

“Sink or Swim”: How First Year Teachers Perceive Teacher Education Program Preparation

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Abstract

Adopting narrative inquiry, this article examines first year teachers' perspectives on their teacher preparation program. The study evaluates the teacher education curriculum for a childhood and early childhood program by analyzing graduates' responses to questions on initial teaching responsibilities and knowledge gaps in their preparation. A number themes and implications for teacher preparation are discussed: practicality, knowledge of cognitive development, literacy teaching skills, classroom management skills, budget and time management skills, awareness of expectations, mentoring systems, simulated experiences, and special education.

Theoretical Framework

There is widespread understanding of the need to evaluate teacher education programs. For example, the importance of conducting program evaluations has been addressed in past, as well as current, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards. There is a widespread expectation for teacher educators to provide evidence of effectiveness of regular, as well as innovative, programs. Additional impetus is present in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 with its mandate to school districts to place high quality teachers in every classroom.

Darling-Hammond, the National Council on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), and other proponents of increased professionalism for teachers and teacher educators assert that teacher education "matters most" in educational reform (Darling-Hammond, 2000b; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; NCTAF, 1996, 1997). NCTAF's (1996), emphasizes the importance of preparing and supporting excellent teachers nationally. NCTAF (1997) also underscores the strong relationship between strong teacher preparation and student success. In response to national reports, such as *The Nation at Risk*, which were critical of American public education, teacher education programs have been under pressure to reform how they educate prospective teachers (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Assessment of Teacher Education Program

In the 1980s, critics of teacher preparation programs began to question the traditional educational experience of pre-service teachers. According to *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986), one criticism was that teachers were leaving universities with insufficient education in their content areas. Others said pre-service teachers had too little "on the job" training. In response to national reports, such as *The Nation at Risk*, which were critical of American public education, teacher education programs have been under more pressure to reform how they educate prospective teachers (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Teacher educators were quick to realize that reforming even reinventing teacher

the largest number of teachers in the state and consistently ranks in the top ten in the nation in size for programs. The college has been playing a significant role in providing initial and professional preparation for state certification.

Participation

The interview data were drawn from alumni of the teacher education program who had graduated from Childhood and Early Childhood Education Program, and who are in the first year of teaching. The researchers recruited five qualified participants for the study, who were all first-year classroom teachers teaching first grade through sixth grades.

1) Graduated in 2004 with undergraduate degree, Joshua was a third grade teacher in an urban High-needs school in a New York city school district. In his class, 16 out of 24 students in his class have lived in shelters. 2) Lisa was hired as a technology teacher with responsibility of teaching from 5th grade to 8th grade in a rural middle school in New York State. She graduated with an Elementary education certification. She is teaching with about the size of 200 students. In her school setting, the average class size is 16-18 and it has had full inclusion model. She had substitute teaching experience in the same district for one year. She was at the last stage of her master program when hired. 3) Kim is a first grade in a small high- needs rural school. In New York State. She is teaching an average class size of 20 to 22 students. Her school setting is not an inclusion model. She had substitute teaching experience in the same district for one year. She completed her master degree in literacy. 4) Graduated in 2004, James was third grade teacher in a suburban school in New York state. His school was not in inclusion model. 5) Helen was hired as a third grade teacher in the state of Virginia. She graduated from a New York state university.

Data Collection

The potential participants were contacted by one of the authors, and identified for voluntary participation in this study. After receiving alumni's agreement of the participation, the primary investigator traveled to schools statewide to conduct on-site 50-60 minute videotaped interviews with each participant. The interview included these open-ended questions:

- 1) Now, after teaching for a year, what would you suggest as additions or changes to the Childhood and Early Childhood Education Program?
- 2) What do you see as beneficial experiences, assignments, or courses in the Childhood and Early Childhood Program which help prepare you to teach?

Data Analysis

Interview data were transcribed and analyzed to identify themes. The analyses used the interpretive-analytic method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Patterns, narrative threads, themes, and tensions either within or across an individual experiences and in the social settings that emerged from the data were narratively sorted to provide interpretive accounts of responses. In the process of data analysis, transcriptions of the interviews were read and re-read by three authors in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of the data. Transcriptions of interviews and literature on teacher education program and first year teaching experiences were also comparatively read together to look for themes in this study. Three researchers analyzed the data to gain multiple perspectives on the data set which allowed us for the development of rich interpretations.

Findings

The findings of this study explicated the repeated themes which fell into the two major research questions of this study: 1) What teacher education program was additionally needed to address teachers' needs for the practice 2) What teacher education program contribute to their preparation for the practice. Although a myriad nationally mandated and locally enhanced efforts

classroom life" (p. 143). According to Ganser (1997), "Being a beginning teacher is like being in water over your head. You are floating on a tiny piece of foam that crumbles away every day just a little bit" (p. 106).

According to Veenman (1984), the number one problem of entry-year teachers is maintaining classroom discipline. Brock and Grady (1997) attribute this difficulty, at least in part, to the first year teacher's lack of familiarity with the students' culture: "Novice teachers encounter students whose behaviors are foreign to them. Young themselves, the teachers have difficulty establishing an appropriate social distance" (p. 17).

A second category of literature concerning the problems of beginning teachers includes research that offers solutions to the problems of entry-year teachers. Perhaps the most widely utilized intervention is mentoring. Ponticell and Zepeda (1996) identified eight different ways in which mentors assist novice teachers within the confines of dialogue. Marso and Pigge (1990) concluded that most novice teachers found their mentoring experience helpful. They also found that elementary teachers found their principals as most helpful, whereas secondary teachers believed that other teacher colleagues were more helpful.

As research clearly documents, beginning teachers face a myriad of challenges including heavy teaching loads, multiple preparations, little collegial or administrative support, unfamiliarity with content, extracurricular duties, discipline and management issues, and disjuncture between expectations of teaching and the realities of the classroom (Bullough, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Rust, 1994). As Gold (1996) notes, "few experiences in life have such tremendous impact on the personal and professional life of a teacher as does the first year of teaching" (p. 561).

Purpose

Teacher preparation programs need ongoing assessment systems for program evaluation and candidate improvement. Recognizing this necessity, this study was designed to assess teacher education program not through the nationally mandated standards or measurements but through the perceptions of the first year teachers who studied in and graduated from the program. Although research in teacher education has increased steadily in the past 10 years, its primary focus has been on preservice teachers' learning while in their teacher education programs. Few studies have attempted to follow preservice teachers into their first years of teaching.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives about the program by investigating what the graduates who are in their first year of teaching perceive about their preparation in their teacher education program. Program assessment is currently conducted by evaluating core course assignments, and the experiences of the graduates in their first years of teaching have not been systematically explored. Specifically, we questioned first-year teachers' initial knowledge base for lesson planning, curriculum construction, instructional practices, and professional interactions. Our purpose was to provide first-year teachers a venue in which they could provide critical information about initial teaching responsibilities and knowledge gaps in their preparation. This consumer-based evaluation allows us to gain the evaluative information on the pragmatic needs of teacher candidates and the further improvement of current teacher education program. In addition, this information help not only construct the teacher education curriculum tailed to students' needs, but also cast light on the areas of weakness in teacher preparation program which were never drew attentions to the developers of teacher education programs. The process of analyzing informants' responses regarding teacher preparation offers a model for critiquing current course content and outcomes, stimulating innovative curriculum development, and revising assessment procedures and program reviews.

Methods

To capture "the positive source of insights" (Mitchell, 1981) embedded in novice teachers' experiences, we conducted a qualitative study employing narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The setting for this study is a comprehensive state college which prepares

anxiety level of executing the new and crude role as a teacher. As Lisa put it,

Just it seems like the application does not happen very often. On the literacy night and math night, I remember the interaction with students and parents, you know, trying to make learning fun. That's what everyone wants to do, and it was really pushed to try to do that.

Retrospective Concerns of What Teacher Education Program should Additionally Have Provided to Address Teachers' Needs for the Practice

A common theme in first-year teacher responses was the impracticality of college curriculum which resulted in under-preparedness for teaching. All participants were uncomfortable dealing with the instructional issues they initially faced in daily practice. Skills and knowledge learned in college courses did not provide first-year teachers with a repertoire of ideas to resolve the constantly changing issues they faced in their own classroom.

Organized Curriculum Around the Issues and Problems: Building Routines

Responses implied the curriculum must be organized around the problems and issues with which teachers coped, not along traditional disciplinary lines. For instance, the teachers were not able to rely on their knowledge from college to determine what they had to do for the first day of school. It seemed that the ability to write an effective lesson plans and theoretical knowledge of teaching and learning did not give these first year teachers answers for how to build the routines and how to plan out the first day of school or the last day of school.

Their frustration and uncertainty was clustered around the fact how to build the routine of the daily school day. The simple tasks of how to get them in a line to enter the hall way, and to get up to get a drink of water was greater challenges than constructing lesson plans. They believed that student teaching failed to address these critical tasks for a beginning teacher. As James put it,

James: What is appropriate to do this and do that? Sharpening pencils, getting up to get a drink of water. Just building those routines. There is no college class to prepare me for that. Just because the time I did student teaching, they didn't even address that. There are the trash courses.

The Components of Teaching That Student Teaching Fail to Address

While first year teachers appreciated that student teaching provided the field experiences in school settings, they also claimed that student teaching should have addressed their needs in a more structured way in real life settings. Their responses indicated that student teaching did not address some important components of teaching skills, and offered limited opportunities to apprentice with exemplary practitioners and supportive mentors, which left them unprepared for the ambiguities in the complex teaching process. The ideal structure the first year teachers envisioned for student teaching was a chronicle of exposure to every events of teaching which occurred throughout the year. The chronicle events of school which would benefit their teaching practice includes the faculty meetings for the curriculum planning and administrative planning before the school start, the first day of school, the last day of school, parent-teacher conference day, and the like. Therefore, the first year teachers' suggestions were made to schedule student teaching in at least three different sections of the year rather than one point time of the year which limit for

to improve the teacher education program have been made with rigor, the results found that first year teachers were continuously struggling the major challenging areas that literature of teacher education have repeatedly presented. Accumulating the feelings of frustration, uncertainty, confusion, the first year teachers have faced a great deal of challenges including heavy teaching loads, multiple preparations, little collegial or administrative support, unfamiliarity with content, extracurricular duties, discipline and management issues, and disjuncture between expectations of teaching and the realities of the classroom (Bullough, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Rust, 1994). As we categorized of themes in relation to the merits and deficiency of our curriculum, graduates' responses indicate the teacher preparation curriculum failed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical issues in the elementary classroom. The more detailed themes of what curriculum of teacher education program needed to adopt to prepare teachers to cope with these challenges were revealed in the findings.

At the same time, the findings of this study revealed in part the positive contribution of the current teacher education program to the first year teachers' practice. Their appreciation of teacher education program they received have gone to the field-based experience which provided them with more closer format to the reality of teaching. It is, however, important to notice that field experiences they had was not enough to handle "reality shock" (Veenman, 1984) in teaching.

Retrospective Appreciation of What Teacher Education Program Contribute to Their Preparation for the Practice

State-of-the-Art: Field Experiences

All of participants mentioned they built their readiness of being a teacher through their TMB (Thematic Method Block) courses which was designed to implement interdisciplinary and field-based teacher preparation. They appreciated that they had ample opportunities to implement lessons with real kids in the classrooms and observing that teachers model effective strategies. The fact that they had prior experience of implementing their own lesson plans strengthened their self-efficacy in teaching. As Kim put it,

I felt like I was ready to come up with ton of ideas. I had done a lot especially with my thematic block. Crossing curriculum with tons of ideas. For example, teaching life cycle across the curriculum. I had a lot of experience with that because in my thematic block, we were connected, teachers were together, brought together by portfolio. I feel like I was prepared for that. I feel like I do that naturally now.

In addition, they gained in a great deal about teaching while working together with peers which allowed them to learn how to collaboratively develop curriculum and instruction, and to engage in peer review of each other's practice throughout the thematic block courses. In addition, this field experience took place under the direction and supervision of the professors, which provided them direct feedbacks from the professors. It seemed that thematic block course provided a safe environment with consulting and feedbacks from the comfortable professionals such as professors.

They appreciated "Math and Literacy Night" which offered them to have a chance to work with students, interact with parents and teachers. The Math and Literacy Night was another form of field experiences to connect their theoretical knowledge into the real life practice. It seemed that every opportunity that allowed them interacted with real people was appreciated in their narratives. It is not that they learned a great deal of teaching at Math and Literacy Night, but that they immersed themselves in a real setting and experienced how it would be like applying what they have learned and interacting students, teachers, and parents. It seemed that the prior experiences that put them in as similar contexts as they faced in their profession reduced the

preparation programs would be essential to addressing these criticisms and returning public confidence in the teaching profession (Goodlad, 1994). Professional organizations, such as the Holmes Group and John Goodlads National Network of Educational Renewal (NNER) proposed substantive changes in preservice teacher education programs. These organizations recommended a number of changes that teacher education programs needed to adopt, such as developing collaborative relationships with public schools, providing extensive experiences for preservice teachers in school settings, and creating a closer link between theories of teaching and the practice of teaching (Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Fullan, 1992, 1993; Goodlad, 1988). Although these studies provide insights about the effectiveness of teacher education, they tend to focus more on entire programs than on particular formats or methods of instruction in preservice methods courses. Follow-up studies that explore the effectiveness of program and course pedagogy, however, can lead to insights about preservice methods or instructional techniques that have staying power and lead to effective teaching in classrooms.

Burke suggests that "... [To be] effective as teachers ... candidates learn to use information about the learning-teaching context and student individual differences to determine and assess learning goals, assess student learning, and modify instruction to facilitate learning for all students" (p.181). Some of these studies suggest that learning in teacher education courses does not always transfer to classroom teaching that a tendency exists for formal learning to be washed out by experiences in the field (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982). Further, teachers do not always perceive their teacher education programs as having been helpful, nor do they rank their field experiences as the most useful component of their preparation (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Kennedy, 1996).

As Darling-Hammond (2001) expresses, "The capacities teachers need to succeed at teaching much more challenging content to a much more diverse group of learners can only be widely acquired throughout the teacher force by greater investments in teacher preparation and development" (p. 751). When such changes are made, it then becomes necessary to assess the effectiveness of our improved teacher education programs and whether they are meeting the needs of the preservice teachers.

Although the importance of teacher education and teacher preparation has been embraced by some educational writers, teacher education is increasingly under criticism, and the level of preparation for teaching has been questioned most pointedly by school administrators. Novice teachers may not be prepared with sufficient practical knowledge and skills required to perform effectively in their new roles (Tom, 1997). Issues of teacher preparation are more likely debated in relation to the validity of teacher education programs. Four common criticisms of educational coursework have related to inspidness (Koerner, 1963; Leslie and Lewis, 1990; Lyons, 1980), irrelevance (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Hermanoviez, 1966; Kagan, 1992), fragmentation (Tom, 1997), and directionlessness (Floden & Clark, 1988; Kagan, 1990).

Ways to determine the excellence of teacher education programs have been confined to performance assessment data collected internally by the teacher education unit and external data such as results on state licensing tests and data prepared for national and/or state review (NCATE, 1999, pp. 7-9). Assessment through graduates' perspectives as they reflect on the effectiveness of the teacher education curriculum has been missing from the literature on curriculum assessment.

First Year Teachers

Studies designed to identify problems and issues facing beginning teachers have been conducted for more than half a century. The findings of these studies indicate that the issues and problems faced by first-year teachers are perennial. Brock and Grady (1997) concluded, "Teaching is one of the few careers in which the least experienced members face the greatest challenges and most responsibilities(p. 11).

Equipped with "book" knowledge of subject matter, a few practiced teaching strategies, and limited planning skills, novice teachers experience an odyssey of emotions which run the gamut-exhilaration, frustration, uncertainty, confusion, and isolation. Veenman (1984) referred to this phenomenon as reality shock. In general this concept is used to indicate the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teaching training by the harsh and rude reality of everyday

them to build the entire picture of what different aspects are occurring throughout a year.

In their suggestions provided, their ideal picture of the learning environment for preservice teachers is a systematically structured place where they have a consistent opportunities to apply what they are learning, and analyze what happens with help of educational consultants such as cooperating teachers, professors, and exemplary teachers. In doing so, they have a chance to adjust their efforts of professional developments based on the inputs of educational experts.

The Importance of Perceiving Expectations of Being a Teacher

The first year teachers made a point that they should have exposed the field experience earlier in the program in that they could have formed the feeling of urgency to learn based on what are the expectations for a teacher and what they needed to learn. Their lack of information on necessary needs for teachers resulted in the passive involvement in the course activities. After their graduation, they had regretful minds of missing opportunities from which they could have benefited more during college years. The most of first year teachers confessed that they believed "those professors did not know what they were talking about." They commented that without realization of the importance of contents, there would be no engagement in the student part regardless of instructors' repeated emphasis. Learning expectation of being a teacher and have a exposure to see what are things teachers actually need would help take their college experience as a serious career of preparing the teaching profession, and engage in the classroom with ownership of the course works. To learn what they needed to learn, they wished they would have had field experiences earlier in their teacher education program to open their eyes for what is more important to pay attention.

The importance of Literacy Knowledge and Teaching Skills

Lack of literacy knowledge and teaching skills, especially for the lower grade teachers, was a critical shortcoming of the teacher preparation program. Building a library with a series of books was a most challenging task, choosing children's books appropriate to the children's literacy level, and in becoming acquainted with a variety of children's books genres. The more pragmatic and children's development based knowledge on how children read and write was a critical component the first year teachers pointed out. One teacher referred to his learning experience in literacy class as "scratching the surface."

Inside their practice of being an elementary teacher, the familiarity of children's books was an indispensable domain for teaching. When they introduced books to students, the knowledge of children's books appeared as absent in their preparation. Introducing children's books took place through the process of their guessing instead of that of employing competent knowledge from the solid preparation. James, as an elementary teacher who needed the children's literature in a great deal, recollected that the course Literacy 371 was the first time he was exposed to children's books ever since he was a kid. In his perspective in his preparation, more exposure to children's book would benefit him who has not had any children of his own and little experiences in children's books.

Knowledge and Skills for Students with Special Disability

One teacher experienced perplexing moments when a special-needs student started throwing things at those in the classroom. She often wished that she knew how to neutralize the classroom situation and not let the learning disruption create chaos. She saw the reasons for studying special needs learners as a requirement in the teacher education program. The first year teachers suggested that they would like more preparation to address the unique requirements of special needs children, in particular special education children with mild disabilities of the type they are likely to see in their classrooms. As Kim claimed,

I wish I took more special education courses because I have a student now who has learning disability and I had other student who has behavioral disability. I wish I had

more knowledge of ADHD, sensory disability. I have to teach myself. We did have an introductory course that covered some of those autism, some ADHD you might see in the classroom, but it is certainly not enough, but kids do not stick to the standard ADHD, autism. I did think it was good overview, but it wasn't enough.

The Long-Term Planning

The first year teachers would like preparation for the long-term planning as opposed to the one class lesson or short term unit plans which were widespread in the duration of their teaching preparation. They would like to have prior experiences to build a mind map of planning for the whole year in terms of time, materials, resources (money and library) and interaction with parents.

James: First of all being in a first year teacher, not knowing curriculum, not have an experience and expectation of having a whole year. That was big challenge. Just plan a year. Being in one year student teaching, I was only required for a plan for one week. Or plan for the day. Now I am expected not only plan for the year but also plan for whole unit. Regularly. Also maintain multiple units. Not being able to see scope and sequence and direction of what I am teaching about. If I am given a plan unit, that unit might be seven weeks long something. That might be too long. Four weeks definitely that was much longer than that I have to go in student teaching.

Classroom Management Skills

A fundamental assumption of teacher education is that each teacher can pursue her own ways of managing the classroom. New teachers in this study experienced worlds of confusion and failed experience rather than simply choice. First year teachers realized that classroom management is a large component teaching and that they did not gain enough knowledge and skills to cope with constantly changing and various classroom management issues while implementing the content curriculum. Nearly all said they would have liked more preparation for classroom management, particularly how to address behavior problems. Several suggested having a course that addresses those concerns before their fifth year to allow them to begin considering management strategies. Respondents indicated classroom management textbooks used terminology called "second curriculum, or social curriculum," but not how to respond to the manifestations of that concept.

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Students

The first year teachers consented that meeting the diverse students' needs with a structured lesson plan was extremely challenging. The diversity appeared as one of major challenging factors since it was located every aspect of teaching. Students' needs were diverse in reading level, math level, development level, learning style, and socio-economic level. They learned and remembered they had to differentiate the lessons, but they were not equipped with the knowledge of application of "how." The differentiated instruction they learned the program remained as remarkable idea per se without enabling them to connect to any applications. As James claimed,

Also another thing that was really difficult for me and challenging for me which also go with that differentiated instruction part. Yes, understanding differentiated instruction sounds like great idea. How to apply that? What is application of that? I understand learning center and everything but managing learning center is an incredible task.

Children's diverse needs became an important element of novice teachers' concerns. Not only low performers but also high performers were challenging for the first year teachers to

provide their needs accordingly. The first year teachers had to deal with all different ranges of students from who were not able to stay in one position for the short period to students who they did not have anything to teach because they already knew everything. As Lisa put it,

Some of them are like speed razor with their work. They are done. They're ready to do centers. Sometimes that works against me because some of kids are done forty five minutes before the block is done. It is hard to keep those kids challenged. I never thought the smart kids are such a challenge. But it's like both ends of spectrum. High kids are hard because you always have to challenge them. The low end kids are hard because I was trying to get them understand it. I have a wide range of abilities in my class. I think that is biggest thing about the first grade.

The first year teachers felt less confident when it came to dealing with students who required different approaches and additional supports when they were to learn successfully. They felt they were not well prepared for the various complexity of problems for teachings. They needed to see models and examples which guided them to better understanding and enactment.

Cognitive Development Knowledge

Empirical, pedagogical approaches should be taught in parallel with descriptions of children's cognitive development across the disciplines. First-year teachers were unable to build their curriculum in association with student development. "What do I have to do first?" was a question indicating a lack of understanding of appropriate sequential learning appropriate to students' developmental level. They felt lacked to discern what is important and how to teach them in teaching procedures since they felt that they did not acquired enough the skills and knowledge to match students' needs and developmentally appropriate materials and resources available in teaching.

Time and Budget Management Skills

First-year teachers stated that meeting the demands of classroom management, reflection, district, colleague and administration needs, as well as their own their personal lives called for more organization skills. Most teachers also mentioned budgetary issues as troubling aspects of their teaching. Some had to relinquish creative ideas for instructional activities due to budgetary constraints. There was no support from schools for purchasing books and instructional materials. Novice teachers regretted their lack of perspective or experiences to train them for such a challenge.

Supportive Mentoring Systems in Student Teaching

Supportive mentoring arrangements should be readily available before, during, and after student teaching. One first-year teacher felt overwhelmed when the school administration expected that she was ready to teach, and when simply the first grade curriculum standards were thrown to them. She turned to an experienced colleague in the same building for suggestions, although it was not a formal mentoring situation. One male teacher continuously contacted his former college instructor for help for several months. One teacher suggested that college faculty should facilitate access to resources during college years that could be used by novice teachers.

Skills for Professional Interaction

For first year teacher, it took a substantial part of their life in teaching profession that they built relationship with colleagues, administrators, mentors, and parents. Social interaction skills played a key role to make their life in a smooth transition as a teacher, colleague, and employee. In addition to responding to many students' diverse needs, they had to work hard to achieve the positive approval of

administrators, fulfill the expectations from colleagues and parents in a school where they worked in the non-linear social relations environment. They often felt that they scrutinized under the microscope at the every moment and in their every movement in the classroom. The judgment was made on what they did or what they did not do. Finding a trustful relationship with experienced, supportive colleagues often formed as the informal mentoring relationship. The informal relationship with colleagues seemed to supplement their shortcoming of apprenticeship with model teachers. Most of first year teachers closely work with and rely on one or two teachers in the building. The skills they needed to acquire to have better interaction and relationship with parents have also emerged as the necessary domain of preparation for linking home and school connection to assist the teachers' educational efforts on the particular students. They learned that they had responsibility for students together with their parents so students' behavioral problems could be approached with the three-way phone call among a teacher, students, and parents to intervene students' disciplinary problems.

Simulated Experiences

Teachers said they needed more simulated experiences to reduce their apprehensions when they were assigned certain tasks. One teacher wished he could take a class called "What would you do after you receive a classroom key for the first time?" A class which presented the challenging situations teachers would undergo during their first school year, that class would be helpful to ease into the responsibilities of teaching in ones own classroom. One suggested the instructor should throw the State Standard-Based Curriculum documentation in front of him as his principal had, and let him write a long-term lesson plan for the whole school year according to the State standard-based curriculum.

Conclusion

Ownership of the Course Work

Teachers admitted that they finally could identify the importance of certain courses and activities after they became involved in teaching. They had not seen the immediate connection between contents of those courses and their job performance while they were in college. Without specific focus, grades for the degree were their only reasons to take teacher education courses. They wished that before they had taken courses, they had more realistic teaching experiences to give them a perspective for studying theory in education.

Preservice teachers who can take ownership of their course work, may make it more probable to resolve ambiguities and perplexities of the classroom. Preservice teacher ownership of coursework can be promoted by awareness of the requirements of teaching jobs and by having a sense the realities of the classroom. Promoting practical awareness is as critical to teaching preservice teachers as facilitating textbooks and demonstrating teaching methods.

Opportunity and Practicability

It is difficult for a single teacher education curriculum to comprehensively cover the complex process of becoming a teacher. Teacher education program cannot impart a body of knowledge that encompasses every dimensions of teachers need to know, but it must provide a foundation for ongoing learning and problem solving skills for teacher candidates. Two key features distinguish a teacher education program promoting practicality in teacher preparation: (1)Providing ample opportunities for actual teaching experience in the classroom, and (2)Provide forums for student teachers to discuss key aspects of teaching with teachers and teacher educators. To this end, the planners of teacher education program ought to made efforts to create the concrete application, analyze and address the problems of practice in the curriculum.

Given the circumstance that teacher preparation time is too short to cover everything teachers need to know, teacher preparation program should be well designed to help preservice teachers learn from

their own practice and learn how to learn from the experiences and insights of others. To be practical, courses should be also designed to facilitate close partnerships with schools and teachers. Through these partnerships, preservice teachers can be involved with teachers and P-12 students, and find opportunities to discuss issues and problems they face as they become responsible for school learning experiences.

The Educational Importance of the Study

The importance of evaluating and reviewing the curriculum from the perspectives of graduates lies in introducing an innovative way to review our objectives and designs for teacher education curriculum. The different perspectives of graduates offers us more specific, empirical suggestions for curriculum reform than other evaluative data, such as performance assessment data collected internally and external data including results on state licensing tests and other assessments, which NCATE (1999, pp. 7-9) documents. This paper seeks a conceptual framework which may establish a model for gathering and analyzing data on novice teacher experiences and perceptions related to program preparation and curriculum improvement.

Implication

Faculty in Childhood/ Early Childhood program should implement changes in their degree program based upon the input of recent graduates:

1. A second classroom management course with a field-based component can be added to the current curriculum.
2. Elementary candidates have to choose more than six hours of coursework in Literacy Method course to gain better understanding of children's literature with proper developmental knowledge of literacy teaching approach.
3. The components of building social and management skills in relation to teaching tasks should be addressed in some courses.
4. The long-term planning with State Standard-Based Curriculum should be included in the course contents in teacher education program.
5. Special education courses should be more than the introductory course to prepare teacher candidates for the application.
6. More field based experiences accompanied with coaching personnel should be provided in a structured way to develop and adjust students' teaching approaches.
7. The field experience should be considered in the early stage of curriculum to inform what are the expectations of being a teacher, and develop the ownership of the coursework.

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