

**Concerns of Pre-Service Teachers Regarding Student Teaching**

Kisia J. Weeks  
Graduate Assistant  
School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education  
Utah State University  
2300 Old Main  
Logan, UT 84341  
[kisia.weeks@aggiemail.usu.edu](mailto:kisia.weeks@aggiemail.usu.edu)

Dr. Rebecca G. Lawver  
Associate Professor  
School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education  
Utah State University  
2300 Old Main  
Logan, UT 84341  
[rebecca.lawver@usu.edu](mailto:rebecca.lawver@usu.edu)

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### **Introduction/Need for Research**

Despite school-based agricultural education (SBAE) being similar to other disciplines in terms of student teacher requirements and overall structure of the semester long practicum experience, SBAE is unique (Sorensen, Lawver, Hopkins, Jensen, Dutton, & Warnick, 2018). However, in SBAE student teachers are not only expected to excel in the classroom and laboratory, but also expected to manage an active Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program, advise an active FFA chapter, as well as foster community and school relationships (Torres, Ulmer, & Aschenbrener, 2008). The student teaching experience can harbor many intense feelings of emotion, doubt, fear, exploration of self, and pedagogical growth (Caries, Almeda, Viera, 2012). This study sought to determine pre-service teachers concerns regarding student teaching in order to combat these intense feelings and better prepare them for the student teaching practicum.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of teacher concerns (Fuller & Brown, 1975) serves as a theoretical viewpoint for the concerns of pre-service teachers regarding student teaching. Fuller and Brown (1975) theorized that pre-service teachers develop concerns in three areas: self, task, and impact. While there are the three stages of concern, Fuller and Brown (1975) indicate pre-service teachers typically experience concerns within the self and task stages. Self-concerns relate to the pre-service teachers' ability to perform, need for acceptance, experience within the classroom, and required evaluations. After the self-concerns are worked through, pre-service teachers begin to develop task-related concerns. Task concerns are focused on the typical day to day activities of a teacher such as lesson planning, teaching methods, materials, and classroom management. The third stage in student teacher concerns is the concern for the impact a teacher is having on his/her students. They begin to develop concerns larger than themselves and the tasks required of them; they become concerned with the way their teaching impacts their students.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to describe the concerns of pre-service teachers at Utah State University regarding student teaching. The population for this study consisted of seventeen pre-service SBAE teachers at Utah State University who were enrolled in agriculture teaching methods during the fall semester of 2018. This course is taught the semester prior to student teaching. Each student was given an unlimited number of sticky notes and asked to answer the following question: "What stresses you out about student teaching?" This method solicited open-ended comments allowing students to give as many or as little concerns they saw fit. Students were asked to answer this question twice, the first time serving as a pre-test at the beginning of the semester and the second time serving as a post-test near the end of the semester. This qualitative analysis was conducted to obtain information about pre-service teacher concerns the semester before they began their student teaching practicum.

### **Results/Findings**

The students enrolled in agriculture teaching methods indicated a variety of concerns ranging from lesson plans, content knowledge, classroom management, the rigidity of the school system, anxiety, and a fear of the unknown. These concerns were themed based on the theory of teacher concerns (Fuller & Brown, 1975) and broken into three sections: self-concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the respondents' concerns

regarding student teaching. An example of student concerns include “I am concerned about lesson planning” or “I am concerned that I am not going to reach my students.” Overall the majority of concerns were in the second stage, the task stage (Fuller & Brown, 1975) of concerns. Between the pre-test and post-test students were taught a variety of subjects, had the opportunity to observe and teach multiple lessons in the classroom they would be student teaching in, and familiarize themselves with their cooperating teacher, the school district, and their future students.

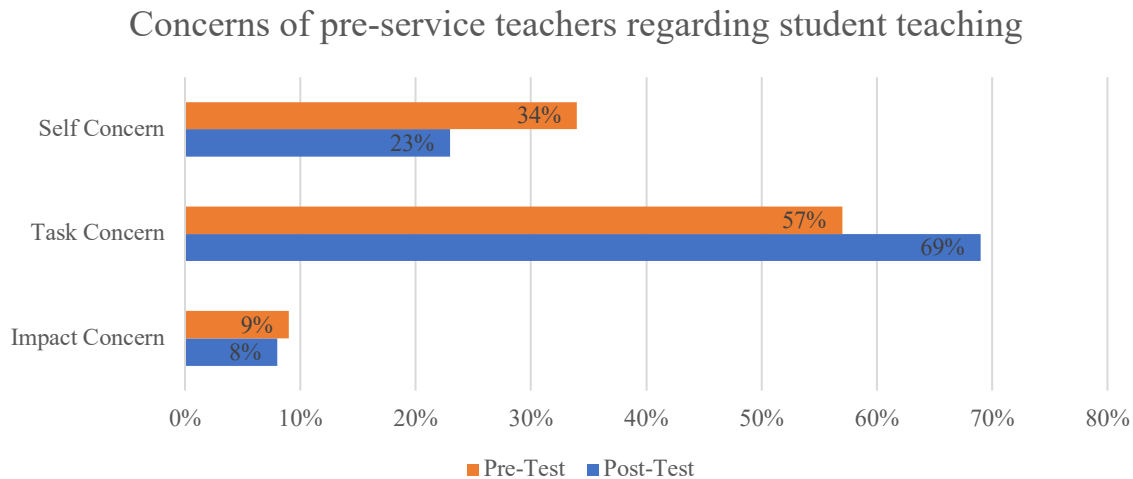


Figure 1. Pre-service teacher concerns regarding student teaching.

### Conclusions

The theory of teacher concerns (Fuller & Brown, 1975) indicated teachers would move through the three stages of concern as they progressed in their teaching ability and experience, with the understanding that pre-service teachers primarily stay within the self and task concern stages. It is clear that students involved in this study showed evidence of transitioning from self-concerns to task concerns. While the findings suggest the students started the semester with a significant amount of both self and task concerns, as the semester progressed the self-concerns dwindled as the percentage of task concerns increased. Although this research was conducted on a small scale and with one question, it is helpful to determine the concerns pre-service teachers have in order to adjust the content of the course, provide advice during student teaching and to combat those anxieties in advance to ensure students are prepared for the student teaching practicum.

### Implications/Recommendations/Impact on Profession

Additional research should be conducted to compare the concerns of pre-service teachers before and after completion of their student teaching practicum and during the first year teacher to determine when the impact concern begins to increase. This research may have a profound impact on the profession in our work to continue to prepare qualified and capable school-based agricultural education teachers. Additionally, this research can allow certifying institutions a look at the concerns pre-service teachers experience with the intent to address these concerns throughout the pre-service teacher certification program.

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