

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 1

Title Page

The Effects of A Year-Long Student Teaching Model on the
Self-Esteem and Preparation of the New Teacher

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Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 2

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Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 3

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Table of Contents	3
Abstract.....	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
Statement of Problem.....	6
Research Question	8
Theoretical Rationale	8
Assumptions.....	9
Background and Need.....	9
Chapter 2 Review of the Literature.....	12
Review of Previous Research	12
Teacher Preparation	12
Historical Context.....	18
Statistics	20
Research Methodology	20
Survey of Teachers	20
Focus Groups	21
Findings	21
Special Collections.....	25

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 4

Summary	27
Interview with an Expert.....	28
Chapter 3 Method	31
Sample and Site.....	31
Chapter 4 Analysis.....	32
Description of Site, Individuals, Data.....	32
Analysis of Themes.....	33
Chapter 5 Discussion	37
Summary of Major Findings.....	37
Comparison of Findings/Results with Existing Studies	38
Limitations of the Study	38
Implications for Further Research	39
Overall Significance of the Study.....	39
References.....	41

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 5

Abstract

The student teaching component of most teacher preparation programs in the United States varies from 30 to 300 hours of field service (Levine, 2006); typically this is a culminating activity comprised of a 15-week engagement at a school in two separate grade levels. California Multiple Subject Credential candidates typically divide their 15-week practicum into a nine-week assignment in a lower grade and a six-week assignment in a higher grade. Yet some graduates of these programs feel under-prepared and overwhelmed in their new role as teacher. This lack of preparation may promote fear and insecurity within some neophyte teachers. A year-long student teaching model may well provide the additional insight and support to fledgling teachers. By interviewing new teachers from both types of programs, this paper investigates the benefits and potential drawbacks of year-long and 15-week teacher preparation programs. Findings indicated that a year-long experience in student teaching assignment makes a difference in one's self-esteem and feeling of preparedness compared to a 15-week assignment.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Statement of Problem

The student teaching component of most teacher preparation programs in the United States varies from 30 to 300 hours of field-service (Levine, 2006). The majority of teacher preparation programs provides for a semester-long student teaching experience as a culminating activity related to the coursework that has been completed as part of the teacher credentialing program. For multiple subject credential candidates the field-service is typically divided into a 15-week practicum; a nine-week placement in a lower grade (generally K-3) and a six-week assignment in a higher grade (generally fourth or fifth grades).

However, teaching schools across the nation are creating more effective teacher preparation programs. The most effective programs address three main components: a strong connection between coursework and field work; intensely supervised clinical work integrated with coursework and closer proactive relationships with schools that serve diverse learners (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) all give vague explanations in regard to the amount of time new teachers are *expected* to work in the field as student teachers. NCATE is the national accrediting body for many schools, colleges, and departments of education that is authorized by the United States Department of Education that determines which schools, colleges, and departments of education meet rigorous national standards in preparing teachers and other school specialists for the classroom. NCATE

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 7

is now pushing for longer student teaching components to the teaching programs for the 632 schools they are affiliated with (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2010). Research of both the CDE and the CCTC websites make no reference to the precise number of hours required for preservice teachers to work in the field in California.

President Obama framed the issue during a speech in November, 2009 in Madison, Wisconsin as he referred to the Boston Teacher Residency Program “We’ve got to do a better job recruiting and preparing new teachers...that means creating alternate pathways to teaching for talented young people by expanding programs like the one used in Boston, where aspiring teachers work side-by-side with effective mentors in a year-long residency” (Obama, 2009).

While some schools in California utilize the year-long model – notably California State University, Long Beach and Stanford’s STEP program - it does not appear to be the norm. If this model proves to lower attrition rates, provides for more prepared teachers, and allows qualified student teachers to become a part of school communities, thus offering a win-win situation – it then must be time for California to consider changing their approach to incorporate more year-long student teaching options.

Purpose

Year-long student teaching components to teacher preparation programs are used in a variety of schools nationwide and have a marked success rate (Levine, 2006; Rubenstein, 2007). Some teacher preparation programs work directly in conjunction with their local school districts – not only for practical application of methodologies used by new teachers, but also as a portal for new educators who have practiced at these schools for a year (Rubenstein, 2007). The purpose of my research is to investigate the experiences of teachers who participated in a year-

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 8

long student teaching model and a 15-week model and bring together their opinions about how those models may have affected their self-esteem and feeling of preparedness as new teachers.

Research Question

The focus is to explore if a year-long student teaching component to a teacher preparation program benefits new teachers in terms of their overall preparedness and self-esteem in the profession. By conducting in-depth interviews of graduates from these programs; as well as from shorter field service programs, I illustrate the challenges and benefits of both student teaching models.

Theoretical Rationale

We learn by doing. We create knowledge and meaning by engaging in a variety of experiences (Kolb, 2006, para. 4). The foundation of the teaching profession lends itself to the connection of practical experience and knowledge so that we benefit from those experiences.

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 2006, para. 4). The more knowledge we are allowed to grasp – the better informed we will be as educators. There is one way to get experience...*get the experience!* As Kolb states, "we choose how to emotionally transform the experience into something meaningful and useful by opting for either 2 (a) or 2 (b) below:

2(a) - through gaining new information by thinking, analyzing, or planning ('abstract conceptualization' - 'thinking') or

2(b) - through experiencing the 'concrete, tangible, felt qualities of the world' ('concrete experience' - 'feeling')" (Kolb, 2006, para. 4).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 9

Both ELT and Bloom's Taxonomy (Officeport, 2002) assert that actually using and applying knowledge and technique to solve problems in a particular situation (i.e. using learned material in new and concrete situations by applying, adopting, collecting, constructing, demonstrating, discovering, illustrating, interviewing and making use of this new knowledge) is a viable and constructive way to learn. A year-long student teaching model for pre-service teachers would give ample opportunity to apply the theories and pedagogy new teachers learn as they *learn* it!

Assumptions

Fifteen weeks of student teaching may not be enough to prepare the new teacher for a lasting career in the field of education. A year-long model with a mentor teacher may more adequately prepare the new teacher. A student teaching component of this duration can perhaps offer more practical experience as well as preparation for the issues that teachers face in the real world of the classroom. The minutia of teaching day-to-day for a full year may reveal issues that may otherwise go undetected in a shorter student teaching practicum. A year-long model may very well build more self-esteem and allow the teacher more experience at tackling the every day tasks that teachers confront.

Background and Need

There is a need for reforming educational preparation, as affirmed by Tom Carroll, President of The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future:

This vision for the future of teaching and learning in genuine learning organizations can only take root if the seed is planted and nurtured during teacher preparation. We need new teachers for new schools. Until we reinvent teacher education, the gap between traditional teacher preparation and the demands of teaching for the future will continue to undermine our ability to create 21st century learning organizations (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), 2009, para. 3).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 10

There are year-long student teaching models used at many schools across the nation that are successful in preparing the new teacher for what they will encounter (Levine, 2006; Rubenstein, 2007). These schools provide pre-service teachers parallel opportunities to apply their new teacher preparation techniques in the classrooms as they are learning it, thereby building their self-esteem and bolstering their experience. Through these year-long models or “residencies” as they are sometimes referred to, teachers in training have the opportunity to see the entire cycle of a school year as well.

Research surfaces that criticizes shorter teacher preparation programs and not all teacher preparatory programs are created equal. This paper describes the differences of one-year models and 15-week models.

Having just completed the multiple subject credential program at Dominican University of California, I plan to have a classroom of my own. I feel prepared after my 15 weeks of student teaching, however the myriad factors that teachers face today on a daily basis, prompted my curiosity to ask the question: “Wouldn’t it have been a better idea to see an entire school year as a student teacher?”

The student teaching component of most teacher preparation programs averages between 30 and 300 hours (Levine, 2006). In California, multiple subject candidates typically divide their 15-week practicum into a nine-week assignment in a lower grade and a six-week assignment in a higher grade. I had the somewhat unique experience of working in a school that placed me with two excellent teachers who openly and honestly shared as much information with me as possible and allowed me to develop as a teacher in my own right and I stayed on an additional month after my practicum.

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 11

In addition to having wonderful directing teachers to guide my two brief student teaching experiences, I bring to the teaching profession life experience – as this is a career change for me – and also the perspective of a parent. I have a fourteen-year old son and I have been the concerned parent sitting “on the other side of the table” during conferences; the eager parent attending back-to school nights and volunteering for classroom fieldtrips; even the pushy parent who might have come off as “over-involved.” At the time, I remember marveling at the grace in which my son’s teachers diffused comments and requests from edgy parents like myself. They made it look effortless.

Now, I am that teacher and I think that during what I call my truncated student teaching practicum I not only missed the hands-on application of theories I learned at school and perhaps the more mundane aspects of teaching, but I also missed one of the most beautiful parts of teaching – watching students grow over an entire school year. I believe that growing alongside the same class over a year, applying theory learned in preparation programs, and being mentored for a year by a seasoned teacher would benefit new teachers as well as benefit the schools by having an additional qualified teacher in classrooms.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

The review of literature surfaces a large body of information about teacher preparation programs. Two predominant reoccurring themes are: 1. the creation of more effective preparation programs for the new teacher and 2. the year-long student teaching model and what it means to new teachers who have learned via these models. There are schools across the nation that use this model and it has been a “hot topic” amongst educators for several years. Are new teachers prepared enough? What is enough?

Review of Previous Research

Teacher Preparation

A leading authority on teacher preparation, Darling-Hammond (2006) addresses the importance of creating more effective teacher preparation programs. Darling-Hammond argues that the most effective programs address three main components: a strong connection between coursework and field work; intensely supervised clinical work integrated with coursework and closer proactive relationships with schools that serve diverse learners. She also argues for preparatory programs to NOT water down teacher preparation thereby strengthening the reputation of the profession.

Darling-Hammond of Stanford University is a chief advocate for longer student teaching fieldwork. Her argument, among other issues, is to put into practice what teachers are actually learning and do it as part of a preparatory program. It appears that her view is that by better preparing the teacher – s/he is more confident and better trained to deal with all the intricacies teachers face. The strength of this study is that she connects her views with real-life application of a program that incorporates her vision. Stanford University’s STEP program successfully

utilizes the year-long student teaching model. Experiential Learning Theory dictates that one actually learns by doing. Darling-Hammond's approach is aligned with ELT - as she has applied this directly to the program she is running.

Additionally, Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002) discuss the implication of educational preparation for teachers and whether this impacts their level of efficacy in the classroom. Further, the authors present a study showing whether or not this preparation factors in a teacher's plans to remain a teacher for the long haul. They examine data from three thousand beginning teachers in New York City and discuss their findings in detail. Again, this article is one of many that address the preparedness or lack thereof in the teaching industry. The authors do a comprehensive job of extrapolating data that show that preparation really does matter.

Another advocate for more thorough teacher preparation is Levine (2006), former president and professor of education at Teachers College at Columbia University. In his study, Levine points out the numerous deficits in current programs while referencing several programs that have a superior standing of preparation. He notes several schools that have year-long student teaching components. His findings suggest a gap in the education and preparation of new teachers that impacts new teachers and students alike. He claims that some teacher preparation programs utilize archaic methodologies that have little or no application in real-life classroom settings.

Though Levine has been criticized for speaking out about teacher preparation programs - this criticism has predominantly come from The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010), which is responsible for the accreditation of more than 1, 200 teaching programs in the nation. NCATE claims his work is "contradictory" in part, because it

was never “peer-reviewed.” However, Levine’s claims and research shed light on an element of teaching that gets overlooked - the deficiencies in some teacher preparation programs that ultimately affect our children as well as our teachers.

Levine details his research and supports it with survey data from an extensive study conducted on the overall performance of more than 1,200 schools and departments of education across the country. This content is valuable to this study for two main reasons: first, he structures his analysis around the lack of preparation that teachers receive before they enter the profession; secondly, he discusses, at length, the benefits to programs that offer more preparation via longer student teaching models and hands-on experience in real classrooms. His research is backed up with survey data from graduates of various teaching programs that yield valuable information about this particular topic.

Interestingly, though NCATE was outspoken about Dr. Levine’s “Executive Summary”, Cibulka (2009) later addressed the reform for teacher preparation programs. Specifically concentrating on the push to close the gap between theory and practice – coupling coursework with classroom work.

NCATE is responsible for accrediting teacher preparatory programs across the nation. The process to become accredited involves a lot of paperwork and a visit once every seven years to participating schools. Cibulka outlines the new approach that will minimize paperwork, encourage higher learning institutions to focus on the outcome of teacher education, and couple more clinical experience with what students are actually learning. The assumption in the past has been that schools of education were lacking in these areas and mostly focused on the need “to encourage institutions to hide problems. We need quite the contrary impulse, ... to work openly toward improving.” (Cibulka, 2009, p. 46).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 15

NCATE is looking at how and why teachers are leaving the profession in droves - some of which is attributed to the fact that new teachers do not have enough experience in the field prior to teaching. Some new teachers do not feel prepared to tackle all that they encounter as new teachers. Longer field experience may well reduce the fears and trepidation new teachers feel and allow them to enter the profession with more confidence.

Further, in their study (Beck & Shanks, 2005) reveal a thorough evaluation that includes how teacher preparation would benefit from more field-service hours. The authors note that in one case, a teacher preparation program had some student groups that logged over 1600 hours cumulatively – which is 50% more than required by their university. The study found that these additional hours create confidence to carry forth in the profession as new teachers.

Beck and Shanks offer strong conclusions based both on an investigation of additional field-service hours for new teachers and take an in-depth look at the demands placed on teachers once they are actually in the classroom. They conclude that more time in the classroom with active mentoring staff support of the pre-service teacher enhances new teachers' self-esteem and confidence.

The two-fold analysis by Beck and Shanks (2005) offers a broad picture of teaching as a whole. They investigate not only the preparation but also the demands that continue with the profession. This information is useful to this study because this is exactly what pre-service teachers may need to better grasp the demands of teaching as they move forward in their careers.

Additionally, it was noted that new educators are not being trained as well as they should be. Statistics from the Education Schools Project imply that more than half of new teachers are educated in programs with the lowest admission standards (often accepting 100% of applicants). When school principals were asked to rate the skills and preparedness of new teachers – only

40% thought that education schools were doing a moderately good job at training new teachers. (Wallstreet Journal, 2006).

Year-long Student Teaching Models

Armstrong (2007) addresses how the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education teacher preparatory program has recently added an additional year to their teaching program; primarily so that students can gain more experience in the classroom. The pedagogy they are learning is directly applied in the classroom with mentors guiding them. Students practice what they learn and are critiqued by mentor teachers. Armstrong purports that the view of Curry School of Education's administrators is to place more of an emphasis on classroom work. By giving teacher candidates the opportunity to practice their newfound knowledge over an extended timeframe the teachers are given greater opportunity to become comfortable in the classroom and apply their knowledge to everyday situations.

By applying this knowledge and receiving feedback on their techniques – new teachers have concrete tools to work with in improving their own teaching strategies as they shape their place in the teaching world. This extended program adds to the new teachers' experience, ultimately providing practice that will serve them well as they embark on their teaching careers.

Furthermore, Students at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas “complete 100 hours of supervised work with young people prior to entering the teacher education program and by the time they are seniors their program is 100 percent field-based” (Levine, 2006, p. 8).

Levine goes on to say that their field-based practice is like those of hospital training programs. Students are on-site working with professional development schools and teachers.

Both University of Virginia and Emporia State University are schools that offer teacher preparation programs in which students apply their knowledge immediately and continually over

a years' time. According to my interviews with two graduates of Emporia State University, the extra field service played a major role in their confidence as new teachers. Additionally, Rubenstein (2007) examines the crisis of teacher preparation programs whereby the norm in preparation separates theory from real-world practice. She points to the lack of "in classroom" practice that many teacher preparation programs utilize and the short-term student teaching components of most programs.

Rubenstein goes on to address a variety of programs that have a longer student teaching practicum that apply the theories new teachers are learning immediately in the classroom. Programs like the Boston Teacher Residency provide successful, prepared teachers to work alongside mentor teachers for an entire year.

Rubenstein offers insight to a variety of programs that offer year-long student teaching components to their preparation programs. She cites real-life experiences from teachers in both short-term preparation programs and long-term preparation programs. She declares that there is a gap between what teachers learn and how they apply that knowledge. She surmises that the more prepared a teacher is (by way of longer student teaching programs) – the more that the teacher and his/her students benefit.

Rubenstein's perspective on the field of teacher training is enlightening and strongly supports my initial assumptions. Rubenstein points to schools around the country that have put year-long student teaching models into place. These models may be the gateway to better training for new teachers thus helping them to succeed in the profession.

Finally, in their study, Spooner, Flowers, Lambert and Algozzine (2008) compare student teachers in semester-long internships versus year-long internships at the same university. The research is fairly extensive and the outcome purports that new teachers from year-long

internships claim to have “better perceived adequacy” (p. 268). The authors theorize that a year-long student teaching component offers better preparation for new teachers based on their quantitative and qualitative research whereby they extracted information from the two pools of new teacher candidates. Their findings show more satisfaction and “perceived adequacy” in the year-long interns.

This content provides one more study concluding that new teachers feel they can be more effective if they have a longer program of student teaching. When new teachers apply what they are learning immediately there appears to be a sense of self-assuredness that eases new teachers into the many intricacies of teaching.

Summary

This literature review unveiled how critical teacher preparation is and just how a year-long practicum may be an answer to best prepare new teachers. The literature also exposed the gap in mandated requirement hours for student teaching. There appears to be no minimum amount of hours. The amount of literature on this subject is extensive and the dominant themes of preparation and year-long student teaching assignments are not mutually exclusive entities, but rather a unified force that in the end may serve our schools, students and new teachers well.

Historical Context

Teaching and teacher preparation have evolved from a belief from the 1800s that anyone who learns something could then teach it, to formal teacher preparatory programs. “In general, the assumption was that anyone who had completed a given level of education could turn around and teach it. Teachers needed no special preparation in the art of teaching; they just needed modest familiarity with the subject matter they would teach” (Labaree, 2008, p. 291). The fact

that practical experience offered a person some insight in how to teach existed only when a new teacher entered a classroom for the first time.

In the 1900s, universities that did not have formal programs in education began to develop them, known early on as “normal schools” (Labaree, 2008, p. 291). Normal schools, in their many forms, were considered the “forerunner” of formal universities that eventually developed teaching programs to accommodate the increased need for professionally prepared teachers.

Later, the demands for more accessible higher education grew into four-year teachers' colleges and then state colleges and universities in the 1960 (Labaree, 2008, p. 296). But teacher-training programs faced what Labaree calls a “ ‘ devil's bargain between quantity and quality: thereby turning education schools into a valuable cash resource for many universities that compromise quantity of over quality” (Rubenstein, 2007, p. 2).

Teacher preparation programs have been faced with challenges for many years, in part due to the fluctuations in the need for teachers across the country. When the need was high – preparation programs were compromised – substituting “relevance over rigor” (Labaree, 2008, p. 293).

Currently, however, some teacher preparatory schools are restructuring their programs to include, among other things, longer student teaching assignments with more practical experience in the classroom (Carroll & Foster, 2010). Rubenstein reports that “though there are some leading lights, far too many of America's 1,200-plus schools of education are mired in methods that isolate education from the arts and sciences, segregate the theory and practice of teaching, and provide insufficient time and support for future teachers to learn to work in real classrooms.” (Rubenstein, 2007, p. 2).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 20

As teachers retire there is an increased need for new teachers. The question in teacher preparation is how to best educate these professionals so that they meet the challenges in the field, and have the incentive to continue teaching for years as a serious career option. Carroll and Foster (2010, p. 9) state “even as the attrition rate of new teachers steadily increases, the country continues to pursue industrial-era recruitment practices that place under prepared, inexperienced individuals alone in the classroom – often in the most challenging schools and classrooms.”

Statistics

MetLife, Inc, a global insurance and investment firm has, since 1984, been a key player in administering surveys that focus on a variety of areas in education. MetLife concentrates on public education topics that vary from reform to violence. The survey below indicates findings from a 2006 quantitative and qualitative survey conducted by Harris Interactive, Inc. for MetLife to reflect among other things – the overall satisfaction of new teachers (those with 2 years or less of teaching; or those anticipating new teaching positions). The following information is taken from pages 3-6 of the 2006 survey:

Research Methodology

This study combined both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to gain a clear picture of attitudes and perceptions of teachers, principals and education leaders.

Survey of Teachers

A nationally representative sample of 1,001 public school teachers of grades K–12 was interviewed. These interviews were conducted on the telephone. Telephone interviews averaged 16 minutes in length and were conducted between March 8 and March 30, 2006.

Focus Groups

In addition, Harris Interactive conducted a series of online bulletin board focus groups among prospective teachers and former teachers recruited from Harris Interactive's online panel. These two groups were conducted online using Harris Interactive's proprietary online focus group methodology in April 2006. Each group was conducted over a three-day period allowing participants to respond to a set of questions each day, as well as comment and respond to one another's ideas, perceptions and concerns. These groups were moderated by a member of Harris Interactive's Qualitative Group. Respondent comments from these groups are included throughout the report.

Prospective teachers were defined as:

- undergraduate and graduate students who plan to become classroom teachers in public schools and
- those who anticipate taking their first positions as a classroom teacher in a public school system in the next two years.

Findings

Teachers say they need more training to prepare for their first year in the classroom.

- One-quarter of teachers (26%) report that they were not prepared to work with children with varying abilities during their first teaching positions.
- One-quarter (26%) report that they were not prepared to engage families in supporting their children's education.
- One in five (20%) say that they were not prepared to maintain order and discipline in the classroom.

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 22

Teachers are driven to leave by unmet expectations, lack of preparation and lack of support by colleagues and principal.

- One-quarter of teachers (27%) say it is likely they will leave the profession in the next five years.
- Teachers who plan to leave are more likely than others to report worse experiences than expected with the professional prestige of teaching (44% vs. 34%), salary and benefits (40% vs. 30%) and control over their own work (24% vs. 13%).
- Teachers who expect to leave are more likely than others to feel unprepared to work with children with varying abilities (34% vs. 23%) and maintain order and discipline (25% vs. 18%).
- Teachers who expect to leave are more likely than others to have principals who do not ask for their suggestions (29% vs. 15%), do not show appreciation for their work (21% vs. 11%) (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2010).

Administrative Records

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) all give vague explanations in regard to the amount of time new teachers are expected to work in the field as student teachers. NCATE is the national accrediting body for many schools, colleges, and departments of education that is authorized by the United States Department of Education that determines which schools, colleges, and departments of education meet rigorous national standards in preparing teachers and other school specialists for the classroom. NCATE is a non-profit (501C) organization funded through dues from its 35-member organization, fees from NCATE-accredited institutions, and foundation grants (NCATE, 2010).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 23

According to their website, a primary question NCATE uses in determining their accreditation process is “does the institution provide many opportunities for candidates to learn how to teach under the supervision of a variety of veteran teachers? At what point does the candidate gain experience in P–12 schools”? (p. 3). NCATE goes on to suggest that many institutions now offer this experience as soon as possible so that prospective candidates better understand schools from a teacher’s “point of view” implying that there is no minimum amount of time required.

According to NCATE, the expectations of new teachers coming from accredited universities should allow for a “professional education unit and school partners to design and implement field and clinical experiences so that candidates develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions so that all students learn.” (p. 3). However, they note the field-service hours as needing to be “substantial” but do not give a number.

Further, the California Department of Education (CDE, 2010) posts the following information: “all pre-service teacher education programs must provide candidates with a comprehensive understanding of the subject they teach, a thorough foundation in student development and ways in which students learn, and strategies to facilitate student learning. Programs must be closely linked to the California kindergarten-through-grade-twelve (K–12) academic content standards, curriculum frameworks, SBE-adopted instructional materials, and assessments. All teachers must be provided with a thorough foundation in research-based methodology for the teaching of reading and strategies that facilitate the academic success of diverse student populations, including EL students and students with special needs” (CDE, 2010).

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 24

Although, when it comes to addressing the hours a new teacher is required to spend in the field the documentation from NCATE, CDE and CCTC is lacking. The CCTC defines teacher preparatory programs as “a program of professional course work (including student teaching) which develops the skills needed for serving in the classroom. This includes course work areas such as teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and classroom management” (State of California, 2007). Again, no mention of a minimum of hours required.

However, The Dominican University of California’s Teacher Candidate Handbook states: “The Credential Programs at Dominican University are authorized by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) to prepare candidates for teaching responsibilities in regular and special classrooms in elementary, middle and high schools. Candidates participate in a program that combines academic preparation with extensive experiences in schools.” (Dominican University of California, 2009, p. 2). Further, the handbook describes student teaching for Multiple Subject Candidates to “participate actively as a member of the school community in an elementary school for the full day for 15 weeks.” (p. 29). However, California State University, Long Beach mandates 2 15-week student teaching units for all Multiple Subject Candidates. (California State University, Long Beach, 2010). Whereas San Francisco State and Sonoma State University require 15 weeks of student teaching for their candidates (San Francisco State University, 2010 and Sonoma State University, 2010).

In summary, it appears that the number of hours of student-teaching field service is left to the jurisdiction of the university itself. The question then becomes: who dictates the number of field service hours and why is there so much differentiation between universities? If universities across the country, though few and far between, are looking to new methods of

teacher preparation, is there room for implementing the year-long model as a standard across the board for all preparatory programs?

Special Collections

Aleman Library at Dominican University houses a large number of special collections on Education - ranging from teaching techniques to reform. There are many journals to search and pull data from on the topic of a year-long student teaching practicum. What I once thought was a subject that had a negligible amount of information is, in fact, a subject that many people have looked at, albeit through different lenses - especially when specifically discussing preservice teacher education and training. Of note, *Action in Teacher Education* journals are rife with information on the subject of teacher training and offer this angle on training: Professional Development Schools. These professional development schools (PDS) “have the capacity to change teacher education, improve student performance and reduce teacher attrition” (Dangel, et al, 2009, p. 3). What makes these models unique is the “buy-in” from districts who couple with universities to use their classrooms as a real-life training ground: “structural change involved placing preservice teachers in one school for a year-long experience. New relationships developed; namely, liaisons as well as university supervisors, and cooperating teachers, [who] were available to work with preservice teachers” (Dangel, 2009, p. 13). Further, participants in this study noted that “the school-based work provided regular opportunities to actualize their commitment to children and to learning in concrete ways at the school classroom level and that it challenged their beliefs about partnerships, schools, and culture” (Dangel, 2009, p. 14).

Though not unlike the Boston Residency Program or the STEP program at Stanford, PDS is one more method of available teacher training options. The dynamic of creating liaisons, school supervisors and administrators all working with and on behalf of the teacher in training is

a concept that is intriguing. The PDS model appears to offer a dynamic approach to strengthen the new teacher in training.

Additionally, (Scheeler, Bruno, Grubb, & Seavey (2009) discuss the use of “generalization techniques used in teacher preparation to promote transfer of training from preparation to practice” (p 147). Scheeler references studies conducted by Bowles and Nelson (as cited in Scheeler, et. al, 2009) and Rose and Church (as cited in Scheeler, et. al, 2009) where “feedback emerged as the variable producing the strongest training effect” and “recommended practice with feedback as a necessary component of any training program” (p. 147). The relationship of feedback from mentors, administrators, professors, etc...and how this feedback begins to shape the foundation of early teaching and this relationship between mentor and new teacher over the course of time becomes a valuable tool as the new teacher bridges their experiences into the classroom.

I coupled my curiosity regarding PDS models with how California fortifies new teachers *after* they are hired. Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment or BTSA is a “state-funded program, co-sponsored by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) designed to support the professional development of newly-credentialed, beginning teachers to fulfill the requirements for the California Clear Multiple and Single Subjects Credential. BTSA programs are locally designed and implemented in accordance with the Standards for Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction Programs, and are accredited by the CCTC to recommend candidates for the Ryan or 2042 Clear Multiple Subject or Single Subject Credential” (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA), 2010, para.1). In California when a teacher begins their work in the classroom they have a Preliminary Credential. After two years of attending weekly workshops and working with a

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 27

designated teacher once a week on a professional plan as well as creating a “portfolio” the teacher will then have a California Professional Clear Credential. The aim of BTSA is to “provide an effective transition into the teaching profession” (BTSA, 2010, para. 1). This is done while the teacher is teaching a full day and the workshops are after school. Is it possible to provide some of these workshops/requirements during a student teaching practicum instead of when the new teacher has the full responsibility of a classroom? This may be best served in a year-long model.

Summary

This special collections research unfolded several common themes: teacher preparation is in a state of flux and the way that teachers are prepared differs from program-to program. There is a need to re-define options for new teachers to allow them as much preparation as possible while still maintaining flexibility for those who are entering the profession as a second career and may not be able to attend student teaching for an entire year. The gaps in this research unveiled two key components. First, there is no mandated amount of time a new teacher “must” spend in the classroom – that is up to the preparatory program. Second, a restructuring or partnership within teacher preparation programs may serve their candidates and local schools well. For instance, units earned can be coupled with direct experience in the classrooms applying methodologies instead of doing that work at the universities where there is no practical experience. Historically, teacher preparation has undergone change– yet those changes sometimes have “compromised quantity for quality” (Labaree, 2008). In gathering and researching the large body of data on this subject and with Obama recently stating there is a need for change in preparing our teachers – it appears that these changes could be a win-win situation and the nation is ready to receive them. Local schools would benefit from teachers in training

and teacher preparation would offer hands on work. It is a fine line, however, and change does not always come quickly. I believe this is the tip of the iceberg for teacher preparatory reform. In interviewing my subjects for this study, it appears that the longer one is in the classroom the more confident they feel when they begin teaching a class of their own.

Overhauling teacher preparation is becoming more important than ever as we see the need for teachers increasing by 2012 (CDE, 2010). Teachers need to be prepared to teach far beyond what was once considered effective teaching practice in years gone by (Labaree, 2008). Transforming these requirements to include a year-long teaching practicum may be one way to validate preparation, self-esteem and perhaps contribute to teachers actually staying in the profession indefinitely.

Interview with an Expert

I was fortunate enough to sit down and discuss student teaching assignments with a very dedicated Superintendent of schools. She is a passionate leader. She is also extremely busy and I felt honored that she was taking time to be my expert. Though, she modestly admits that “expert” may be the wrong word. She has been at the helm of many school districts for years but admits that this is a job shared by many. She has the energy of three people and you can see by her office – decorated with family portraits and special moments in her career and life that she is one who puts education and family first and may in fact, look at the districts she is involved with as her extended family. She is a committed educational leader and a delight to speak with. She was able to spend about 30 minutes with me as her lunch sat on her desk un-eaten.

She read over the consent form and signed/dated it. She chuckled at the part about “minor discomfort” so I promised that I would make the interview painless. Thoughtful and honest in her responses, she was focused and deliberate in her answers even as her computer

beeped at her and her secretary knocked on the door twice. She gave me her un-divided attention.

This Superintendent had a very interesting opinion about student teaching. She surmises that student teaching programs are not a one size fits all undertaking. Just like teachers who teach children with varying needs – it is equally important to allow teaching programs to accommodate many different approaches. For instance, she noted that for someone (like me) who was entering the profession as a second career – might have family needs and other employment to attend to - so that potentially a full year in a student teaching practicum may not make sense. There are teaching programs that offer options like this; to assist with the training of new teachers. Further, if year-long models were mandated by schools in California, how many excellent teachers would we loose to that kind of model? She also noted, that in some ways it is an effective tool to get people “jump started” into the classroom quickly. They will learn as they go, and no teacher knows everything anyway. The second you think you do, she said, “you better leave the profession”. She gave this poignant example, “Some people know they want to be a teacher from the start. Like me – I knew I wanted to be a teacher. Other people don’t know how they will use their gifts. We could have different programs for people in different phases of their lives. It is similar to a kid with special needs in your class. We have many people with many different needs. Definitely the more time you have to interact with kids and how they work and observe other teachers and what you take from them, or choose not to take from them, is important. It is about relationship building – those are the best teachers I know. Having different options for students to become teachers would be great – it’s just a matter of how we make that work for everyone”.

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 30

She uses herself as an example: when she was a newly credentialed teacher she made the decision to become an aid the next year in that class to gain further experience, stating, “Everybody is different. For me, I took exactly what I needed - that extra year to become a confident educator. I taught and stayed exactly where I was and that was exactly what I needed to be a confident educator”. She went on to address the year-long models like the one at the Boston Teacher Residency, which Obama recently commented on, as a way to “creating alternate pathways to teacher education” – she said this: “As much support and time we can give to a potential teacher is great! I think that perhaps any set amount of time in and of itself as a – skill set is something that evolves over time” and “teaching is really about learning all of the time”. She also added “In order to be an effective teacher – you can’t just read a book. Teaching is an art. You have to practice to be an effective teacher and that takes more than just the content and curriculum – so adding student teaching works in conjunction with that idea. The area of relating curriculum to the classroom and putting it into practice and taking it to the kids is what really matters. You have to watch greatness and see it in action to then apply it.”

Perhaps the most salient piece of information I gleaned from my interview with this Superintendent is that student teaching is, in fact, a component to teacher preparation that can offer many different approaches depending on the kind of learner you are and what your needs are. You take from it what you will and apply it, as you will. There is no one *right* way to learn to be a teacher – because basically we are all learning as we move through the profession. As our interview concluded, she left the lunch on her desk and left quickly for yet another meeting.

Chapter 3 Method

Sample and Site

I have interviewed by telephone or email two teachers who have graduated from year-long student teaching models and two teachers who have graduated from 15-week student teaching models to compare and contrast their experiences as new teachers in the field. I prepared a list of questions that helped to determine their experiences and incorporated their perspectives about how confident and prepared they felt to embark on their first year of teaching. The information I gathered enabled me to create an analysis of the two forms of student teaching and are detailed as a phenomenological report of the experiences my subjects have had over their first year of teaching.

Ethical Standards

I prepared an IRBPHS for each subject so that they were made aware of the questions and circumstances of the proposed data gathering. The subjects are aware that this information will be kept confidential and that their answers are used to formulate a basis for understanding their experiences as first-year teachers from different teacher preparation programs in which they attended. The interviews were conducted either by phone or email correspondence. The IRB consent forms were signed by all parties who participated in the study.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

Four subjects participated in interviews regarding their student teaching assignments. Two individuals from the same year-long student teaching model at - Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas, and two individuals from a 15-week program at Dominican University in San Rafael, California. The age ranges were 24-34 and all are female. The participants were asked the following seven questions and all had completed between one and two years of teaching.

1. How long was your student teaching experience? Which university did you attend?
2. Did you feel prepared to handle the many facets of managing your own classroom after your student teaching experience? i.e. grading, back to school night, IEP's, parent conferences, classroom management, etc...
3. How did your program prepare you for this? Do you think longer student teaching assignments are more beneficial to new teachers? If so, why?
4. If you came from a 15-week student teaching model, do you think that was enough time? Would/could you have used more time? How could that amount of time been more beneficial to you?
5. What advice do you have for new teachers – regardless of the preparation programs they came from?

6. Did your program prepare you as much as a program can? What are your thoughts around just “jumping in and doing it”?

7. Were you able to apply theories/pedagogies that you learned in student teaching and get feedback from other teachers/principals when needed? Was this useful to you?

Analysis of Themes

From the seven questions two major themes surfaced:

1. The subjects with longer student teaching assignments felt more confident than those with less time, yet those with less time preparing felt capable once they started the teaching process, in part due to previous classroom experience they had outside of student teaching. The two subjects from 15-week programs agreed that more time would have been better. According to the subjects from the 15-week program – they found they *did* have enough intrinsic skill to manage the intricacies, though it was a challenge. One-year student teaching model participants felt completely prepared as indicated below by Ms. S. of Emporia State University who candidly offered this description of her one-year preparatory program:

“I feel that my education at ESU has really helped me to feel confident to handle the many different facets of teaching. Naturally, each school district is different and there are things that you will need to learn no matter where you teach. However, ESU gave me such a great education and student teaching allowed me to see these things in action. As a student teacher we are required to do pretty much everything that a regular teacher would do over the course of a school year. This means that we have to learn how to manage a classroom quickly, attend and participate in parent/teacher conferences, attend and participate in IEP meetings and PLC’s. Nothing is kept a secret from us! We have to see and be involved in EVERYTHING!!!” (G. S., email interview, April, 2010).

Ms. R. of Emporia State University echoed Ms. S's comments:

"When we participate in our student-teaching practicum we are responsible for EVERYTHING: parent teacher conferences, grading, lesson planning, curriculum design, classroom management, back to school night, etc..." (K. R. phone interview, April, 2010).

The heartfelt interview I had with first year teacher, Ms. P. who recently came from a 15-week model at Dominican University in San Rafael, California had this to say about her student teaching after completing her first year of teaching the first grade:

"No!" I was totally unprepared. In my student teaching practicum I did not do any grading, progress reports, back-to-school night or any of that. That is my biggest complaint about student teaching in such a small timeframe. You don't get "a year at a glance" In a 15 week practicum no matter what point in the year you start teaching – you end up missing certain components of the year. That is either the beginning of the year set-up, back-to-school night, etc...or end of the year report cards, and closing down the classroom at the end of the year." I don't really feel that student teaching is a reality – you are following someone else's plans, the kids know you are not really "the teacher". Thank goodness I had a lot of previous experience in schools, both as a teacher's aid and as a tutor. I felt like these experiences helped me add to my teaching capabilities." (F. P., personal interview, June, 2010).

Additionally, Ms. M., detailed her 15-week student teaching preparation this way:

"No, I wasn't prepared at all! I am teaching in a completely different population from those I taught in Marin County during my student teaching, however. The differences are vast. The kids that I taught this year came from economically challenged families and spoke little English. Neither the students nor the parents seemed to value education. I got a lot of support, thankfully, from three colleagues, but the principal didn't even know who I really was until the last two months of school! This was a completely challenging environment. Every day I was in a sink or swim situation – experimenting with different classroom management techniques and different teaching techniques. The sixth graders I taught were very receptive for the most part, but I struggled with my seventh graders all year. Most of these kids came from street gangs; so on top of teaching I had to learn the gang culture. It was a really challenging year. I don't think anything could have prepared me for this! But more time student teaching would have helped me as far as practice is concerned. Thankfully, I had exposure to the education world prior to student teaching and that definitely helped! As far as dealing with IEP's I felt totally comfortable with that – but I needed a translator at the meetings and it was usually pretty awkward. Academics didn't seem to trouble the parents as much as whether or not their child was respectful towards me. It appeared that they

viewed school more as a babysitting service. This was a shocking realization for me.” (Ms. M., phone interview, June 2010).

2. The second theme that surfaced revolved around the application of pedagogy. Interestingly, the two subjects from year-long models felt strongly about how they applied teaching theories and pedagogies learned in their preparatory programs. Whereas the two subjects from 15-week models felt that they relied less on what they learned in their programs and more on how they handled the day-to-day. Ms. S. from a year-long model, offered this:

“I was honestly surprised when I started student teaching how much I relied on the knowledge I was learning in my college classes. If I came across a difficult situation or something I hadn’t encountered before, I would think “What would Professor So-and-So say about this”. Practical things, such as running records, QPS, data analysis, I was able to apply and use immediately.” (G. S., email interview, April, 2010)

Again, Ms. R.’s comments align with Ms. S’s as she discussed the pedagogies she was able to apply immediately from her year-long model:

“Yes, what I was learning at college I was applying directly in my student teaching. Whenever I had questions there was either a teacher or professor from my university to ask. I could learn something and apply it immediately. This was perfect – because you could see it in action and determine if it works for you and if not how you could adapt it.” (K. R., phone interview, April, 2010).

However, Ms. P. from the 15-week model offered this insight to a variety of applied applications:

“First let me say something about classroom management. That is very difficult to teach and ultimately it really depends on your style and the dynamics of the classroom. You learn what works best with your particular group of students. As far as parent-teacher conferences – I was TOTALLY unprepared about how to approach this. I would gloss over “touchy” subjects and tried to stay very positive even if there was an issue. By the end of the year, I had more confidence around this and I let that guide me. I learned a lot about myself, my style and my approach to teaching over this last year. My view of student teaching is that a year-long would be ideal so that you could actually apply the pedagogy and theories you are learning at school in the school where you are working! This would allow for direct experience and you would be able to get feedback on if it

worked or not. Also, you could find out what works best for you as a teacher. Instead of spending so many hours in my college classroom I should have been in a real classroom learning everything over the year. I would have been way more prepared. All of that said, I jumped into my first year and learned as I went. I had a really great academic advisor in college and her advice and critiques during my practicum resonated with me as I taught. I would always think “now what would she do?” I appreciated her input in my early training. Just don’t ever be afraid to ask questions. Schools know they are hiring a new teacher - and that you may need guidance. I am lucky that I had colleagues to help me when I needed it.” (F. P., personal interview, June 2010).

Further, Ms. M. illustrated her point about pedagogies this way:

“All of the theories and pedagogies I learned completely went out the window. Like I said before, it was sink or swim. I was just trying to survive. Also, I wasn’t teaching in the grade level I student taught in – which was difficult. It makes me think that during student teaching we should be exposed to as many grades as possible as Multiple Subject Credential holders, that way we could see the gamut of grade levels. A longer student teaching practicum could allow for this.”(Ms. M., personal interview, June 2010).

All four participants had similar advice for new teachers: don’t be afraid to ask questions!

You are going to learn new things as you begin your teaching career, no matter how much experience you have. Preparation counts, but the amount of time ostensibly did not affect those with shorter student teaching preparation as they managed their first year of teaching. However, they both felt that more time in a classroom setting would have been more beneficial to them in terms of preparation and self-confidence.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

Through the interview with my expert and case study subjects, several major findings were revealed. Ostensibly, longer student teaching assignments provide extremely valuable time in the classroom working with students, colleagues, parents, and administrators. This is something that shorter practicums do not allow for. That said, year-long models are not always practical or affordable for some. This is especially true of students who may be entering a program while working full-time to support a family. So, from a practical standpoint, like my expert interviewee commented, we could potentially lose excellent teachers if there is an absence of “differentiated programs” to address a population that may need to go through a program at a more rapid pace. Yet, longer programs may “weed out” those that do not have the desire to endure a classroom and the experience they would gain from it. I have mixed feelings about this because, as stated in my “assumptions” section...the more experience you have the more prepared you will be. This is not unlike medical schools or law schools that encourage students to inform their practice by getting as much practical experience as possible. The issue of affordability is a little trickier, I realize. How can one be expected to be in a classroom fulltime if they are not paid for that time? I believe this can be addressed thusly: if one has made the decision to enter a professional program – one is expected to be in college courses anyway. I think that more of those courses could be replaced with practical experience. Here, I can use myself as an example. I am a single parent that was initially attracted to a 15-week program because I would have time to work outside of school and raise my young son at the same time. However, in retrospect, I feel I would have benefited more by having increased time in a

classroom settings and less time in college courses regardless of the duration of my program.

That said, I later went on to create a situation that enhanced my direct experience, because when I graduated, teaching jobs were amazingly scarce. I bolstered my expertise further over the last year by substitute teaching, tutoring, and getting my masters degree. I feel that these experiences will add to my capabilities as a new teacher once I am hired.

Comparison of Findings/Results with Existing Studies

According to my findings, it appears that in fact, my conclusions support the existing studies I researched. More time in the classroom is definitely more beneficial, (Rubenstein, 2007). In speaking with the subjects from year-long models they appeared completely confident and ready for anything. They felt as if they had seen the entire year and knew what to expect; whereas my subjects from 15-week models felt they really had to learn on the go; neither one of them felt totally prepared. Interestingly, however, the 15-week subjects had a foundation that bolstered them to persevere through their first year – their program did offer enough support in that regard.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited with respect to a small sample pool of subjects who shared their direct experiences with me. Yet, I have informally had extensive conversations with teachers who have many years in the profession and those who have little experience, and not one of them attended year-long models and not one of them felt ready for their first year of teaching.

However, going back to what my expert interviewee stated, there is something to be said about just “jumping in and doing it”. It may really have more to do with the type of individual you are and the type of support you are receiving as a new teacher that dictates how you manifest your experiences.

Implications for Further Research

Further research in the area of student teaching models across the country and in California specifically would be beneficial. I believe there is a need for change in these programs. Firstly, elementary, middle, and high schools are suffering so much now. Teachers are over-worked and have too many children in their classrooms to tend to. Some of these teachers are fortunate enough to have parent volunteers to bear some of the load, but my thinking, is that if teaching programs could fortify schools with teachers in training for an entire year - it would be a win-win situation. Student teaching programs could be utilized to aid in not only direct application of learning theories, but also to contribute to the students and the teachers who are so desperately in need of additional support. I would like to see more research done in this area and perhaps offer a new vision as to how teacher preparation programs could couple with schools to make the process more beneficial for all involved.

Overall Significance of the Study

New teachers face a world of variables as they enter their classrooms. There is much to learn that even the most seasoned teachers say they are always learning. This is really what teaching is all about – we want to be life-long learners and model that for our students. Yet allowing new teachers the opportunity to strengthen their skills prior to having their own classrooms and learn as much as possible in a year, would also benefit current teachers and students by aiding in all the extra demands that teachers take on. This not only benefits students but new and current teachers as well. The significance of this study, I believe, sheds light on potential new avenues that are waiting to be traversed in education- starting at the very core: our teachers in training and their experiences with their students. It appears that self-confidence as a new teacher is enhanced by the preparation teachers have in order to succeed in the profession, at

Effects of a Year-Long Student Teaching Model 40

least in part. By setting the foundation of the learning process for teachers and giving them more time to experience the intricacies that they will face, I assert that students and teachers alike would be greatly benefitted.

In conclusion, more time in the classroom certainly seems to contribute to ones' self-confidence by being more prepared to teach. I believe there is room to re-evaluate teacher preparation programs to enhance both those teachers being trained and to fill the gap in classrooms that is so desperately empty now. By reconsidering how teachers are prepared we may be able to begin solving an educational issue from the "inside-out". Those that dedicate their lives to teaching deserve the best training possible and from those training experiences the seed is planted and the tree of knowledge will bloom.

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