Research Poster

Range in Allocation of Time of Preservice Teachers During Their Field Experience

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Introduction

Student teaching is an impactful and culminating experience for preservice teachers that serves as the final component of teacher education programs (Edgar, Roberts, & Murphy, 2009). A significant time commitment is required to fulfill the many job responsibilities of agriculture teachers (Krysher, Robinson, & Edwards, 2015). The field experience portion of a preservice teacher's education provides them with a real-word understanding of the substantial time commitment associated with being an agriculture teacher. The relationship between the cooperating teacher, student teacher, and cooperating school are highly influential on the experience of preservice teachers (Shoulders, Edgar, & Bolton, 2016, Kasperbauer & Roberts, 2007). Cooperating teachers should be prepared to give student teachers opportunities that reflect a real-world experience (Jones, Kelsey, & Brown, 2014)

The purpose of this study was to describe the differences in time allotment to preservice teacher activities during the student teaching internship among members of a student teaching cohort. These activities included learning as a student, FFA advising, classroom instruction, administrative responsibilities, and adult education.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's work on self-efficacy provides theoretical basis for this study. Over the course of the development of his theory, he identified four sources that contribute to a heightened sense of self efficacy: mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and physiological and emotional state (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). According to Wolf (2011), it is essential that agricultural science teachers are competent in all areas in which they are asked to perform. Student teachers that spent more time in the classroom teaching identified themselves as "self-assured" teachers (Krysher, Robinson, & Edwards, 2015). Student teachers' perceptions of their field experience are positively linked to their sense of self-efficacy (Knobloch, 2006).

Methods

Fifteen students in the student teaching cohort at Texas Tech University submitted weekly reflections and reports that summarized time allocation. Students were provided a Microsoft Word template at the beginning of their student teaching experience based largely off of Torres and Ulmer's (2007) study on the time distribution of pre-service teachers. For each of the 15 weeks spent student teaching, the cohort utilized this template to report the number of hours spent in 13 areas to their university supervisor. In order to create a more comprehensive look at the differences of time allocation amongst preservice teachers, the researchers grouped each of the 13 reported areas into five encompassing categories of the student teaching experience: 1) Learning as a Student, 2) Serving as a Secondary Agriculture Instructor, 3) Administrative Duties, 4) FFA Advisor Duties, and 5) Adult Education. The students' self-reported hours were entered into a Microsoft Excel data sheet. Totals were calculated for hours spent in each of the 13 areas and the cumulative hours for each of the five general categories. Minimum and maximum scores were determined and ranges were calculated for the encompassing categories. Additionally, mean and standard deviation were calculated by utilizing the functions included in Microsoft Excel software. Processes discussed by Field (2014) were used to confirm scores.

Results

This study sought to describe the range in time allocation amongst preservice teachers in various areas of the student teaching experience. Student teachers dedicated most of their time to FFA advisor responsibilities. The time spent in this category ranged significantly, with a minimum of 92.5 hours invested to a maximum of 658.0 hours over the 15 week experience (*M* = 281.7, *SD* = 165.6). Activities associated with being a secondary agricultural science teacher were the second largest use of the student teacher's time (*M* = 271.1, *SD* = 126.2). There was a 431.5 hour difference between the highest and lowest number of hours invested in classroom instruction. On average, the cohort spent 130.5 hours (*SD* = 80.8) learning by observing and conferencing with their cooperating teachers. Preservice teachers spent the least amount of time participating in administrative duties (*M* = 21.7, *SD* = 39.1) and adult education (*M* = 8.8, *SD* = 17.9).

Table 1
Time Allocation of Preservice Teachers in General Categories (N = 15)

Activity	Minimum	Maximum	Range	*M*	*SD*
FFA Advisor Duties	92.5	658.0	565.5	281.7	165.6
Secondary Instructor	111.5	543.0	431.5	271.1	126.2
Learning as a Student	33.5	325.0	291.5	130.5	80.8
Administrative Duties	1.0	161.5	160.5	21.7	39.1
Adult Education	0.0	70.0	70.0	8.8	17.9

Conclusions and Recommendations

Individual student teachers are having significantly different field experiences in all aspects of agricultural education. While no two preservice teachers will have identical student teaching experiences, it is vital to ensure that student teachers are confident and qualified in all areas before they are certified. Krysher et al. (2015), found that students who identified themselves as "self-assured" spent more time teaching in the classroom setting. The inequity of hours dedicated to the aforementioned activities could result in a cohort of preservice teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy and confidence.

It is recommended that more thorough and detailed guidelines are established by teacher preparation programs regarding time commitment and allotment expectations. Prior to the beginning of the field experience, these expectations should be clearly communicated to the members of student teaching cohort. Additionally, a clear line of communication needs to be established with cooperating centers to help assure that student teachers are getting a well-rounded, complete experience and spending a sufficient number of hours completing the diverse job responsibilities of an agricultural science teacher. It is recommended that cooperating teachers are invited to a professional development training hosted by the university prior to the beginning of the field experience. This training should outline expectations for both the student teacher and cooperating center. During the student teacher placement process, teacher preparation programs should ensure that selected cooperating teachers will provide opportunities in all aspects of the agricultural education program. It is imperative that cooperating teachers are willing and prepared to involve their student teacher and allow them to be active program participants (Jones et al., 2014).

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