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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AT RISK: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR AND BY TEACHERS

Prepared By

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Ethics

Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB): Study ID: REB17-0633

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Statement of the Problem

Pre-service teachers may face challenges in field experience that have a real impact on both them and their partner teachers. Sometimes these challenges arise as a result of the field experience and sometimes they present themselves before the field experience begins. Current legislation prevents postsecondary institutions from divulging potential challenges pre-service teachers may face. As a result, successfully supporting struggling pre-service teachers in their field experience is a challenge.

Literature Review

Current teacher education programs depend upon practical, field-oriented components that allow pre-service teachers to integrate theory and practice and to develop a reflective stance to their work in the classroom (Zeichner, Payne, & Bayko, 2015). The task of coaching pre-service teachers falls to in-service teachers who welcome their charges into their classrooms and task them with the education of the K-12 students in their care. In-service teachers then provide the feedback and guidance necessary for professional growth. In-service teachers often regard this act of welcome as an opportunity for mentorship and leadership as well as a professional obligation (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010).

The role of the partner teacher is critical to the development of the pre-service teacher . Pre-service teachers depend on their partner teachers to create a kind and welcoming environment, one that encourages the development of excellence (Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough, 2008). This means that pre- service teachers must feel secure enough to risk failure and to learn from that failure. Partner teachers will also be asked to share their knowledge and to guide the pre-service teachers through the inevitable uncertainties they will face. Hall et al. (2008) continued to state that having a caring partner teacher was one of the most critical elements regarding the development of a pre-service teacher's practice. Similarly, Beck and Kosnik (2002) noted that the environment created by the partner teacher is of utmost importance. Left out of this body of research, however, was the effects the pre-service teacher may have on the environment that has been created, and it is this unknown that often causes in-service teachers to be reluctant to take on the role.

Partner teachers often express concern over the potential strengths and weaknesses pre-service teachers possess upon entering the field experience. This concern is then exacerbated when the pre-service teacher demonstrates challenges within the placement. Franklin Torrez and Krebs (2012) noted that when pre-service teachers faced lack of success in the classroom partner teachers often felt conflicted as to how to proceed. Partner teachers did not want to give more feedback than the pre-service teacher could handle at any given time and often felt a personal sense of failure as a result. Finally, Smith and Avetision (2011) noted that, more important than pedagogical strengths and weaknesses of pre-service teachers, was the differences in fundamental

beliefs around teaching and the mentorship style of the partner teacher. This was particularly worrisome for in-service teachers considering the role of partner teacher as it was seen as much more difficult to manage should it be a source of tension.

As can be seen, the issues surrounding the field experience have been discussed in the literature but a significant gap exists. A broad, reflective question that emerged from the literature review was: What are the practical and relevant strategies that have been successful in either supporting a struggling pre-service teacher or in removing them from the placement with a minimum of disruption for all involved?

Research Questions

The primary question our research will address is: (RQ1) What strategies do in-service teachers employ to support struggling pre-service teachers in field education?

A secondary question we will address is: (RQ2) How can postsecondary institutions better facilitate placements where a pre-service teacher is struggling before the field placement begins, given the legislative restrictions that exist with regard to privacy?

Methodology

This research will follow a multiple site case study methodology where the case is bounded by the identified examples of placements in which a pre-service teacher has struggled and either succeeded or failed the field experience placement.

Ten in-service teachers and five school-based leaders will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The in-service teachers will be purposefully chosen based on pre-service teacher interventions conducted by the Director of Field Experience with the Werklund School of Education.

Those in-service teachers approached for participation will have worked with at least one pre-service teacher who was placed on a performance contract in which he or she succeeded, or at least one pre-service teacher who was unsuccessful in the field experience. The school-based leaders will be chosen based on the schools at which the in-service teacher is employed and where the pre-service teacher was placed.

Each in-service teacher or school-based leader will be interviewed one time and each interview will take approximately 20 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded to allow for transcription. Pseudonyms will be employed in all cases to enable anonymity of the data.

Data collection sites

We intend to approach individuals working at public and separate school boards in and around Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The exact data collection sites may not be disclosed in order to protect the anonymity of project participants.

Timelines

This project will run from September 1, 2017 to August 30, 2018. We anticipate that interaction with research subjects will begin in November, 2017, depending on research subject recruitment and availability.

Significance

The field experience is a critical and required component of pre-service teacher education. When pre-service teachers experience challenges, it can have an impact on both in-service teachers and K-12 students. This study will act as a preliminary step in the creation of a resource for in-service teachers and as a discussion point among teacher education institutions as we attempt to support both pre-service teachers and those with whom they engage. This study will also act as a precursor to further study the reasons why pre-service teachers experience challenges including mental health concerns.

This study is unique in that it will address, not only one of the most pervasive issues still facing the field experience, but it will also begin to provide some points on which in-service teachers can act. It will also begin to address legislative constraints that exist, whereby student privacy prevents post-secondary institutions from providing information that might assist in-service teachers in their roles as partner teachers. By beginning to develop a framework of strategies designed to enhance and improve the field experience, it is anticipated that action can be taken at the institutional level that can prevent or lessen issues before they arise.

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Results of this study will be disseminated in the following ways:

This research will be disseminated in three ways:

1. ***A digital resource for teachers.*** It will outline successful strategies for supporting at-risk pre-service teachers will be created and made available to all partner teachers and school divisions and to all post-secondary institutions in Alberta that have a teacher education program.
2. ***Presentations.*** This research will be presented, if accepted, at a minimum of two academic conferences and also at a minimum of two teachers' conventions around the province.
3. ***Publications.*** A minimum of two peer-reviewed articles will be written for academic journals. A companion article written for a professional audience such as the Alberta Teachers' Association Magazine will accompany each of these articles.

The dissemination of this work is equally committed to both the academic and the professional audience. Dissemination will be focused on filling the noted gap in the literature and also in supporting the work of in-service teachers in their work as partner teachers. As this research constitutes the pilot phase of a bigger anticipated project, we also envision building upon the conference presentations and publications with follow-up materials in later iterations of this research.

Research Assistant Role

This project will include one Research Assistant (RA), hired in accordance with University policies and procedures. Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Attend and actively participate in research team meetings.
- Assist with participant recruitment, obtaining informed consent and keep accurate records for the project.
- Collaborate with the Principal Investigator and other research team members to implement protocols for secure storage of data.
- Schedule interviews
- Maintain detailed and organized project documentation, including reports, data, etc.
- Assist with literature reviews, documentation and report preparation.
- Assist with clerical work as needed.
- Other duties as assigned.

The research assistant must complete the TCPS2 CORE Tutorial and send the PI a copy of your completion certificate before onboarding to the project is complete.

Intellectual Property Statement for Research Assistants

The purpose of this statement is to ensure clarity and transparency among all members of the research team. According to the University of Calgary Intellectual Property Policy:

> "Persons paid to perform specific assigned tasks unrelated to their academic program are employed and, in the absence of another agreement, their work belongs to their employer." (p. 13)

The intellectual property rights for this project technically rest with the Principal Investigator (PI). You may not claim any of the outputs or results this work as your own. Research Assistants (RAs) are hired to perform specific duties and tasks in relation to the project, but this does not entitle RAs to intellectual property rights.

Research assistants may not copy, publish or publicly share results or any other work relating to this project without the explicit written permission of the PI.

Under certain circumstances RAs may be invited to contribute to collaborative dissemination of research results (e.g. conference presentations or publications). The PI would extend an invitation to collaborate based on the depth and substance of intellectual contributions made by RA to the research project. Invitations are extended solely at the discretion of the PI.

We encourage our research assistant to engage in an open and frank conversations with the PI about what constitutes a substantive intellectual contribution to a research project.

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Research Team

Amy Burns, Ph.D., Principal Investigator – Director of Field Experience and Academic Program Coordinator for Instructional Leadership in the Werklund School of Education. Her research expertise includes improving pre-service teacher education and, in particular, field experience, through an examination of the ways in which policy, support and unique experiences come together to develop excellence among pre-service teachers.

Sarah Elaine Eaton, Ph.D., Co-Investigator – Faculty member, Werklund School of Education. She has been a collaborator on the research project "Building a Robust Online Teacher Education Program" since 2014. Other areas of research expertise include academic integrity and plagiarism.

Dianne Gereluk, Ph.D., Co-Investigator - Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs in Education, and professor in leadership, policy and governance at the Werklund School of Education. Her research examines normative aspects of educational policy and practice particularly related to controversial issues in education, provision of schooling, and civics education. She recently led a research team since 2014 on the project "Building a Robust Online Teacher Education Program".

Katherine Mueller, Ph.D., Co-Investigator – Sessional Instructor, Werklund School of Education. Her research expertise includes second language pedagogy and professional development for educators.