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A STUDY COMPARING THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF TEACHERS AND THEIR ACTUAL TEACHING POSITIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by

13446

David F. Niemiec
August 1957

LD 5771.3

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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Robert L. Johnson		



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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

It is the opinion of numerous people in education that there are too many times when individuals have to sacrifice their training and background in order to obtain a teaching position in our public school systems. It is also the belief of many that there are specific fields of preparation which are less adequate than others when it comes time for teacher placement. For the most part, however, these claims have been based on cursory observation and there has been practically nothing done in the way of research to substantiate these contentions.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine what percentage of teachers were actually teaching at levels and in fields for which they were prepared; (2) to ascertain those areas in which teachers felt they needed more training.

Importance of the study. A problem continually being faced by teachers colleges and their students is that of determining those subject matter areas in which the student has a propensity towards, ability in, and which will offer him an excellent opportunity to obtain a

teaching position without having to teach in areas for which he is not prepared. Many times this becomes a problem in selecting the correct major-minor combination. Once a student has determined what his field of preparation will be it is largely up to the college to ensure the fact that adequate preparation is given to enable the student to teach well and to be able to handle any situations which may arise. It is also the function of the college to perceive those subjects which the students will need most upon their return to college for their fifth year, which is necessary to obtain the Standard General Certificate, and to present a program which will do the most for the greatest number of teachers. This is especially true of summer sessions through which the majority of teachers complete their graduate work.

Limitations of the study. The limitations of this study are due in part to the use of the questionnaire technique of gathering data. First, it is difficult to anticipate all of the possible questions which might arise concerning the phrasing of the questions. This was in part eliminated by giving the questionnaire to a few teachers from each grade level in Puyallup, Washington, and then, on the basis of their critiques, revising it to eliminate the trouble spots. Second, the fact that 25.4 per cent of the secondary teachers and 32.7 per cent of the elementary

teachers in Puyallup did not reply to the questionnaire might tend to influence the results obtained for this town.

A third limitation was the extent of sampling of the study. By concentrating a study of this nature in one town the following factors had to be contended: the philosophy of the administration in placing teachers in positions according to their training; the popularity or reputation of the teaching position and the location of the town, which might induce more teachers to apply for jobs, thus giving a greater opportunity for selectivity. These factors were somewhat but not completely controlled by giving the questionnaire during the summer to public school teachers enrolled in two of the required courses for the degree of Master of Education at Central Washington College of Education, Ellensburg, Washington.

A fourth limitation is the small number of responses on certain questions included in the questionnaire. For example, only eight teachers in Puyallup were teaching a block of time. Thus, percentages based on such a small sample might be distorted.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Block of time. This term refers to a length of time greater than one school period during which time an attempt is made to break down artificial barriers between subjects.

This is also, correctly or not, referred to as a core curriculum, common learnings, integrated courses, block scheduling, and unified studies.

<u>Field</u>. A field is a broad and relatively homogeneous area of learning. For example, mathematics, economics, and biological science are considered to be separate fields.

<u>Field (or area) of preparation</u>. This includes the major(s) and minor(s) of the teacher.

Level of preparation. Courses taken which would best prepare one to teach in specific grades: elementary level Primary (grades 1-3) and intermediate (grades 4-6); junior high level (grades 7-9); and senior high level (grades 10-12).

Prepared. Prepared means that a teacher has received sufficient academic training to feel justified that he is capable of contributing materially to the student: That is, the teacher ordinarily has completed a major, a minor, or heavy course concentration in his teaching area.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURE

I. THE BACKGROUND

In thoroughly checking through indexes and educational literature, no studies were uncovered which were similar to the present study, that of appropriateness of placement with respect to teacher preparation.

Information was available at the Dean of Students' office at Central Washington College of Education, however, which allowed comparative interpretation of the data gathered by the questionnaire. This is discussed in Chapter III.

II. THE PROCEDURE

The questionnaire technique was selected to gather the necessary data for this study. It was preferable to the interview technique because the information desired did not require any special interpretation and because the latter method would have consumed too much time. With the assistance of Dr. Pettit, Chairman of the Division of Education and Psychology at Central Washington College of Education, the essentials of the questionnaire were established.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections (see Appendix B). The first section pertained to all

teachers and from it information concerning the teacher's preparation was ascertained. The remaining three sections pertained to elementary, junior high school, and senior high school teachers in that order. If a teacher had taught previously at a different level, the section for that level was also to have been filled out.

The information asked of the elementary teachers in the second section was of a nature which would indicate how they felt toward their undergraduate preparation. They were also asked if they taught certain specialized subjects; otherwise a true picture would not be presented when attempting to compile the percentages of people feeling weak in certain areas. That is, the per cent of people feeling weak in areas will vary as the number of people teaching in these areas varies.

In the remaining two sections, the secondary school teachers were asked what subjects they were teaching and how many hours they were teaching in and outside of their fields of preparation. This data would then be checked against their actual preparation as shown in the first section of the questionnaire.

Teachers at all levels were requested to fill in those courses they felt would benefit them most if they were to return to college.

The questionnaire was first presented to a few

teachers from each of the three levels and, on the basis of their critiques concerning the phrasing of certain questions, revisions were made. The questionnaire was then given to the principals of Puyallup at one of their meetings for their later presentation to teachers and each section was fully explained. This was done because it would have been very difficult to have been present at the teachers' meetings of all of the schools to explain any perplexing part. The meetings in the various buildings generally fell on the same day and the elementary schools had only one meeting per month. The principals agreed to assist any teacher who had difficulty interpreting certain questions.

The questionnaires were then distributed to the teachers of each school in the district. This was done toward the end of the school year so that beginning teachers would have the benefit of almost a full year's experience before answering the questions. Attached to the front of each copy was a note from Puyallup's superintendent, Mr. Paul Hanawalt, endorsing the study and requesting teachers to give it their full support (see Appendix A). It was also pointed out that the teachers could seek the aid of their principal if they did not understand any part. Each copy was numbered and a record kept in order to eliminate any confusion as to the teaching level of the

teacher supplying the data.

It seemed that the study also had to be carried on outside of Puyallup because several factors were present which could have affected the results. The philosophy of the administration in selecting teachers according to their training, the popularity or reputation of the teaching positions, and the location of the town all could influence the type and background of people chosen to fill teaching vacancies.

It was decided that two of the graduate courses required of teachers seeking a Master of Education degree at Central Washington College of Education would be the ones in which the questionnaire would be presented. names of the students and the towns in which they were teaching were then ascertained to ensure the fact that there would not be too many people from one locale. The teachers came from such cities in Washington as Seattle, Tacoma, Auburn, Yakima, Wapato, Ellensburg, Grandview, Sunnyside, and Othello, to name a few. Once this distribution of locale was assured, the questionnaireinterview technique was used to obtain the necessary data. The questionnaire employed was a somewhat shortened version of the original because in the process of the interview explanations were made to compensate for the lack of detail.

As mentioned previously, the Dean of Students'

office was checked to obtain placement data. It was the role of this office to place prospective teachers in jobs for which they were most prepared. The success of matching available teachers with position openings is explained in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study indicate that the secondary school teachers have received an adequate amount of undergraduate preparation in college for their teaching positions. The vast majority of secondary school teachers responding to the questionnaire were teaching in their fields of preparation and all of them had been specifically prepared to teach at the secondary level. The elementary teachers, however, were less prepared to teach at their level, a large percentage of them having been prepared to teach at the secondary level. In addition, a high percentage of them felt unprepared to teach specific elementary school subjects such as art, reading, and music.

The first consideration in this Chapter is given to the results of the questionnaire. This is divided into two sections, one pertaining to secondary school teachers and the other to elementary school teachers. The second consideration is given to the data received from the of the Dean of Students at Central Washington College of Education, which partially corroborated the results of the questionnaire.

I. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Secondary school teachers. Tables I and II show that 100 per cent of all secondary teachers have been prepared for that level. Many educators feel it is important that a teacher be prepared for the level at which he is teaching because the psychology of handling children at certain grade levels holds for most of the learning situations involved. In the case of secondary teachers, this would be the psychology of adolescents. Thus, if a secondary teacher were prepared by such courses as secondary school methods and secondary school student teaching, he would be familiar with the typical learning difficulties encountered by this age group.

The percentages of people teaching subject-matter fields for which they were prepared are also high. Table I presents the fact that 96.2 per cent of the junior high school teachers and 93.3 per cent of the senior high school teachers in Puyallup were teaching in their majors or minors. In Table II it is seen that 87.9 per cent of the junior high teachers and 91.7 per cent of the senior high teachers who were enrolled in two of the courses required for the degree of Master of Education during the summer session at Central Washington College of Education (in Tables referred to as CWCE) were teaching in their majors

TABLE I

ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF TEACHERS IN PUYALLUP, WASHINGTON

	Elementary Schools(6)	Jr. High School	Sr. High School	
No. of teachers	52.	28	47	
Responses to Questionnaire				
Number	. 35 . 67.3	26 92.9	3 0 62.6	
Level No. of teachers prepared for their level academically	. 30	26	30	
Per cent of teachers pre-pared for their level academically	. 83.3	100.0	100.0	
Field No. of secondary teachers teaching in their major or minor field	•	29	33	
Per cent of secondary teachers teaching in their major or minor field	•	96.2	93 .3	

TABLE II

ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF TEACHERS SAMPLED
AT
CENTRAL WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

	Elementary Schools	Jr. High Schools	Sr. High Schools
No. of teachers	5 5	33	36
Level			
No. of teachers prepared for their level academically	. 44	33	36
Per cent of teachers pre-pared for their level academically	. 80.0	100.0	100.0
Field			
No. of secondary teachers teaching in their major or minor field	•	29	33
Per cent of secondary teachers teaching in their major or minor field		87.9	91.7

or minors. These figures do not mean that all of these people were teaching all of their classes in their majors or minors. If a person were teaching more than three-fifths of the time in these subjects, he was considered to be teaching in his major or minor. The number of people teaching more than one class period per day outside of their major-minor field was negligible, and the vast majority were teaching a full load in their major-minor field. In addition, of the two Puyallup high school teachers who were not teaching their major or minor, one had done so originally in the system but later had additional college training and entered a new field.

For those people teaching a block of time in the junior high schools, however, there is an indication that a lack of preparedness exists on their part for this area. As seen in Table III, 37.5 per cent of the Puyallup teachers in this area indicated a weakness in their undergraduate preparation for this block of time. Table III also shows that 30.0 per cent of the teachers at summer school were of the same opinion. Moreover, only a small percentage had been specifically prepared to teach a block of time, this figure being about 60 per cent for the entire study.

Secondary school teachers for the entire study showed a marked preference for courses in their field of

TABLE III

TEACHERS' REPORT OF FEELING OF UNPREPAREDNESS
CONCERNING THEIR FIRST POSITION

				Block of Time	Elemen- tary Grades	Art	Re Music	ading
Puyallup				٠.	i.		.,	25
No. of teach surveyed .			•	8	35	35	33	35
No. who feel unprepared		•		3	13	14	11	10
Per cent who feel unprepa			•	37.5	37.0	40.0	33.3	28.6
CWCE Summer School Sample								
No. of teach surveyed .	•		•	10	55	51	33	53
No. who feel unprepared			•	3	13	16	1,7	19
Per cent who feel unprepa			•	30.0	23.6	31.4	51.5	35.9

specialization. Practically everyone who filled in this information included simply these courses. The only other course mentioned was Guidance, and that only by a relatively few people.

Elementary School Teachers. The placement situation among elementary school teachers is not as favorable as that for secondary school teachers. Table I shows that 83.3 per cent of the elementary teachers in Puyallup were prepared for the elementary level and Table II shows that 80.0 per cent of the elementary teachers attending summer school were prepared for their level. This is very significant when it is realized that between one out of five or six elementary teachers were not specifically prepared for this level. (With the assistance of Dr. Emil E. Samuelson; head of teacher placement at Central Washington College of Education, it was estimated that anything more than one or two percentage points lower than 90 per cent would be significant.) However, these people were not completely devoid of training because of the five in Puyallup who had prepared for the secondary level, four had done some student teaching at the elementary level. And of the eleven at summer school who were not prepared, five had done some student teaching at the elementary level.

The percentage of elementary teachers who felt that their undergraduate preparation was not adequate for

significant. In Table III it is seen that 37.0 per cent of the Puyallup teachers felt unprepared and that 23.6 per cent of the teachers at summer school were of the same opinion. In specific teaching areas, the feeling of unpreparedness for the first year of teaching was also striking. Of the Puyallup teachers, 90.0 per cent felt unprepared to teach art, 33.3 per cent to teach music, and 28.6 per cent to teach reading. And of the summer school teachers, 31.4 per cent felt unprepared to teach art, 51.5 per cent to teach music, and 35.9 per cent to teach reading.

The results were quite similar for those who were prepared for the secondary level but who were teaching at the elementary level. As seen in Table IV, 40.0 per cent of the Puyallup teachers felt unprepared to teach the level and 40.0 per cent were unprepared to teach art, music, and reading. Although these percentages are equal to each other, of the ones who felt unprepared to teach music, art, and reading, some felt prepared in one area but not in another. The same holds true for the summer school sample, where 45.5 per cent felt unprepared for the level, 45.5 per cent for art, 36.4 per cent for music, and 36.4 per cent for reading.

The results of the survey are almost identical for

REPORT OF FEELING OF UNPREPAREDNESS
BY TEACHERS WHO ARE TEACHING AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL
BUT WHO WERE PREPARED FOR SECONDARY LEVEL

TABLE IV

		wh	achers o felt repared	_ <u>f</u>	ea bre elt un Art	prep		o te	
	No. of teachers	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Puyallup	5	2	40.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	2	40.0
CWCE Sum- mer School Sample		5	45.5	5	45.5	4	36.4	4	36.4
Total	16	7	43.8	7	43.8	6	37.5	6	37.5

those who have been teaching more than five years and those who have been teaching less than five years. Thus, the use of the General Certificate in Washington does not seem to be a factor affecting appropriateness of teacher placement.

The preferences of elementary teachers for college courses which would bolster their teaching are shown in Table V. The percentages were determined on the basis of thirty-five elementary teachers for Puyallup and fifty-five elementary teachers for the summer school survey. The courses mentioned most frequently were art, reading, and music. Other courses were specified but only these with any relatively high degree of frequency were indicated.

TABLE V
TEACHERS' PREFERENCES FOR SUMMER SCHOOL COURSES

	Art	Music	Reading
Puyallup No. of teachers			
desiring subject Per cent of teachers desiring	.10	7	12
subject	28.6	20.0	34.3
CWCE Summer School Sample No. of teachers			
desiring subject Per cent of	8	5	16
teachers desiring subject	14.5	9.1	29.1

II. INFORMATION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS

The statistics found in the office of the Dean of Students concerning graduating seniors are located in Table VI. This Table shows that the per cent of misplacement for level of teaching was 40.0 per cent for the upper-junior high, 15.7 per cent for the junior-senior high, and 0.0 per cent for the senior high. Upon close analysis, it is seen that one hundred people were prepared for these three branches of the secondary level. Of this number, fifteen were placed at the elementary level, representing a 15.0 per cent misplacement.

Eighty-seven prospective teachers were placed at the secondary level and four of these were prepared for the elementary level. As a result, 95.4 per cent of the secondary school placements were actually prepared for that level. One hundred twenty-seven people were placed at the elementary level and twenty-four of these were prepared for the secondary level, giving 81.1 per cent of the people placed at this level being prepared for it. These results for beginning teachers are quite similar to those of the present study.

The types of positions being offered to prospective teachers were also tabulated by the Dean's office and the vast majority of these positions were of a nature that

TABLE VI

THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF GRADUATING TEACHERS OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (1955-56) AS COMPARED TO THEIR FIELDS OF PLACEMENT¹

Fields of Preparation Kdgn. Int. Upper Jr.Sr. Sr. All A11 Pri. Int. Jr.Hi. Pri. Int. Int. Upper Jr.Hi. Hi. Hi. Elem. Levels Total Pri. Total Preparatory Group Fields of Placement 1. Kindergarten Primary Kdgn.-Primary Pri.-Intermediate Intermediate Inter.-Upper Upper-Junior High Junior-Senior High Senior High Administration 10. 11. All Levels College 12. Total Placements Per Cent of Placements Placed in Field of Preparation Placed Outside of Field of Preparation Per Cent of 15.7 0.0 40.0 15.8 0.0 16.7 0.0 40.0 0.0 14.0 0.0 0.0 Misplacement

¹Emil E. Samuelson, "Comparison of Fields of Preparation and Actual Fields of Placement (Graduate Group 1955-56)" (unpublished study, Office of the Dean of Students, Central Washington College of Education, Ellensburg, Washington, 1956), p.31.

required a person to teach in more than one field. Very rarely were the requests for people to teach all day in one field greater than 50 per cent of the total number of positions which encompassed that field. For example, of the eighty positions which included industrial arts, only forty-two were openings for full-time industrial art instruction. Since a very large percentage of secondary teachers are teaching in their fields of preparation, it would tend to indicate that the colleges are advising students well as to those combinations of major and minor which are requested most by the public schools.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of the present study was twofold: (1) to determine what percentage of teachers were actually teaching at levels and in fields for which they were prepared; (2) to ascertain those areas in which teachers felt they needed more training. In order to obtain this information, a questionnaire was prepared which was distributed to the teachers of Puyallup, Washington. Because of the limitations imposed by concentrating such a study in one locale, the study was extended to include teachers in two of the required courses for the degree of Master of Education at Central Washington College of Education, Ellensburg, Washington.

Before and during the time the data was being gathered, other sources were examined to uncover comparable studies. However, checking through such references as the Educational Index turned up nothing similar. The professors contacted on the campus of Central Washington College of Education also did not know of any research against which the present one could be checked.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Secondary school teachers in Washington seem to be more adequately prepared to teach their students than elementary school teachers; not only are they more prepared to teach at their respective level but they are also more prepared to teach the specific subject matter required by the curriculum. The only exception to this are those people teaching a block of time at the junior high school level. Because of the special techniques which have to be used in this area, over and above those techniques used in single subject-matter fields, it can readily be seen that there might be some disparity between their training and that of other secondary school teachers. This is especially evident when one considers that many undergraduates do not take courses which would train them for core or block-of-time teaching and later are thrust into it because of circumstance.

The colleges, during the students' freshman and sophomore years, should place greater emphasis on the fact that a significantly high percentage of teachers do not feel adequately prepared to do their best for their students; namely, (1) elementary teachers and (2) junior high block-of-time teachers. Thus, a student who is undecided about the level at which he would like to teach would realize that a late decision to enter the elementary

field might seriously hamper his effectiveness as a teacher at this level. Also, those students who intend to major or minor in fields which constitute the major portion of block-of-time arrangements would know that it might be best if they prepared for such a contingency as being asked to teach a block of time--they might even be induced to investigate a core-curriculum major.

The great number of teachers mentioning art, music, and reading as weak spots in their preparation indicates that the colleges should do something to alleviate this situation. Either the students are not taking a sufficient number of courses in these areas or they perceive that the ones which they do take are not preparing them adequately for actual teaching conditions. The number of teachers who, after many years of teaching, still indicate that they would like courses in these areas to bolster their teaching also demonstrates the fact that this phase of teacher education could be improved. Further study seems to be entirely justified to uncover the weakness and supply a possible remedy.

The purpose of the fifth year program of the General Certificate in Washington is to enable teachers to fortify those areas in which they feel they lack strength. It is possible that many teachers pursuing a degree of Master of Education are not obtaining the full benefits

teaching, as are those who are simply fulfilling the requirements of the General Certificate. As described in Chapter III, the phase of the study conducted at summer school was in two of the required courses for a Master of Education degree. Although the question was not specifically asked of these people, many indicated that they were unable to take courses of their choice because of the requirements they had to fulfill. A conflict may have arisen here between the teacher's aspirations for an administrative position or some other non-teaching position, and his need for increasing his growth as a teacher. An intensified investigation might yield results which will reduce the source of this friction.

Since most of the secondary school teachers are teaching in their majors and minors, it is an indication that the colleges are doing a good job in advising students as to which areas and combinations of fields offer the most potential. As mentioned previously, though, more attention needs to be given to guiding the preparation of elementary and block-of-time teachers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Samuelson, Emil E. "Comparison of Fields of Preparation and Actual Fields of Placement (Graduate Group 1955-56)." Unpublished study, Office of the Dean of Students, Central Washington College of Education, Ellensburg, Washington, 1956.

APPENDIX A

We are very happy indeed to cooperate with Dave
Niemiec in helping him analyze a problem which he is going
to use as a basis for his Master's thesis at Central
Washington College of Education. Dave will be consulting
the teachers of the Puyallup Public Schools for some data
which he will use to develop his thesis.

I am sure we wish the best of luck to Dave and we are certain that he will make a real contribution with his analysis.

Yours sincerely,

P. B. HANAWALT, Superintendent PUYALLUP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This questionnaire is necessary to the completion of my Masters Degree and I would appreciate your filling it out and returning it to your principal within a period of one week. If you begin to fill out one area, please answer all of the questions in that area, even if the directions do not explicitly tell you to. Your principal has advised me he will assist you with any questions about which you are in doubt.

Thank you very much.

David F. Niemiec

APPENDIX B

Sex M F College Major(s) College Minor(s)
College Major(s) College Minor(s) 1.
2.
Charlent Manching Functions
Student Teaching Experience LevelElementary Half Day
Jr. High School Full Day
High School
Quarter Hours Credit
1.
2.
3.
4. Your college preparation was for
Elementary Jr. High School High School
Elementary Jr. High School High School Were you prepared by a State (or Private) college in Washington State? Yes No What type of certificate do you hold?
Washington State? Yes No
what type of certificate do you hold.
How many years have you been teaching in this system?
At your present level?
different from present)?
(Elementary
Level-(Jr. High School
(High SchoolSubjects or areas taught
1.
2.
Years taught
IF YOU ARE TEACHING OR HAVE TAUGHT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS
PLEASE FILL IN THE DESIRED INFORMATION (ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN APPROPRIATE AREAS)
IN ATTROTRIBLE ANDAOY
DIDIONOLON COMO I TELACHERO
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS
Do you (or did you) teach your own
Yes No music
art
reading
physical education

Do you feel you received adequate undergraduate preparation for your present (or former) position? Yes No Are there areas you feel are (or felt were) relatively weak? 1. 2. 3. 4. If you were returning to school this summer, which courses and areas do you feel would help (or would have helped) you most? 1. 2. 3. 4. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS Subject(s) teaching 1. 2. 3. If you teach a block of time, what subject areas are included? 1. 2. 3. Did your undergraduate concentration prepare you for this block of time? Yes No How many periods do you teach a week? * preparation? preparation? 11 ** ** Ħ in neither major or

in your major area of in your minor area of minor areas?

If you were returning to school this summer, what courses or areas would you feel would be most helpful?

1. 2.

3.

4.

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Subject(s) teaching

l.

2.

3.

How	many	periods	do	you	teach	a week?
11	11	- "	11	"	11	in your major area of
						preparation?
**	11	11	11	- 11	11	in your minor area of
						preparation?
11	"	11	**	11	11	in neither major or
						minor areas?

If you were returning to school this summer, what courses or areas would you feel would be most helpful?

1.

 $\bar{2}$.

3.

4.