

Beyond Pedagogy: Disposition Meetings as a Tool for Preservice Teacher Growth

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

The goal of all teacher preparation programs is to provide preservice teachers with the proper pedagogy and content knowledge necessary to enter the classroom. Kasperbauer and Roberts (2007) suggested that student teaching is a crucial component of teacher preparation programs, as it provides a constructive experience that shapes the preservice teacher's views on the future of agricultural education. Previous research has connected agriculture teacher preparation with human capital theory to stress the importance of developing future educators' skills and knowledge base (Eck et al., 2021), while highlighting the common traits essential for employability (Knight & Yorke, 2003; Robinson & Baker, 2013).

Quality SBAE teachers are not only expected to teach, advise FFA chapters, and supervise SAEs, but also display dispositions of trustworthiness, respect, and empathy (Talbert, 2014; Eck et al., 2019). Dispositions, also known as personal qualities, include attitudes, interests, beliefs, and values. Previous researchers suggested that educators' attitudes, beliefs, and values about their profession can influence students' classroom development (Combs, 1974, as cited in Taylor & Wasickso, 2000). The greatest challenge for SBAE teacher preparation programs is finding a valid and reliable list of dispositions within the limited resources available. Therefore, further research is needed to provide SBAE teacher preparation programs with an instrument to evaluate and implement their student teachers' dispositions. Valid and reliable instrument testing of dispositions will enable university faculty to provide feedback on the areas of personal growth needed for preservice teachers (Eck et al., 2024). Prior research has established a correlation between teaching dispositions and successful teaching careers (Edwards & Edick, 2006); therefore, more research is needed to demonstrate the outcomes of evaluating dispositions for teacher preparation programs.

How It Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

Oklahoma State University stresses the importance of preservice teachers possessing the necessary dispositions to enter the classroom. Oklahoma State University Agricultural Education teacher preparation program also utilizes the Candidate Preservice Assessment of Student Teaching (CPAST), an evaluation form that has been developed and researched by VARI-EPP. This form was broken down into two sections: pedagogy and dispositions. Within the form's rows, observable and measurable descriptors are provided to guide scoring decisions (Candidate Preservice Assessment of Student Teaching [CPAST], n.d.).

To better assess preservice teachers' dispositions prior to student-teaching placements, faculty hold disposition meetings to evaluate each candidate. A junior-level agricultural education course introduces dispositions in class lectures, and students develop their own teaching philosophy. After creating their teaching philosophies, students received instructions on how to register for a time. Students in the course attend a professional interview where faculty role-play professionals, such as administrators. Interview questions focus on the disposition section of the CPAST evaluation form, to make students aware of the metric they will be scored

on during their student teaching experience. Students who struggle to meet these requirements are recommended for a plan of improvement prior to student teaching and can be re-evaluated before student teaching begins, as needed. General disposition topics broadly assess punctuality, professionalism, communication, and humility.

Results to Date/Implications

Following year two's disposition meetings, students were asked a few questions regarding their experiences. The questions asked included the structure, if it was beneficial, how it could be improved, and anything else they would like to add. Positive and negative feedback were reported. In response to "Did you benefit from your meeting?" some positive responses were: "I believed it helped me to a degree. It was nice to know I was on the right track", "It gave me a chance to reflect and think about my progress," and "It helped my interview skills". Negative or neutral responses included "I don't think it helped in any way" and "They were just good to catch up with my advisor."

Students who have been identified with disposition issues in the past have been able to start an improvement plan, turn around, and meet the requirements to student teach. These meetings helped secure the proper placements at student teaching centers and contributed to success and graduation.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Disposition meetings will continue, and Oklahoma State University will continue to refine them to serve students best. Where meetings previously happened in a group format, moving forward, they will occur in a one-on-one format. By reformatting these meetings, students can receive coaching at a more personal level, whereas previously they could not be coached in front of peers when concerns arose. Initially, some students viewed these meetings as punitive, however this was not the goal. Other institutions choosing to adopt a similar approach should consider how these can be framed as constructive, personal growth-oriented, coaching meetings. Framing these meetings in such a way has influenced how they may have been received and perceived by students. Although it can be challenging to create a valid and reliable instrument to measure dispositions when incorporating measures of human behavior and internal beliefs (Flowers, 2006; Schulte et al., 2005), more University teacher preparation programs should adopt disposition meetings to prepare pre-service teachers to enter the profession.

Costs/Resources Needed

The resources needed for disposition meetings include welcoming, supportive faculty, and facilities to host them. The financial cost includes providing a meal for the students on the evening of the meetings. The cost of the meal will be dependent upon the number of students per cohort and the restaurant in which the food is ordered from; therefore, the amounts will not stay the same per semester.

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