

# An Examination of the Correlation Between a Teacher Candidate's Disposition Assessment From the College Supervisor and the Cooperating Teacher During Student Teaching

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**Abstract:** *The research focused on clarifying the responsibility of the institutions preparing teacher candidates. The purpose was to develop candidates who possess dispositions so that they will be successful in the classroom. The study focused on examining candidates' dispositions as assessed by their college supervisor as compared to the assessment by their cooperating teacher in the student teaching setting. The participants were all students admitted into the school of education who also completed their program of study in a small college in southeastern Nebraska. The candidate disposition assessment survey assessed student dispositions that were aligned to meet Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards. An analysis of variance was calculated on the survey results for teacher education candidates over the last four semesters (18-19 and 19-20 school year). Three of the four semesters found no statistical difference in the two assessments for teacher education candidates. One of the four semesters showed significant difference between the College Supervisor and Cooperating Teacher. Further research was recommended to: add the teacher education candidate self-assessment to the data; implement other strategies/opportunities to assess teacher education candidates' dispositions; develop training for assessing teacher education candidates for all assessors; and provide opportunities for candidates' to reflect on their disposition assessments to identify areas that may need to be strengthened.*

**Key Words:** Disposition, teacher education candidate, assessment, teacher preparation

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of teacher education preparation programs in higher education institutions is to produce teachers who display dispositional attitudes that are consistent with successful teaching and social interaction. It is not enough to possess the requisite knowledge and skills, nor is it enough to articulate the appropriate beliefs (Cantor, 1990). As Cantor (1990) stated, having is not necessarily doing. Katz and Raths (1986) gave the example of listening; it is likely that most children have listening skills, but they may or may not have the disposition to be listeners

(Katz, 1986). The same holds true for future educators. They may possess the desired dispositional qualities, but are they able to consistently apply them? Our future educators will serve as role models for the students they serve. Zost (2014) states that having a disposition process in place will help communicate the overall expectations for teacher candidates, allow remediation and opportunities for growth, and support judging incompetence that would suggest that a teacher candidate is not qualified to teach in the regular classroom.

In 2012, Mark Wasicsko, Director of the National Network for the Study of Educator Dispositions (NNSED), contended that disposition is often what people remember when they fondly reflect on the qualities of their favorite teacher. Wasicsko conducted a nationwide survey in which 5,000 stories were collected. Seventy-five percent of the time, when students think of their favorite teacher what they first think of is a disposition (Edick, Danielson, & Edwards, 2006). If these are the qualities that constitute an effective educator, it makes sense that teacher education institutions should screen for them. Carroll (2011) stated it is common sense that basic qualities of honesty, integrity, and caring are the foundation in teacher education work. These qualities usually find their way into admission screening procedures for a teacher education program.

According to Carroll (2011), the purpose of screening is to prevent those who are obviously unqualified to teach from gaining access to the classroom, or the purpose can be to determine if teacher educators have a responsibility to help prospective teachers develop dispositions. Some researchers suggested that if a teacher has an inclination to interact or behave in a certain way, then certain behaviors should be addressed and changed (Anderson & Brydges, 2010). Dispositions for teaching are under construction at all times and they have a significant impact on how teacher candidates perceive, come to understand, and learn to enact the role of teacher.

This study specifically examined the candidates dispositions as assessed by both their college supervisor and cooperating teacher during their student teaching semester. The results of this study provided a clear picture of whether or not there is a difference in the assessment of the teacher education candidate. If the teacher education candidate is to reflect, change, and grow then the feedback they receive needs to be consistent. By comparing the assessment of both college supervisors and cooperating teachers, we can determine if their expectations are consistent and thereby providing meaningful feedback to the teacher education candidates. This information is critical in moving forward in making decisions about the effectiveness of the institution in developing dispositions for teacher education candidates as they move through the program.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to determine if candidates' disposition assessments used by an institution preparing the teacher candidates were effective in improving candidates' disposition. Were the disposition assessment results providing helpful, meaningful feedback for teacher education candidates in their student teaching semester? This study acknowledges that dispositions throughout the program are beneficial as well however this study looks at the reliability of those assessing the teacher education candidate during student teacher. Is there a difference when teacher education candidates are assessed by college faculty and by their cooperating teacher? This is significant as these assessment results provide information to the candidate for growth and therefore, consistency is crucial. The information the candidate receives from the assessment should indicate strengths and growth opportunities as assessed by professionals in the field. This information could be counter-productive if the assessments

received are different and varied in the information they provide. In other words, if the college supervisor scores a candidate high but the cooperating teacher scores the candidate low in the same area, then the information received would be confusing at best and not productive in helping the candidate to grow and improve. The significance of this project was that this research focused on the comparison of teacher candidate assessments between college supervisors and cooperating teachers. The scores were compared to determine if there was a statistical significance between the two assessments. The participants were senior students who were completing their student teaching semester. The data gathered was from the candidate disposition assessment instrument used by the college which is a small, public teacher preparation college in southeastern Nebraska.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

College supervisors and cooperating teachers complete a disposition assessment during the teacher education candidates' student teaching. These assessments include a Likert-type scale with three options: Meets Expectations, Developing, and Needs Improvement. The two assessments were compared to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two.

**Q1.** Is there a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher?

### **HYPOTHESES**

**H1<sub>0</sub>.** There is no significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher

**H1<sub>a</sub>.** There is a significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

What is the purpose of screening for dispositions for teaching? According to Carroll (2011), it can be to prevent those who were obviously unqualified to teach from gaining access to the classroom or it can be to determine if teacher educators have a responsibility to help prospective teachers develop dispositions. As some research has suggested, if a teacher has an inclination to interact or behave in a certain way, then certain behaviors should be addressed and changed (Anderson & Brydges, 2010). Dispositions for teaching are under construction at all times while also having a significant impact on how teacher candidates perceive, come to understand, and learn to enact the role of teacher.

Mark Wasicsko, director of NNSSED, contended that a disposition is often what people remember when they fondly reflect on the qualities of their favorite teacher. Wasicsko conducted a nationwide survey in which 5,000 stories were collected. The survey revealed that 75% of the time when they think of their favorite teacher, what they first think of is a disposition (Edick et al., 2006). Walker (2008) also found that students, when asked, refer to personal qualities (qualitative) of their most memorable teacher, not of the teacher's academic qualifications (quantitative), underscoring the importance of said qualities (Serdyukov & Ferguson, 2011). If these were the qualities that constitute an effective educator, it makes sense that teacher education institutions should screen for such qualities.

According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss (2007), teacher preparation institutions are focusing on dispositions and send the message to future teachers that content knowledge alone will

not suffice in the classroom today. According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss, the educational process is about understanding the needs of their students. Da Ros-Voseles and Moss stated that a teacher's disposition will set the tone for the classroom, which in turn affects the overall climate for students to be successful. In other words, setting a climate for success depends largely on the dispositions of the teacher in the classroom. As most experienced educators know, teachers must support the emotional and social well-being of the students in order to facilitate an atmosphere conducive to learning. According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss, "As NCATE mandates that dispositions of teacher candidates continue to be evaluated, teacher education programs must consider how to strengthen candidates' desired dispositions, while discouraging dispositions that might negatively impact their teaching skills and practices" (p. 90). Dispositions such as critical reflection, perseverance, empathy, and compassion should be strengthened throughout the teacher preparation program.

Conderman and Walker (2015) discussed a strong connection between a teacher's disposition and the quality of student learning. The researchers discussed dispositions and standards that align to teacher behavior, especially those considered by NCATE. Communication, collaboration, and leadership are key characteristics teachers must obtain (Conderman & Walker, 2015). Teachers need to have a positive line of communication with all involved in the educational process. Teachers must talk with others and keep everyone on the same page about things happening in the classroom and at school as a whole. These communication and collaboration skills will further develop leadership skills for the future.

Conderman and Walker (2015) made an interesting point about teacher perceptions about disposition, including: perceptions about self, others, subject field, purpose and process of education, and one's general frame of reference perceptions, and that teacher candidates should model these appropriate dispositions. Conderman and Walker demonstrated a rubric for acceptable and unacceptable dispositions for teachers where there are five different categories of acceptable disposition, including: caring, collaboration, creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning and scholarship, and diversity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN(S)**

This research was quantitative to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by their college supervisor and their cooperating teacher. The sampling size included all students in their student teaching placement during the 18-19 and 19-20 school year. The institution is a small regional college in southeastern Nebraska with a history as a teacher's college. This size was chosen as it includes all students that were student teaching in the program at that time. The goal was to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher.

### **DATA COLLECTION, PROCESSING, AND ANALYSIS**

The study data were collected from the disposition assessment instrument administered to the college supervisors and cooperating teachers for candidates enrolled in the teacher education preparation program in a small college in Southeast Nebraska. The institution is part of the Nebraska State College System and is the oldest teacher preparation college in Nebraska.

The data gathered from the college supervisor disposition assessment teacher disposition assessment were compared to data from the cooperating teacher disposition assessment at the end of their student teaching program. The data gathered were analyzed for statistical significance to determine if the candidates' disposition assessments differed from their college supervisor and their cooperating teacher. The results of those assessments were examined to determine if there was a significant difference between the two and if there was consistency between assessment evaluators in order to determine if this method was effective.

The research question asked if there was a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. The disposition assessment consists of 9 statements, all aligned with InTASC standards.

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

The population for this study included all of the teacher education candidates that completed their teacher education program at a small, public university system college in the Midwestern United States. One assumption for this study was that the need for assessing dispositions for this type of population would continue to be emphasized by the accrediting bodies, the institutions, and the public schools they serve. This emphasis on teacher education candidate dispositions has been increasing due to accreditation standards that require some evaluation process for dispositions (NCATE, 2008), and institutions the prepare teacher candidates were having to *show* how dispositions were being addresses and/or evaluated.

An assumption is that this study was objective, apart from the researcher, and the researcher was independent from what was being researched. The methodological assumption was that this was a deductive process focused on statistical data to guide the results to explain and predict the results. Another assumption was that the respondents were honest in their evaluations on the measurement scale being utilized. Another assumption was that the population was representative of teacher education candidates at other institutions of higher education that prepare teacher education candidates for the classroom.

### **RESULTS/FINDINGS**

The findings of this study revealed that for the four semesters that were analyzed, three semesters (Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020) showed no significant difference. However, one semester (Spring 2019) did show statistical difference between the college supervisor and cooperating teacher assessments. ANOVA for data resulted in a statistically significant findings at  $p < .05$ .

The results were expected because it is one of the goals of the institution to have a significant impact on their teacher candidate's dispositions. The findings reflect consistent assessment data for teacher education candidate's dispositions for three of the four semesters. This was encouraging as consistency is crucial for providing feedback to teacher education candidates regarding disposition assessments. These results can be utilized by leaders of other institutions who may be considering the option of implementing disposition assessments that result in consistent results from college supervisor to cooperating teachers, thus strengthening that connection between college preparations and real world expectations.

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