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College Freshman Decisions Concerning a Teaching Career as Influenced by In-School Experience in Public Schools of Ellensburg, Washington

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COLLEGE FRESHMEN DECISIONS CONCERNING A TEACHING CAREER
AS INFLUENCED BY IN-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS OF ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON



A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College



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



by
Leilani Mae Bangs

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Education for the preparation of teachers has always been an area for praise, attack, conjecture, and experimentation as educators search for an optimum program. Experimental programs are being conducted by teacher-education institutions in which college Freshmen are introduced to the field of Education and frequently enrolled in Education courses traditionally prerequisites by Junior standing. Evidence of success or failure of such experiments could prove valuable and instrumental in planning future teacher education programs.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to: (1) determine the influence of in-school experience during the freshman year upon decisions for or against a career in teaching; (2) ascertain the over-all effectiveness and efficiency of the design of the in-school experience as outlined in the Pre-Professional Preparation Program at Central Washington State College as to its relative value

in equipping the Freshmen to make aforesaid decisions; and (3) briefly state and ennumerate the specific values of the experience itself.

Importance and Purpose of the Study. Researchers have long acknowledged that preparation for any multi-faceted occupation, such as teaching, is necessary for success and effectiveness at that job. Experience in the chosen field should equip an individual for selecting a suitable career. Good common sense reasoning has led to the conclusion that the sooner the prospective teacher is able to make direct contact with the teaching field, the better his chances are for accepting or rejecting the field--and the fewer his chances for finding, after having enrolled in Education classes as a Junior and having student taught, that he had made the wrong choice. It logically follows that an early introduction to the teaching profession might prove invaluable, both to the college student and to the profession. The purpose of the Pre Professional Preparation Program was to give this opportunity to selected Freshmen; the purpose of this study was to evaluate this program.

Significance of the Study. The strong and weak points of this particular experimental program will enable

curriculum planners to alter the program in such a way that maximum benefit might be derived by all.

Limitations of the Study. The limitations of the study were: (1) that human elements, apart from the precepts of the total Program (such as homesickness, marriage, deaths, academic and financial problems, the draft) might more readily influence decisions concerning a teaching career than the Program's experience; (2) that some Freshmen might have been convinced before the Program that their destiny is to become teachers and needed no Program of education observation or participation experience to make that decision; (3) that samples for the study were drawn from only the fall and winter 1968-1969 in-school experience Freshmen; (4) that the Hawthorne Effect may have played a part in the immediate decisions of the Freshmen for the students knew that they were part of an experimental program designed to encourage them to enter the field of Education. They may have been inclined to give decisions that they felt were desired by the faculty of the Education Department at Central Washington State College; and (5) that this study, being original and concerning a program heretofore unattempted,

cannot serve to predict with one hundred percent accuracy what the long-term future results of the Program will be because of intervening factors such as the human elements listed in limitation (1).

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

In-School Experience. The In-School Experience, or Experience as it will be called hereafter, was a five-week program consisting of ten hours per week in which a student, having been placed in a classroom at primary, intermediate, or junior high school level, received the opportunity to observe and possibly instruct, under the guidance and supervision of the regular classroom teacher, the pupils in the classroom into which he has been placed.

Freshman or Freshmen. The students designated as Freshmen were those freshmen participating in the Pre-Professional Preparation Program, having been selected on the basis of results of the Washington Pre-College Testing Program, expressed desire to become a teacher, and personal interview with members of the Education Department, and living in the Cooperative Men's and Women's Dormitories at the Student Village Complex.

Program. The Pre-Professional Preparation Program, as designed and implemented by the Education Department at Central Washington State College, is referred to as Program, most specifically in its phase concerning in-school experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Only recently have programs such as the Pre-Professional Preparation Program at Central Washington State College, Ellensburg, been initiated. Among the other experimental programs being conducted across the United States are those at Marshall University in West Virginia, and the Northshore Experimental Teaching Program in Washington state.

Marshall University began an experiment in 1959 which ran parallel to their standard teacher preparation program. The main question to be answered in this research study was: What were the effects of the in-the-field experiences on (1) the professional outlook of the participants in the experimental group and how did this compare with those students in the standard program? and (2) the image of the teaching profession? Using an unpublished Educational Views Inventory, the researchers determined significant differences when a before and after within-group analysis was made but no significant differences in the between-group comparisons. As far as changes in the image of teaching were concerned, there were no statistically significant differences between

the two groups of students.

In 1967, the University of Washington, cooperating with the Bothell School District, placed 23 senior students in different schools to test the postulate that direct contact experiences were important for future teachers. Dr. Clifford Foster, director of the project, states that to generalize about the effect of this program would be difficult because of the various and variable factors involved.

The experiment with which this study is concerned was conducted during the academic year 1968-69 at Central Washington State College at Ellensburg, and involved 60 Freshman boys and 60 Freshman girls, living in two separate but identical Cooperative dormitories and enrolling in Education 307, Introduction to Education. They experienced five weeks on a two-hour daily basis of in-school experience in the public schools of Ellensburg, and attended seminars and field trips with professional educators and experienced persons from academic and education departments.

As David F. Niemiec, in his "STUDY COMPARING THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF TEACHERS AND THEIR ACTUAL TEACHING POSITIONS," a thesis presented to the Faculty of Central Washington State College in partial fulfillment for the

Master of Education Degree in August, 1957, stated in his conclusion, the "college, during the student's freshman and sophomore years should place greater emphasis on the fact that a high percentage of teachers don't feel adequately prepared to do their best for their students. . . 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 education field might. . . hamper his effectiveness as a teacher at this level."

CHAPTER III

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

Data for the study were gathered by use of a questionnaire followed by private personal interviews with each participating Freshman. The purpose for the interview was to supplement the questionnaire and provide additional in-depth data unobtainable through the rather mechanical questionnaire. The researcher selected at random forty Freshmen from fall and winter quarters who had completed their in-school experience to provide the interview data for the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings were compiled from the completed questionnaires of the 40 Freshmen. These findings offered statistical evidence concerning that group's individual evaluation of the Program.

Questionnaire and Results

Decision for or against entering a teacher-education program. As a result of the Questionnaire (see Appendix A), it was found that 78% of the participating Freshmen were able to make the decision that they wanted to enter a teacher-education program, while the remaining 22% had made no positive decision. During the personal interview it was found that the majority of those Freshmen having decided that they would enter a teacher-education program had had strong previous motivation for teaching and that the in-school experience had reinforced this motivation.

Influence of the in-school experience upon the decision. The in-school experience directly influenced the decisions for or against becoming a teacher in the case of

75% of the Freshmen. The remaining 25% indicated that the experience had no influence. Among the latter group there were very few Freshmen who, upon interview, indicated that the experience itself had resulted in their deciding not to become teachers, i.e., was not a negative experience wholly responsible for turning their intentions away from teaching as a goal.

Level of teaching sought. Although the in-school experience was limited to observation from Kindergarten through Junior High School level, 22% of the Freshmen noted that they would like to teach at other than that level. The Kindergarten through Junior High School level was the choice of 60% of the Freshmen, and 25% of that group clearly desired teaching Special Education. Of the remaining Freshmen, 5% indicated having chosen no level, and 13% were altogether undecided. Of the latter group, all felt that they should observe more extensively on different levels of teaching before making a decision concerning one in particular.

General value rating. On the numerical value scale presented in the Questionnaire with ratings 1-10 from lowest

to highest value rating, the Freshmen submitted the following rating for the value of the Experience in general:

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	0 percent
2-5	26 percent
6	5 percent
7	12 percent
8	27 percent
9	17 percent
10	13 percent

These ratings demonstrate that one-third of the Freshmen rated the Experience at or slightly above the average median of 5, while one-third clustered around the eight point rating, leaving the remaining third rating the Experience's value at above eight points. During the personal interviews it was found that the Freshmen had honestly attempted to rate the Experience itself in general, regarding not whether it had influenced their individual decisions.

Personal value rating. In terms of personal value, the Freshmen indicated that the Experience had the following influential value upon their decisions:

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Great deal	20 percent
Very much	48 percent
Very little	20 percent
None	12 percent

Among those stating that there was no influence upon them were exclusively those Freshmen who, having had experience in public schools prior to the In-School Experience, had already been favorably impressed by teaching and had previously decided definitely that a career in teaching was what they intended to pursue.

Questionnaire and Interview Results Concerning Positive and Negative Values of the In-School Experience

As a result of the Questionnaire and the interviews, the researcher was able to compile lists of positive and negative values as determined by the Freshmen involved in the In-School Experience.

Positive values of the In-School Experience. The Freshmen saw examples of method and material changes in action, having previously only read about them. These included the Modular System of instruction, learning the grading systems, and incorporation of new text books into the classroom.

In-depth study of a child or children through individual contact and academic consultation, as well as insight into discipline and child-handling, were made possible by

the cooperative efforts of the classroom teachers.

The Freshmen handled the responsibilities of the classroom in phases including lesson planning and execution, helping with clerical duties such as attendance records and class assignment grading, and providing positive room environment to enhance learning situations through use of displays, bulletin boards and other audio-visual aids.

The responsibilities of a teacher and his role as a person became evident to the Freshmen as they observed the classroom teacher and had personal contact with the teacher on an individual basis.

A realistic view of the work load, the trials, and the joys of a teacher was presented to the Freshmen.

Learning the "mechanical" aspect of teaching through use of ditto machines, thermofax machines, projectors, and tape recorders gave the Freshmen confidence in handling these areas, as did planning and execution of bulletin boards and displays in the classroom.

Desires to become teachers were reevaluated, reinstated, and enhanced throughout the In-School Experience.

Negative values of the In-School Experience. The

initially poor communications between the In-School Experience Committee, the participating teachers and principals, and the Freshmen coupled with lack of tangible guidelines hampered the Freshmen's understanding of what their role in the classroom was to be.

The Freshmen felt a lack of preparation on their part in the realm of basic knowledge of Education and found themselves, in many cases, instinctively hostile and defensive toward the position they held in classrooms.

Many Freshmen considered themselves merely as Teacher's aides, treated as outside observers or even intruders. Some received little or no consultation in theory of methodology, what in particular to observe, or no opportunity to participate in classroom activity.

Age-proximity created problems, for the Freshmen often felt that their own age was too close to that of the grade level in which they had been placed and consequently their potential effectiveness was stunted.

The Freshmen were not provided with observation of more than one level of teaching, in most cases.

The five-week 50 hour observation was too short for any in-depth experience.

The Pre-Professional Preparation Program, on the whole, was too "built-up" to the Freshmen and did not live up to their expectations. The disappointment carried over into the In-School Experience.

Some Freshmen felt they were given too much responsibility with little preparation and were expected by the classroom teacher to take over the classroom and teach within one or two days after having come into the classroom.

More professional help and consultation, such as discussions, were desired, both during the Experience and afterward.

College registration procedures made it difficult for the Freshmen to plan around In-School Experience sessions and conversely.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions appear warranted. The In-School Experience provided the opportunity for the 40 Freshmen involved to weigh their tentative decisions and, in most cases, decide upon whether or not to pursue a teacher education program throughout the remainder of their college careers. Most of the Freshmen were certain as to the grade level they would desire to teach and were pleased to have had this opportunity to affirm, reaffirm, or reject the teaching level in which they were placed.

On the whole, a high value rating was given to the In-School Experience, regardless of what personal value it might have had in influencing individual decisions. On an individual basis, there wasn't sufficient evidence to support assertions of positive correlation between the influence of high ratings on individual decisions and the general decisions for or against teacher preparation programs.

It is fairly evident that the total results as they relate to the success of the basic philosophy behind the Program are, in theory and in actuality, positive and encouraging for the future success of the Pre-Professional

Preparation Program and similar endeavors.

Recommendations. As a result of the Questionnaire and personal interviews, the researcher was able to isolate specific recommendations for the continued positive progress of the Pre-Professional Preparation Program.

1. A pre-In-School Experience should be held to include the Pre-Professional Preparation Program Committee, cooperating classroom teachers and principals and Freshmen before each quarter's Experience. Such a procedure would acquaint all persons with the goals and purposes of the Experience, its anticipated outcomes, and roles of the participating persons.

2. More tightly knit organization and thorough understanding of the goals and desired outcomes of the Experience may be fostered by group and individual meetings.

3. The follow-up (post-In-School Experience discussions) should be well organized and in depth, giving the Freshmen a chance to examine, in retrospect, their experience and ask questions about it in the company and under the auspices of qualified personnel.

4. More involved discussion sessions during the

Experience, in small group situations, would permit the Freshmen to present immediate problems encountered in the classroom. They could clear up any misunderstandings between all involved before serious and incapacitating difficulties ensue.

5. The Freshmen should compile their own checklist of activities as an evaluation of their Experience and in turn present it to the In-School Experience Committee for its perusal.

6. The In-School Experience Committee should avoid arbitrary placement of students at a grade level in which he is not interested.

7. Giving the Freshmen the opportunity to observe grade levels and phases of teaching that he would not be in daily contact with during the assigned In-School Experience would broaden the spectrum of those Freshmen.

8. The program has decided merit and should be continued.

9. Studies similar to this one evaluating the success and importance of the Pre-Professional Preparation Program, with particular reference to the In-School Experience Phase, should be undertaken.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please mark X on the line beside your chosen response. Do not respond more than ONCE to each question and in the event that your preferred response is not there, choose the closest one in meaning.

Sex: Male___ Female___

Major (if decided upon): _____

or

Major Field of Interest: _____

1. Have you made a decision about entering a teacher education program with the final goal of becoming a teacher? Yes___ No___
2. Indicate which level, if any, you have decided that you would like to teach:
K-6___ Jr. High___ Other_____ None___ Undecided___
3. Indicate your opinion of the value to you of the in-school experience in general, using the scale 1-10 with 10 representing the highest value, 1 representing the lowest:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Did your in-school experience in the public school influence you in this decision? Yes___ No___
To what extent?
A great deal___ Very much___ Little___ Not at all___
5. Please list the positive values of your in-school experience, being very specific. Use reverse side of Questionnaire.
6. Please list the negative values of your in-school experience, being very specific. Use reverse side of Questionnaire.

Thank you, Leilani Riggs
Mailbox 110, Women's CoOp

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