Research Poster

Progression of Time Spent Observing, Preparing, and Teaching Throughout the Student Teaching Experience

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Introduction

Student teaching is the capstone experience in teacher preparation programs; it provides an opportunity for experiential learning in which student teachers take on the roles of a full time teacher (Krysher, Robinson, Montgomery, & Edwards, 2012). Paulsen, Smalley, and Retallick (2016) stated that there are many critical factors to the student teaching experience. Among these, university supervisors ranked planning for instruction and teaching as the most important activities. Cooperating teachers reported both teaching and planning for instruction to be among the most important factors of student teaching (Smalley, Retallick, & Paulsen, 2015a). It was also reported from the perspective of student teachers that planning for instruction was one of the most important activities in their student teaching experience (Smalley, et al., 2015b). Torres and Ulmer (2007) found that student teachers spent a combined majority of their time planning for instruction and teaching while they only spent a small amount of time observing other teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine the progression of time spent observing teachers, preparing for instruction, and teaching throughout the student teaching experience.

Conceptual Framework

There should be a logical progression of expectations through the student teaching experience. Wentz (2001) outlined three phases of student teaching: 1) orientation and observation, 2) assisting, and 3) assuming responsibility in the total school program. Wentz (2001) stated that student teachers should observe their cooperating teacher for at least the first week of their experience, then move onto assisting students individually or in small-groups. Once student teachers have progressed through the first two stages, they should increase their workload throughout the experience until they assume the full role of the teacher (Wentz, 2001).

It is important to determine how student teachers are allocating their time during the student teaching experience (Torres & Ulmer, 2007). Torres and Ulmer (2007) found that student teachers initially spent a majority of their time observing other teachers, but that amount of time rapidly decreased through the conclusion of the student teaching experience. While it was stated that there should be a consistent rate of planning for instruction through the experience, it was reported that time spent planning started out high and decreased through the end of student teaching (Torres & Ulmer, 2007). Finally, as time spent observing decreased, the amount of hours spent teaching increased with the exception of the final weeks of the student teaching experience when the hours spent teaching decreased (Torres & Ulmer, 2007).

Methods

The population of this study was made up of the student teachers from the cohort at Texas Tech University ($N = 15$). Student teachers were required to submit reports to their university supervisors for each week of their student teaching experience. Using a document based off of Torres and Ulmer (2007), student teachers reported the number of hours they spent each week in thirteen different categories. For the purpose of this study, researchers chose to focus on the following three categories: 1) Observing Cooperating Teacher, 2) Preparation for Instruction, and 3) Classroom and Laboratory Teaching. The reported data from the 15-week student teaching experience was collapsed into five, 3-week time intervals and compiled into an

Excel spreadsheet. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each time interval using functions in Excel.

Results/Findings

This study sought to determine the progression of time spent observing teachers, preparing for instruction, and teaching throughout the student teaching experience. Table 1 displays the averages in the three categories for each three-week interval of the student teaching experience. Time spent observing was highest in the first interval (M = 28.70, SD = 20.91) then decreased through the second (M = 17.57, SD = 12.25) and third (M = 12.60, SD = 10.63) intervals before increasing through the end of the student teaching experience.

There was an increase in the time spent preparing for instruction from the first interval (M = 11.10, SD = 7.92) to the second (M = 11.50, SD = 10.08) before a drop in the third interval (M = 9.60, SD = 6.90) and a peak in the fourth (M = 15.10, SD = 10.90). Finally, time spent preparing for instruction decreased in the fifth interval (M = 13.00, SD = 11.30).

The time student teachers spent teaching started out with the lowest number of hours in the first interval (M = 19.10, SD = 13.92) and increased in the second interval (M = 38.00, SD = 29.32). There was a decrease of hours spent teaching in the third interval (M = 24.30, SD = 17.02) before increasing through the remainder of the student teaching experience.

Table 1

Time Spent Observing, Preparing, and Teaching by Preservice Teachers (N = 15)

	Observing		Preparing		Teaching	
Interval	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1	28.70	20.91	11.10	7.92	19.10	13.92
2	17.57	12.25	11.50	10.08	38.00	29.32
3	12.60	10.63	9.60	6.90	24.30	17.02
4	12.77	14.63	15.10	10.90	32.40	22.30
5	15.47	14.73	13.00	11.30	40.30	19.44

Conclusions/Recommendation

The distribution of time spent observing by student teachers at Texas Tech University started out high then decreased through the conclusion of the student teaching experience until the slight increase through the final weeks of student teaching. This is consistent with the results of Torres and Ulmer (2007) with the exception of the increase in the final interval. Additionally, this cohort was consistent in the amount of time they spent planning for instruction as Torres and Ulmer (2007) suggested should happen.

Wentz (2001) outlined three phases of student teaching: 1) orientation and observation, 2) assisting, and 3) assuming responsibility in the total school program. The student teachers in this cohort followed these phases in the teaching aspect with the exception of the drop in hours spent teaching in the third time interval. This drop in hours spent teaching is potentially due to the timing of Career Development Events and livestock shows in Texas. It is recommended that the individuals involved in planning for the student teaching experience determine guidelines to ensure student teachers are receiving the practice they need during that time of year. Torres and Ulmer (2007) stated, there is a need for a “phase-out” period of student teaching. As student teachers reported spending the most time teaching in the final weeks of their experience, it is recommended that a plan for phasing out of the role of the teacher be outlined as an expectation.

References

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