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Exploring the Early Field Experience to Examine the Impact on Pre-Service Teacher Development

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EXPLORING THE EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCE TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT

ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Title: Exploring the Early Field Experience to Examine the Impact on Pre-Service Teacher

   Development

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   An integral part of teacher preparation programs are field experiences that allow pre-service teachers to make the connection between the theory and practice. This study examined the experiences of pre-service teachers as they participated in the early field experience component of the teacher preparation program at a small suburban college in northeastern Pennsylvania. The overarching goal of this study was to investigate the experiences of the pre-service teachers that participated in both a traditional early field experience (TEFE) or an early field experience with a virtual component (VEFE) and their interactions with the college professor and cooperating teacher to determine whether this field experience meets the criteria of an exemplary field experience.

   This phenomenological case study approach utilized content analysis to analyze data. Data was gathered from pre-service teachers participating in the VEFE, cooperating teachers, and the college professor through individual interviews.   And data from pre-service teachers participating in the TEFE was gathered through focus group interviews.

The data gathered through the examination of the triad of individuals involved in this experience show that there is clearly a perceptual misunderstanding about what the common and clear vision of good teaching is that is being taught in the college classroom versus what is being supported in the field. Pre-Service teachers from both experiences and cooperating teachers report their understanding to be more task orientated based on the requirements of the experience versus the college which is focused on good teaching behaviors and exemplary lessons. The data also reports that the pre-service teachers from both experiences are not intensely supervised by the college, but pre-service teachers that participated in the VEFE experience reported an increased level of support from the college professor. Lastly, the data shows that cooperating teachers provided a higher degree of support to the pre-service teachers in the VEFE, but this support was mostly superficial in nature and may be attributed to the cooperating teachers' interest with the technology. Based on the findings, it can be determined that neither the VEFE nor TEFE early field experience meet the criteria of an exemplary field experience.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Ginger

Thank you for your love, encouragement, and unwavering support of this endeavor.

To my children, Kiersten, Anthony (A.J.), and Jenna

Always remember…

"The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary" –Vince Lombardi

To my parents, Anthony and Sandy

Thank you for support, encouragement, and emphasis on education throughout my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Educational reform has been at the forefront of educational debate and policy making for

nearly 30 years. Most recently President Barack Obama's Reform and Invest in K-12 Education

(2009) platform and the resulting Race to the Top (2009) initiative is placing a strong emphasis

on teacher quality through evaluations that utilize student achievement data as one of its criteria

(http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education). Prior to that President Bush's No Child Left

Behind law (2002) placed a strong emphasis on school accountability and ensuring that every

student has the opportunity to be taught by a highly qualified teacher

(http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html).

The demand for highly qualified teachers is an outgrowth of the need to meet the demands of

the students in today's classrooms. These demands include being prepared to deliver instruction

to students of varying ability levels, diverse backgrounds, and learners with diverse needs to be

able to meet state and national standards. These demands, often referred to by many as the

demands of 21st century classrooms, require neophyte teachers to be ready to perform as veterans

the first day on the job. In order to meet these challenges teacher preparation institutions and

programs need to reexamine their programs to ensure their pre-service teachers are ready to meet

the demands of today's classrooms.

Preparing highly qualified and effective teachers becomes even more paramount in today's

climate when looking at the ever increasing teacher shortage throughout the country. Not only is

the United States facing a shortage of teachers, rather the United States is facing a shortage of

well prepared, highly qualified teachers. Preparing highly qualified teachers begins during initial

teacher preparation and continues on as professional educators. Linda Darling-Hammond (2004)

reports that evidence suggests that access to fully prepared and certified teachers is associated

with greater student achievement; however this access is not always available.

One of the most important aspects of initial teacher preparation programs is the field

experiences prospective teachers participate in as they progress towards becoming in-service

teachers. The overarching goals of field experiences are to extend and connect the concepts,

skills, and dispositions acquired in a student's program of study (University, 2010). These field

experiences differ in format, length, number of expereinces, and requirements among programs.

A pre-service teachers initial field experience, often refered to as the early field expereince, is

a pre-service teachers first expereince in a classroom setting. Although there is a myriad of

research on field expereinces, there is still a lot of discussion and debate about the best format in

which to deliver these experiences. In addition the results of these studies report mixed results

on the effectiveness of these expereinces (Kragler & Neirenberg, 1999).

Policy Perspective

The concern with improving the quality of teachers in our nation's schools came to the

forefront of educational policy almost thirty years ago, *A Nation At Risk (1983)* report, when the

United States Department of Education (2002) proposed federal legislation titled *No Child Left

Behind of 2001* (Public Law 107-110). As part of that legislation, the federal government

required that by the 2005 – 2006 school year that all teachers must be "highly qualified"

(www.nclb.gov). The term "highly qualified" reflects the question that researchers have been

asking for a number of years; whether or how teacher education makes a difference in teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goodlad, 1990).

The Excellence Commission's Recommendation D: Teaching; made seven specific recommendations to improve teaching preparation and teacher quality. Three of these recommendations were related to teacher preparation (www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/recomm.html). They include:

- Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and to demonstrate competence in an academic discipline. Colleges and universities offering teacher preparation programs should be judged by how well their graduates meet these criteria.

- Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.

- Incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage.

The same three recommendations are still areas of concern nearly 30 years later. These recommendations guide this research to examine how field experiences can help teacher educators foster a strong vision for good teaching and the roles of cooperating teachers and teacher educators in the preparation process with the overarching goal of preparing highly effective novice teachers.

More recently the National Council for the Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) has established a framework of standards to promote best practice in the area of teacher preparation. Research shows that teacher education programs often lack the courses and hands-

on experiences needed to prepare future teachers for classroom strategies they will need to be effective in today's world (Barabetta, Leong-Norona, & Bicard, 2005).

On a state level, in June of 2006 the Pennsylvania State Board of Education enacted Chapter 49-2 regulations relating to Certification of Professional Personnel (www.pde.psu.edu, 2010). These new regulations require increased coursework, 270 hours or 9 credits, in the area of accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive settings, increased coursework, 90 hours or 3 credits, in instruction of English language learners, and an increase in the number of field experience hours pre-service teachers must complete before they begin student teaching.

The new Chapter 49-2 and subsequent Chapter 354 of the Pennsylvania School Code established new criteria that teacher preparation programs must meet in order to certify new teachers. The regulations dissect field experiences into four stages with the first stage beginning in the first year of the teacher preparation program. Stage one is observation and stage two is exploration. These two stages combined need to provide pre-service teacher 40 hours in the field. Stage three is pre-student teaching which is required to include 150 hours of field experience before a pre-service could move into stage 4, student teaching (www.pde.psu.edu, 2010).

The Pennsylvania Department of Education believes that during these early field experiences pre-service teachers participate in a variety of activities that are intended to bridge the gap between theoretical foundations and practice in the field. According to the Chapter 354 regulations, pre-service teachers should be participating in activities such as journaling,

reflection, observations with feedback from the college supervisor, and regular classroom meetings (www.pde.psu.edu, 2010).

This research study will examine the experiences of pre-service teachers to capture the essence of their experiences and their interactions with their cooperating teacher and college professor as they complete the requirements of the teacher preparation program at a small private suburban college in northeastern Pennsylvania.

University-School Connection: Clinical Field Experiences

Traditional teacher preparation programs typically place a culminating clinical field experience, student teaching, at the end of the program curriculum. These clinical experiences are seen as opportunities for pre-service teachers to work and learn alongside in-service teachers. The value of these clinical experiences has led many teacher preparation programs to go above and beyond state requirements and look to meet national standards for teacher preparation by adding numerous field experiences earlier in the teacher preparation programs. Research shows that carefully constructed field experiences allow teachers to reinforce, apply and synthesize concepts they have learned in class (Baumgartner, Koerner, & Rust, 2002).

In the case of teacher preparation an organization called NCATE, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, sets the national standards. NCATE' s Standard 3 deals with the conceptual framework and target behaviors related to field experiences as part of the teacher preparation process. Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice states, "The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn" (NCATE, 2007).

The rationale is that field experiences and clinical practice are integral parts of teacher preparation programs (NCATE, 2007). NCATE Standard 3 includes standards and statements that stress the importance of collaboration between the college/university and their K-12 partners. The purpose for these experiences is to provide the opportunity for teacher candidates to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout the classroom components of the teacher preparation process. What is found to be important about clinical and field experiences is that they allow pre-service teachers to learn about the practice while in practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). And early field experiences have a significant impact on pre-service teachers, suggesting the need for carefully designed and authentic classroom experiences (Aiken & Day, 1999).

A study conducted on successful teacher education programs by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) looked to identify common features that make these programs successful. The results of the study cited six features: a common and clear vision of good teaching, well defined standards of practice and performance, a rigorous core curriculum, extensive use of problem based methods, intensely supervised, extended field experiences, and a strong relationship with reform minded local schools (NCTAF).

The key elements in effective field placements are the interactions between the "triad" of participants, the pre-service teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the college professor (University, 2010). Since the pre-service teachers need the guidance of the cooperating teacher and we know the cooperating has an influence on the pre-service teacher, it is important that effective field expereinces figure out a way to train cooperating teachers in the field. It has been found that pre-service teachers who receive training in feedback techniques and communication

skills have been found to provide more feedback to pre-service teachers (University, 2010).

Ramanathan & Wilkins-Canter write, at minimum cooperating teachers should receive some

training to help them understand the connection between the college's expectations and the field

expereince (2000).

Another component of an effective field experience is clear expectations and communication

between the college faculty and the host cooperating teacher. In an effort to address these

deficiencies in many field experiences, colleges and universities examined ways to bridge this

gap. Unfortunately, the research on the effectiveness of field experiences is mixed (Kragler &

Nierenberg, 1999). The number one reason cited that researchers have found for their

ineffectiveness was the lack of connectedness between course work and field placements

(Kragler & Nierenberg, 1999).

The lack of a clear focus of teacher preparation programs is an outgrowth of the lack of clear

expectations and the lack of communication between the university faculty and host teachers.

Universities must not only locate cooperating teachers that embrace the philosophies of the

teacher education program but also ensure that these classrooms will be ones where prospective

teachers can learn productively and advance knowledge and practice.   The lack of purpose and

coordination between college courses and field experiences results from the absence of a clearly

articulated theoretical framework and goals guiding the teacher education process (University,

2010).

As a way to adhere to NCATE standards and recommendations from NCTAF, the Holmes

Group, and the Carnegie Group; many universities are looking to establish partnerships with

local education associations in order to be able to use the local schools as a place for pre-service

teachers to gain clinical experiences throughout the entire teacher preparation process versus the old model of a fourteen week culminating experience at the end of their program. Through these partnerships with k-12 schools many universities have established professional development schools (PDS) to enrich the quality and quantity of field experiences pre-service teachers receive as part of their preparation program.

The benefits of professional development schools revolve around the benefits of increased time in the schools as well as both university and school officials overseeing the preparation and development of pre-service educators. Although the benefits of PDS's can be great, not every school has the resources to establish these partnerships. Therefore many universities are looking for creative ways to effectively implement more clinical experiences to allow pre-service teachers to develop their pedagogical skills before entering the classroom.

The Problem Statement

This study will compare the positive and negative aspects of a traditional early field experience and a virtual field experience at a small private college in northeastern Pennsylvania. The purpose is to determine whether or not the virtual early field experience or the traditional early field experience will better prepare pre-service teachers to progress as instructional designers and leaders as they matriculate through the teacher preparation program.

Many researchers believe restructuring teacher preparation programs is long overdue (Fullan, 1994; Metcaf-Turner & Fischetti, 1996; Rigden, 1996). The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) has moved to add validity by evaluating teacher preparation programs based on rigorous criteria. NCATE has established an accreditation process that established standards for all aspects of the teacher preparation process. Included in

these standards are performance targets for field experiences. The National Council on Teaching for America's Future also cites that intensely supervised, extended clinical experiences are characteristics of highly successful teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

The problem is not making early field experiences part of the teacher education program but rather of how to effectively, efficiently, and economically implement the field experiences to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary guidance and support that any other beginning teacher should receive. Despite the efforts by educational and government leaders, the question still remains on how to best educate and prepare pre-service teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The early field experience component of the teacher education program at small urban private college is typically completed in approximately 10 hours of on-site field work. Students participating in this experience are required to spend eight periods/days observing in the classroom in which they are going to design and teach two lessons. Pre-Service teachers are assigned to a cooperating teacher who serves as their mentor throughout the eight days they are observing in the field. Additionally, after the pre-service teacher teaches their two lessons, the cooperating teacher provides feedback to the pre-service teacher based on the college's observation tool and the pre-service teacher is also required to write a guided lesson reflection based on this feedback.

This phenomenological case study approach will examine the experiences of the traditional early field experience participants (TEFE), the virtual early field experience (VEFE) participants, the cooperating teachers that hosted the VEFE participants, and the college professor. The VEFE participants completed the same steps as the traditional early field experience participants

with the exception of the virtual component that will supplant one of the on-site lessons for pre-service teachers completing lessons in which the video-conferencing technology is available. During the virtual delivery component, the pre-service teacher will deliver a lesson via Elluminate Live videoconferencing software into the on-site classroom. Each student in the on-site classroom will be in front of a computer. This is a synchronous application that will allow for real-time interaction between the pre-service teacher live at the college and the students in an actual school classroom. During the virtual lesson, the pre-service teachers will be on campus delivering instruction with a college faculty supervisor who serves as a coach. The cooperating teacher in the on-site classroom will be with the students and be responsible for classroom management and non-academic issues. The pre-service teacher will be responsible to execute and carry out his/her lesson plan.

Research Questions

The following questions frame this research:

Does the early field experience address the standards of an exemplary field experience?

1) Does the early field experience communicate a common and clear vision of good teaching? How does a virtual early field experience compare with a traditional on-site field experience in pre-service teacher development as it relates to developing a common clear vision of good teaching?

2) Will a virtual field experience allow pre-service teachers a more meaningful early field experience than a traditional early field experience in terms interactions and feedback with the college professor. Will one of these experiences help to produce better prepared novice teachers?

3) Does a virtual field experience allow for pre-service teachers to receive more feedback compared to a traditional early field experience from their cooperating teachers? Are virtual and on-site experiences intensely supervised and aligned to the standards established by the college?

Background for the Study

Three historic traditions have influenced the ways in which institutions of higher education have prepared teachers prior to the publication of *A Nation at Risk (1983)*. These three traditions are classified as Normal Schools and Teachers Colleges, Liberal Arts Colleges, and University Schools of Education (Feiman-Nemser, 1999). In more recent times the large majority of new teachers enter the teaching ranks through four-year undergraduate teacher education programs, but there was a time in which many believed that elementary teachers did not need a college education and that secondary teachers did need to matriculate through a professional preparation program (Feiman-Nemser, 1999).

The Normal School, established in the 1920's, traditionally provided beginning educators a brief course of study to help students master the subjects they would teach as well as gaining some insight on managing instruction. "The typical curriculum consisted of reviews of elementary subjects (e.g. reading, spelling, and arithmetic), some secondary academic subjects (e.g. geometry and philosophy) and pedagogical subjects (e.g. history of education, psychology, teaching methods, observation and practice" (Monroe, 1952). Normal school programs typically lasted about two years.

The Liberal Arts tradition is the oldest form of teacher preparation dating back to the 1800's in regard to the preparation of secondary teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1999). The focus of this

tradition is to highlight the relationship between liberal education and teaching. According to this tradition, "to be liberally educated and prepared to teach are equivalent" (Borrowman, 1965, p. 1). The driving principle behind the liberal arts teacher preparation program was to prepare secondary teachers.

The Liberal Arts philosophy later evolved into university schools of education at the turn of the twentieth century. The driving principle behind their development was the movement to professionalize various occupations. Their purpose was to prepare educations leaders by implementing scientific research as part of the curriculum (Feiman-Nemser, 1999). Educators wanted to place teacher education in the modern research university hoping to dignify education as a career, lead to the development of specialized knowledge base, and support the professional preparation of educational leaders (Clifford and Guthrie, 1988).

Since the publication for the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report titled *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, a number of professional and government organizations have called for reform in all aspects of education. Ultimately school reform efforts have been motivated over the dissatisfaction of both the government and public's perception of our nations failing schools. The lack of improvement in America's schools after the reform movement began in the mid-1980's led educators and policy makers to refocus their attention from improving schools to improving teaching (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001).

Two reports quickly followed as a reaction to *A Nation at Risk* that focused on improving teachers and more specifically the improving the quality of beginning teachers. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986), made a series of recommendations to improve the teaching profession in a report titled, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. In the

report, *A Nation Prepared*, the Carnegie Forum recommended that a governing board be

established to develop performance standards for teachers. As a result, the National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was established in 1987. The purpose of the NBPTS

was to establish policy related to teacher certification. A main focus of the policies established

were to advocate the need for pre-service teachers to be prepared in the context of real schools to

ensure that new teachers are prepared to deal with the demands of k-12 schools.

Additionally the Holmes Group of Education Deans published two reports titled *Tomorrow's*

Teachers (1986) and *Tomorrow's Schools: Principles for Design of Professional Development*

Schools (1990) which prompted university faculty to begin to restructure the way pre-service

teachers were prepared (Kuchinski, 2004). These two reports spurred another reform initiative

that led to the establishment of Professional Development Schools (PDS's). John Goodlad called

for the establishment of these schools in *A Place Called School (1984)*.

Since 1984, the numbers of school-university partnerships have increased dramatically. In

1995, the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) lists 2,322 partnerships. (Moguel)

"Many of these programs have joined with local school districts to create Professional

Development Schools. Like teaching hospitals, these schools aim to provide sites for state-of-

the-art practice that are organized to support the training of new professionals, extend the

training of veteran teachers, and sponsor collaborative research and inquiry" (Darling-Hammond,

1994). These Professional Development Schools take on a wide variety of designs. "In concept

and in practice, involvement came from college educators supervising a small cadre of student

teachers on-site, to a symbiotic partnership in which school and university personnel share the

decisions of operating the school and the entire length and breadth of the teacher education

program" (Goodlad, 1993). Professional Development Schools are not something that is put into place; rather it is something in which two entities evolve into. In a study completed by the Holmes Group on this topic, they report that, "It is as much as a process as a place…" (Moguel).

Although there is a tremendous amount of research that supports the effectiveness of the Professional Development model of teacher preparation, PDS's are not always efficient and cost effective to put into place. Therefore many colleges and universities implement the medical model of teacher preparation. This model promotes a dependence on field placements in which a variety of cooperating teachers serve as host to pre-service teachers as they complete their clinical hours in the field. The question becomes, how do teacher educators make these experiences worthwhile learning experiences.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2005) writes: A study of seven exemplary teacher preparation programs was evaluated and common themes were identified. The common themes are:

- A common and clear vision of good teaching that is consistent in clinical work as well as coursework;

- Well defined standards of performance and practice that are used to design coursework and clinical experiences;

- Extended clinical experiences that reflect the program's vision for good teaching, are interwoven in the coursework , and carefully mentored; and

- Promote strong relationships, based on common knowledge and beliefs, between colleges and reform minded schools.

The results of this research can provide some valuable information to both higher education institutions that prepare pre-service teachers and K-12 local education associations. Both of

these entities can look at the early field experience component of teacher education from both financial and quality aspects. If prior research leads us to believe that the early field experience component can be a valuable part of teacher development, the value and procedure in which it is implemented needs to be researched further.

From the perspective of higher education it is not financially feasible to send teacher educators to host sites for each of their pre-service teachers even though research tells us that these teachers need to be scaffold in these situations as they develop. And from the perspective of K-12 schools, students participating in early field experiences often come to the school in high numbers, become intrusive to the everyday operations of the school, and could be in need of a lot of attention from practicing teachers that may not be readily equipped to help them. The value of the research to identify the effective methods for providing early field experiences to pre-service teachers that will best prepare them to be prepared to meet the demands of today's classrooms.

Theoretical Foundation

There are two theoretical foundations in which this study is being based upon. First, it is understood that making the connection between theory and practice is an essential component to a teacher preparation program. This is evidenced in the movement toward professional development schools. Increasingly more research is finding that effective teachers are the single most influential factor in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Research conducted by Marzano (2003) indicates teachers' actions in their classrooms have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement.

Recent research on exemplary field experiences identify common components that be used to serve as a measuring stick for other teacher preparation programs when it examines the value of their field experiences. These characteristics identified by Darling-Hammond (2005) show a strong connection between the triad of individuals that play a role in the field experience. These characteristics include a common and clear vision of good teaching, experiences that are interwoven between coursework and clinical practice, and a strong relationship between the college and the hosting cooperating teachers.

Learning Process of Pre-Service Teachers

Lev Vygotsky's views on cognitive development, also known as Sociocultural Theory, explain how pre-service teachers can develop through the use of social interactions and instruction. Vygotsky believed that social interaction was the primary cause of cognitive development. In order for social interactions to produces cognitive development an individual must incorporate mediation processes. These mediation processes allow an individual's thought processes to develop through the intervention of another person's more advanced thought processes.

This theory, when applied to practice, is analogous to the relationship between the pre-service teacher and his/her cooperating teacher in the field. The role of the cooperating teachers in the field is to support the pre-service teacher that is coming to them with certain amount of knowledge from their coursework and then helping them to develop cognitively to apply that knowledge in the field.

This study will examine a cohort group of pre-service teachers as they participate in the early field experience component of their teacher preparation program. Each VEFE participant will

participate in both the traditional field experience and virtual field experience for comparison

purposes.   The theoretical and conceptual framework above will serve as a base for the research

questions that form the foundation of this study.

Perceptions of Professional Preparation

Due to the time consuming and financial inefficiency of university faculty supervising the

early field experiences of pre-service teachers, it is critical to examine alternative observation

methods for pre-service teachers. In addition, how effective is the feedback pre-service teachers

are receiving from their cooperating teacher and college supervisor as they work on overall skill

development. This phenomenological case study approach will look to examine the early field

experience component of a traditional teacher education program at a small urban liberal arts

college in northeastern Pennsylvania to determine if the program exhibit the common themes of

an exemplary field experience in addition to examining any benefits to the pre-service teachers

of a virtual component to the early field experience.

Data will be collected through a variety of qualitative methods. Interview and focus group

interviews will be used to gather data. Data will be gathered from the perspective of the teacher

educator, the cooperating teachers, and the pre-service teachers participating in both the TEFE

and VEFE.

Definitions of Key Terms

Learning Management System (LMS) is a software application or Web-based technology used to

plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management

system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student

participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system may also provide

students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums

Pre-Service Teachers – For the purposes of this study, pre-service teacher refers to students enrolled in a four year undergraduate education program or a one year post-baccalaureate education program.

Traditional Early Field Experience (TEFE) – For the purpose of this study, the traditional early field experience is a component of the teacher preparation program at a small private institution in northeastern Pennsylvania. Sophomore and junior students enrolled in the course, *Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers.*

Virtual Component – For the purpose of this study, the virtual field experience is a component of the teacher preparation program at a small private higher education institution in northeastern Pennsylvania. Students enrolled in an undergraduate course, *Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers* will conduct a virtual lesson via Elluminate Live web-conferencing software.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) **--** is a software system designed to help teachers by facilitating the management of educational courses for their students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration.

Delimitation of Study

   The sample for this study involves participants from four different perspectives. There will be one teacher educator from the college as well as a participant observer that works in the teacher preparation program at the college. In addition, four cooperating teachers from multiple secondary schools in close geographic location to the college will participate. There will also be

seven virtual early field experience (VEFE) and sixteen traditional early field experience (TEFE) secondary pre-service teachers enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education program at a suburban institution of higher education located in the Northeast region of Pennsylvania that conduct a virtual lesson. The participants in this study will be participating in the early field experience program requirement.

Students enrolled in this class will be either juniors or non-traditional students at the college. This will be the first teaching experience for all students. Every student will have the opportunity to instruct in the same classroom both in person and via synchronous instruction.

Limitations of the Study

This study has limits in its sampling procedures and the generalizability of the findings. The entire sample for this study will consist of seven VEFE and sixteen TEFE pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education program, four cooperating teachers from local public schools, one teacher educator, and a participant observer.

In spite of the limitations of the study, it is worthwhile to conduct this research in order to explore efficient methods of enriching the current early field experience of pre-service teachers enrolled at this small private institution. The findings of this study will provide the college instructors and administrators information related to this approach as they investigate methods of improving the learning experience during the early field experience. Additionally it may spur further research in the use of synchronous instruction and observation to develop the skills of pre-service teachers.

Significance of the Study

The growing body of research on teacher preparation programs tells us that field experiences should occur early and often as part of teacher preparation programs. The problem that most institutions run into is the high cost and lack of instructors to properly supervise and provide feedback for every experience. Therefore, identifying more efficient methods of observing and providing feedback to pre-service teachers need to be identified in order to develop more effective teachers.

Data collected from pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, and college faculty will be utilized to measure the impact of both experiences. This study will add to the current body of knowledge related to teacher preparation programs and will identify better ways to prepare teachers for today's complex classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is examine the phenomenon of the early field experience component as part of the teacher preparation program at a small private urban college in Northeastern Pennsylvania that is NCATE accredited. This experience will be examined to determine whether or not the program is meeting the six criteria of exemplary field experiences as determined by the Commission on Teaching for America's Future (2003). These six criteria serve as the theoretical foundation of this study. The criteria include, a common vision of good teaching, well defined standards of practice and performance, rigorous core curriculum, extensive use of problem based methods, strong relationships with local schools, and intensely supervised and extended field experiences.

For the purpose of this study, the characteristics of exemplary field experiences that relate to this study include a common vision of good teaching, well defined practice and performance, intensely supervised field experiences and strong relationships with local K-12 schools. This study will also examine the impact of a virtual component to the early field experience as an alternative method of delivery. This experience will be evaluated against the same criteria as stated above.

This chapter includes an in-depth examination of literature that relates to the core concepts of this study. The first part of this literature review will examine the research and theories that relate to pre-service teacher development, reflection-in-action, and development of pre-service teacher knowledge. In addition, literature related to exemplary field experiences and research

studies on early field experiences are reviewed. Lastly, research related to the use of video conferencing technology as a method to deliver or observe field experiences was reviewed.

Pre-Service Teacher Development

A major job of a teacher educator is to help aspiring teachers work out the problem of teaching a topic and the methods to be used to effectively teach that topic (Dils, 2005). The overarching goal of a teacher preparation program is to prepare future teachers to have a thorough understanding of the conceptual framework of the teaching and learning process. In addition, pre-service teachers need to be able to apply that conceptual framework in diverse classrooms. The essence of the process of the teacher preparation program can be captured in a quote from John Dewey.

According to Dewey (1910) (cited by Dils, 2005):

> The questions a teacher should ask in working out the problem of teaching a topic [include] what preparations have my pupils for attacking this subject? What familiar experiences of theirs are available? What have they already learned that will come to their assistance? How shall I present the matter so as to fit economically and effectively into their present equipment? What pictures shall I show? To what objects shall I call their attention? What incidents shall I relate? What comparisons shall I lead them to draw, what similarities to recognize? What is the general principle toward which the whole discussion should point as its conclusion? By what applications shall I try to fix, to clear up, and to make real their grasps of this general principle? What activities of their own may bring it home to them as a genuinely significant principle? (p. 205).

Recent research related to the development of pre-service teacher effectiveness identifies cognitive abilities, content and pedagogy knowledge, reflection practices' and teachers' affective characteristics as important factors in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Stronge, 2002). The theories guiding this research are based on the different aspects of developing pre-service teacher learning, knowledge, and pedagogy through the experience of an early field experience component to the teacher preparation process.

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation Programs

Introduction

Over the past several years, a new consensus has emerged that teacher quality is a significant factor in student achievement and academic performance (Cochran-Smith, 2004). The search for more effective ways to integrate educational learning theory with teaching practice and vice versa has been an ongoing topic for educational researchers (Moore, 2003). Since the publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983, followed by other education and teacher quality research projects such as the Holmes Group (1986 & 1995) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 2005, the quest to improve the instruction and learning process has been ongoing. Some of the more recent findings show that schools of education are revamping their programs to emphasize content knowledge, increased use of technology, and creation of professional development school models (Edutopia, 2008).

Need for Change

"For teacher education, this is perhaps the best of times and the worst of times" (Darling-Hammond, 2010 p. 35). Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 legislation under the Bush administration, teacher quality has been under scrutiny. Under President

Obama's administration the commitment to the continuous improvement of teacher quality remains at the forefront of redesigning and improving education. The Obama administration has proposed a $6 billion annual investment in improving public education, focus areas include improved teacher education, perfromance based assessments for teachers, mentoring for new teachers, and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In addition, part of the Federal Stimulus package of 2009 foucsed on developing teacher quality through residency programs and strengthened clinical expereinces (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Most recent literature cites the imperative need for teacher educators to promote change and look for additional ways to further relationships and connections between P-12 and higher education (Eifler, 2004). The need for change becomes most evidenced by the belief statement that we teach how we were taught. The skills, attitudes, and practices of classroom teachers are inextricably linked to the pre-service preparation they received at the university level (Eifler, 2004). The challenge is for teacher education programs to disband outdated practices that produce mediocrity.

John Goodlad, (1990)twenty years ago, wrote, "the teacher education train is not on the tracks, the engine is not coupled to the cars, nor the cars to one another, and the Board of Directors is not even sure where the train should go" (p. 270). Following along with the idea that teacher quality is one of the most important, if not the most important, significant factor in student achievement, the need to provide direction becomes paramount (Cochran-Smith, 2004). By knowing that teacher quality is a corollary to student achievement, the importance of identifying effective practices in teacher education becomes a conduit for school improvement.

The case for tighter government regulation of teacher education is reflected in increased federal and state control over the inputs of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Examples of these inputs would be the number of courses, the kind and content of courses, and the type of field experiences all pre-service teachers would participate in. As part of controlling the inputs to teacher preparation the federal and state governments are trying to control the outcomes or outputs of teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Examples of the intended outcomes of increased regulation included assessments of the impact of teacher preparation on teacher learning, k-12 practices, and student learning.

The case for increased deregulation lies in the innovative practices being employed by many teacher preparation institutions (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Advocates of deregulation push their agenda in an effort to break the monopoly of the profession (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Many of these programs include specialized training for military veterans and former technology workers, online training programs, and various other programs that include minimal initial coursework with immediate classroom responsibility and on the job training (Zeichner, 2006).

The ongoing debate between the professionalization, regulation, and deregulation of teacher preparation standards and procedures continue on as we move into the 21st Century. In a growing number of research arenas related to teacher preparation the "science of teacher education" has been elevated (National Research Council, 2001 cited by Cochran-Smith et al., 2005). Lagemann (2000) writes "the history of educational research throughout the 20th century was a troubling one, with "science" a complex and elusive objective, leaving the research on teacher education has been troubling" (cited by Cochran-Smith et al., 2005). The purposefulness

of utilizing the "scientific rigor of research" to study teacher preparation can lead to identifying effective outcomes related to teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Using a scientific approach to teacher education and studying teacher education as a learning problem allows us to assume that teacher preparation, teacher performance, and educational outcomes are related to one another in a complex way (Cochran-Smith, 2005). The science of education or the scientific research base for education needs to be expanded according to a 2004 report by the United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (Cochran-Smith, 2004). The utilization of scientifically based research and evidenced-based education emphasize the power of science to solve problems related to teacher quality and teacher preparation (Institution of Education Sciences, 2003).

A large body of research has cited that the missing paradigm in the study of teacher education was research on how teachers understand and use content knowledge. Over the past two decades a number of scholars have suggested that what is missing now is research that connects teacher knowledge and beliefs to pupil's learning, including academic achievement as well as social and emotional learning (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004).

Field Experiences

In their most recent study on teacher education, the AERA cited research on methods courses and field experiences as priority number four for study in their report (Cochran-Smith et al., 2005). Teacher educators struggle with how to best create learning experiences powerful enough to transform teachers' classroom practice (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Behavior change is the key goal and focus of the teacher educator. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher

Education (NCATE) Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice describe these experiences:

Field experiences and clinical practice are integral program components for the initial and advanced preparation of teacher candidates and candidates for other school personnel roles. They provide the opportunity for candidates to apply their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a variety of settings appropriate to the content and level of their program. Designed and sequenced well, they help candidates develop the competence necessary to begin or continue careers as teachers or other school professionals (www.ncate.org).

Field experiences hold great opportunity for pre-service teachers to practice instructional decision making but in most cases the focus of the field experience practicum shifts toward routine tasks and procedural concerns (McBee, 1998). Many of the differences between the theories being taught in the university classroom do not connect with the beliefs and ideals of the cooperating teacher for the field experience. Rita Moore quoted one of the cooperating teachers advise to a pre-service teacher under his direction during a field experience related to her 2003 study who said, "Forget the theory stuff you learned in those methods courses – that's not the real world…that's not real teaching" (p. 31).

More recent research on pre-service teacher education has shifted its focus. Historically, the research related to the field experiences focused on discrete, observable, and measurable teaching behaviors that could impact student achievement or attitudes (Clift et al., 2005). More recently, the research related to the field experience component of pre-service teacher education programs has investigated the interactions among thought, intention, belief, behavior, and content knowledge of pre-service teachers (Clift et al., 2005). Teacher educators examine pre-

service teaching field experiences for more effective ways to develop a reciprocal relationship between learning theory and teaching practice (Moore, 2003). Researchers have identified Professional Development School (PDS) models as the most ideal model to bridge the divide between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Professional Development Schools (PDS) are partnerships between universities and K-12 institutions. PDS's are formed around a four-fold mission (NCATE, 2010): the preparation of new teacher, development of faculty, inquiry directed at the improvement of practice, and enhanced student achievement. PDS's serve as models of good practice that demonstrate the positive outcomes of collegiality, reflection, and inquiry. They most closely coorelate the characteristics of exemplary field experiences.

Further analysis of the research related to field experiences has identified the lack of congruence between the beliefs of teacher educators and the beliefs of cooperating teachers in the field as a negative factor in the development of pre-service teachers. Researchers have suggested that the disjuncture between program components often indicate a view of knowledge that is fragmented, not presenting a holistic view of knowing and understanding (Guyton et al., 1990). Twenty years later Darling-Hammond (2010) addresses this issue by writing that research shows significant headway on this issue has been made through reform efforts. She further writes:

At the heart of much of this progress has been an effort to tap the wisdom of practice through the involvement of strong practitioners and to connect theory to practice, both through well-designed clinical experiences, often in professional development schools, and through the use

of case methods, action research, and performance assessments (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p.
36).

This issue was further studied and several suggestions were made to teacher educators based
on the observations of several researchers. In the *Handbook of Research in Teacher Education*
(Sikula et al., 1996), the researchers suggested that teacher educators' focus on more of a
standards based curriculum as it relates to instructional methods and field experiences.   One of
the common themes of exemplary field experiences is establishing and communicating clear
standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010).   In the chapter related to laboratory experiences from the
Handbook of Research in Teacher Education, the researchers recommended a movement toward
defining the purpose of field experiences and clarifying the goals of teacher education but there
is still insufficient data to determine whether or not certain programs are effective (McIntyre et
al., 1996). By defining and clarifying clear standards and behaviors of good teaching, the triad
on stakeholders, the pre-service teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the teacher educator, to
focus on the same behaviors.

After the publication of the second edition of the *Handbook of Research in Teacher
Education* (2006) the research base on field experiences shifted to more of a foundation in
cognitive psychology. The research related to cognitive psychology has revealed that beginning
teachers are resistant to practices recommended by teacher education curricula because they do
not fit into their beliefs (Wideen et al., 1998). Wideen argued that there is evidence that at times
teachers' beliefs change, but not always in desirable ways (1998). This represents a knowledge
base that teacher's beliefs can play an important role in their development and effectiveness.

Clift et al. writes, "One's beliefs, intentions, knowledge frames, and skills interact continuously in classroom teaching" (2005, p. 313).

The behavior change needs to occur early on in the pre-service teacher preparation program. The literature confirms that pre-service teachers learn a number of instructional methods for teaching but they do not recognize the specific situations in which to use these methods (Korthagen et al., 1999). Linda Darling-Hammond writes, "Often, the clinical side of teacher education has been fairly haphazard, depending on the idiosyncrasies of loosely selected placements with little guidance about what happens in them and little connection to university work (2009, p. 11). To align what pre-service teacher's are taught and how they behave, in order for university instruction to be worthwhile, there must be collaboration among the pre-service teacher, university instructor, and the cooperating teacher must take place (Helfrich, 2007; Harlin, 1999).

As mentioned earlier in this review of literature, pre-service teachers become bogged down with procedural and management concerns early in their field experiences (Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner et al., 1981). This is why the behavior change needs to occur early in the process and cognitive and belief systems will need to change in order to effectively change teaching in-service teaching practices. A review of the literature informs us that there is a need for further research related to how pre-service teachers transform their own beliefs and experiences into effective pedagogy (Agee, 1997).

Research on Field Experiences

For decades now, researchers such as Dewey (1965) and Barth (2001) as well as professional groups such as the Carnegie Forum on Education (1986) and the Holmes Group (1986) have

advocated for the essential role of field experiences in the teacher preparation process (Capraro et al., 2010). According to the Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Training America's Teachers report titled *Investing in Great Teachers for All Students* (2006), new teachers lament their limited field experiences and express an interest in increasing their field experience requirements. A field experience is defined as a placement of teacher candidates in actual classrooms in order to observe and practice the craft of teaching (Grable, Hunt, & Kiekel, 2009).

While the field experience research base is not extensive, teacher preparation programs need to become more systematically structured and have more intensive field experiences that involve reflection and inquiry (Capraro, 2010). "The existing research base regarding field experiences appears to be somewhat equivocal as the learning that occurs during field experiences is highly contextualized and uneven (Capraro, 2010 P. 1)." A synthesis of research conducted by the United States Department of Education found that "experienced and newly certified teachers alike see clinical experiences as a powerful – sometimes the single most powerful – component of teacher preparation (Ferinni-Mundy, 2001)." The issue remains that schools of education have still been unable to agree on the 'best practice" in utilizing field experiences to maximize pre-service teacher learning. Teacher educators constantly struggle to link knowledge gained by pre-service teachers in their coursework to their experiences in the classroom (Kingsley, 2007).

Research conducted by Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) found that the shortcomings of the pre-service teacher education programs they studied were their lack of a strong apprenticeship style approach to field experiences as well as a lack of a cohesive curriculum that was tied to these field experiences (Kingsley, 2007).

Over the past two decades there has been significant headway on improving teacher preparation and quality. Standards of focus for improvement were: creating stronger field placement experiences, strengthening coursework around critical areas such as pedagogy, English language learners, and special needs students, and connecting coursework directly to clinical practices, often in professional development schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Effective Field Experiences

Field experiences should be designed and implemented to for an effective bridge between the theoretical aspects of teaching and the practical aspects of teaching. Allsopp et al. (2006) identified six research-based recommendations to teacher educators to link theory to learning:

1) Changes in class schedules

2) More supervisor – teacher involvement

3) Enhanced orientations

4) Restructured observations by university instructors

5) Course assignments related to field experiences

6) Collection of data

These recommendations have been addressed by many school of education throughout the country and there is evidence that these schools are making progress. Darling-Hammond (2010) writes:

Many schools of education undertook successful transformations—using the standards to redesign their programs; creating stronger clinical practice; strengthening coursework around critical areas like student learning and development, assessment, subject matter pedagogy, and

teaching of English language learners and special needs students; and connecting this

coursework directly to practice in much more extensive practicum settings (p. 36).

In a study by Capraro et al. (2010), the researchers looked to directly compare the

effectiveness of different models of field-based learning experiences based on standards for

exemplary field experiences. This study utilized INTASC standards as a benchmark (Interstate

New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2002). This study was focused on answering

two questions (Capraro et al., 2010):

1) Do different field-based experiences affect a teacher candidate's self perception of their

professional competence as defined by selective INTASC standards?

2) Do teacher candidate's completing different field experiences rate themselves differently

on knowledge, disposition, and performance as measured by latent variables?

There were 135 pre-service teachers that participated in the study. They were all

undergraduate students' participating in an intensely field-based teacher education program

(Capraro et al., 2010). The sample size was randomly split into equal thirds (n=45) for each type

field experience (Capraro et al., 2010). Students were assigned to one of three field-based

treatment groups, control, PDS, and inquiry. This study was conducted in the semester

immediately prior to student teaching.

The participants in the study particpated in many of the same expereinces and completed

many of the same assignements. One of the main differences among the field-based treatments

was the time spent in the field. The researchers did not believe that time spent in the field

without a treatment was beneficial to any of the treatment groups versus the control group

(Capraro et al., 2010). The team members associated with each field experience were well

versed in the procedures and expectations of each type of placement and the requirements of each placement.

Pre-Service teachers in the control group were in the field 28 days during the semester. In addition, they visited four other classrooms besides that of their cooperating teacher and interviewed various school personnel. Pre-Service teachers in the Professional Development School (PDS) treatment completed 56 days in the field during one semester. In the PDS group, the pre-service teachers particpated in seminars, attended faculty meetings, and met regularly with their cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Pre-Service teachers in the inquiry treatement group also completed 56 days in the field during one semester, but part of their expereince was to plan and conduct an Action Research inquiry project. Memebers of the inquiry group were also committed to student teaching under the guidance of the same cooperating teacher with whom they worked with for the Action Research project.

This quantitative study used the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Readiness Survey (IRS) to collect data. This is a 63 item Likert type instrument designed to measure the ten beginning teacher standards (Capraro et al., 2010). Responses ranged from 1 "not yet prepared" to 5 "well prepared" (Capraro et al., 2010). Data was analyzed using 95% confidence intervals for each treatment group.

In relation to the first research question from this study, results show that after IRS results were analyzed, the Inquiry treatment group had consistently higher mean ratings that the Control and PDS groups. When comparing the Control and PDS groups there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the INTASC standards (Capraro et al.,

2010).   Additionally, all statistically siginificant differences favored the Inquiry group versus the PDS and Control groups (Capraro et al., 2010).

Analysis related to the second research question for this study shows that there is no statistically significant differences among the treatment groups, but the analysis shows that the Inquiry group slightly outperformed the PDS and Control groups. The overall results of this study show that the pre-service teachers perception of their competence to teach was highly rated across all groups (Capraro et al., 2010). These results led the researchers to believe that the pre-service teachers percieve that their coursework and field-based experiences are relevant and somewhat connected. These results show that there is little effect between the different field experience delivery models.

These results highlight the importance of aligning field based expereinces to the theoretical framework from the university classroom. Another interesting finding from the results of this study was that it was more important to effectively spend time in the field than it is to just log time in the field. Lastly, the researchers assert that the Inquiry group was best equipped to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practice in the field. And that these inquiry expereinces create a more effective field expereince than a PDS or traditional model (Capraro et al., 2010).

Digital Early Field Experiences

Although there are a multitude of benefits to pre-service teacher preparation that are garnered through field experiences, the dilemma continues to be how to effectively manage these onsite field placements. Issues that arise as a result of pre-service teacher field experiences include university supervisor time constraints, the cost of travel to onsite locations, and the incongruence

of theory being taught by the university and what is being demonstrated and expected in the school based classroom (Hunt & Grable, 2008). Utilizing video conferencing technologies to supervise pre-service teachers conducting their field expereinces provide flexibility in scheduling, eliminating costs, eliminating travel time, and aligning a clear set of standards that marry theory and practice (Hunt & Grable, 2008).

Teacher preparation programs continuously need to examine ways to reinvent themselves to effectively train pre-service teachers to meet the demands of today's classrooms (Grable, Hunt, Kiehle, 2009). Exemplary teacher preparation programs are evolving as they learn from research to effectively train pre-service teachers. Field experiences are an integral and essential part of these exemplary teacher preparation programs. The dilema among initial teacher preparation programs on how to manage onsite field placements continues to be a cause of disconnection and concern among teacher educators. Simpson states, " It may be impossible to to release the lecturer from other teaching duties to visit the students who are on field expereince. Cost is a consideration. Travel is expensive" (Grable, Hunt, & Kiekel, 2009, p. 244).

Technology, more specifically, web-based video conferencing software has allowed field expereinces to take on different formats. In a study conducted by Skylar, Higgins, Boone, Jones, Pierce, and Gelfer (2005), they found that there is no significant difference in achievement or satisfaction among the students participating in a traditional environment versus a virtual environment. The key questions are whether or not online field experiences provide an effective learning environment for the pre-service teacher and does online supervision provide effective information for the candidate to be successful in the classroom?

The Distance Learning Center (DLC) in Central Arkansas conducted a pilot study in which Math, Science, and Business secondary pre-service teachers delivered instruction to rural and suburban schools (Grable, Hunt, & Kiekel, 2009). The DLC provides sychronous, interactivce teaching/learning expereinces in real time, not asychronous. Data was collected to compare traditional and distance field experiences. Data was collected along three domains using the Pathways Plus field evaluation form.

Assuming that the data collection tool is valid, the data collected indicates that there is no real difference in the average scores of the pre-service teacher candidates in the traditional setting versus the virtual setting. In addition to analyzing comparative scores from the Pathwise Plus system, pre-service teacher participants recorded their thoughts in reflective journals which were analyzed for comparison. Respondent "A" reported that some of the similarities among the virtual and traditional settings are homework, quizzes, papers, journals and exams. But one of the major differences is how these products are evaluated. Another difference cited by respondent "A" was that when teaching in the virtual environment there needs to be a greater level of organization and pre-planning before instruction. As a result there seems to be a more student-centered focus in the virtual environment. Respondent "A" also feels that they had a better relationship when teaching in the virtual setting because students were more focused on their computer screens and paid better attention to the technology and the manipulatives.

Respondent "B" reflects much less about the teaching and learning process and their development as a pre-service teacher and more about the concerns they have regarding the cooperation from the classroom teacher on the other end of the Distance Learning Center. This respondents main concern centered around the level on technology skills the cooperating teacher

has on the other end. The concern from this respondent is that the technology may not work properly if the cooperating teacher isn't adequately trained.

Respondent "C" in a similar type statement from that made by respondent "A" believes that teaching in a virtual environment requires a greater amount of planning and organization, but they felt that they had more flexibility to adapt or revise their lessons in the traditional setting. Respondent "C" didn't like that fact that their teaching style was constrained by the fact that they were teaching via distance learning technology. All respondents agreed that the curriculum is the same whether you are delivering instruction in a traditional or virtual setting, but planning and organization as well as a stronger focus on the student teacher relationship is a benefit of the virtual environment.

Issues with Pre-Service Teacher Development Research

The majority of research on the impact of field experiences and methods courses focus on teacher conception of their content areas, the concept of the teaching and learning process, and their abilities to translate theory into practice (Clift & Brady, 2005).   A growing number of researchers are moving away from research on methods courses to focus more on making changes of beliefs and concepts. Pre-Service teachers as well as experienced teachers often have difficulty in making the connection between theory and practice. It seems clear that instructional practice is impacted by individual, instructional, and contextual factors (Anderson et al., 2000). Anderson et al. (2000) writes, "Students enter into teacher education programs moving along a certain trajectory, which is acted upon by contacts with faculty, peers, cooperating teachers, children, and program materials." (p. 567). The result of this is the continuous reorientation of the preparation trajectory.

Current research does not give teacher educators the ability to measure the impact of field experiences and methods courses on the long term professional development of pre-service teachers. Researchers claim that current studies provide for only short term understandings of the impact of their interventions but many believe that they need to conduct longitudinal studies to determine the impact of theories about teacher education (Clift & Brady, 2005).

Another issue related to the research is that a lot of the research studies on field experiences and methods courses utilize case study methodologies. These studies can be invaluable when they provide a complete analysis of the variables isolated in the studies (Clift & Brady, 2005). The drawback is that it is very difficult to generalize results of the study from one population to another. Although there are limitations based on the reviewed studies, there is an ever increasing body of knowledge about field experiences and methods courses as they relate to pre-service teacher development that can steer future research.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 reviewed theories, research, and literature that pertain to learning aspects of pre-service teacher development. The review of current and past literature has been examined to determine how important these experiences can be in pre-service teacher development as well as the most efficient and beneficial way is to deliver that experience. Reviewing the preceding literature has informed this study from a variety of aspects: a) theories and research related to the development of pre-service teachers b) research on the effects of various types of early field experience delivery methods, traditional versus virtual, and c) the obstacles and challenges that pre-service teachers and teacher educators face in the development process.

The research theme of this study is that of pre-service teacher education programs, especially as it relates to field experiences. The body of literature reviewed in this area indicates that there is a need for change within teacher preparation programs due to the complexity of teaching. The evidence based of the review of literature suggests that teachers need to be better prepared in the real world context of schools with longer and more structured field experiences so they are prepared to deal with the rigorous demands being placed on the K-12 educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2001, Abdal-Haqq, 1998).

John Goodlad (1990) writes, "The teacher education train is not on the tracks, the engine is not coupled to the cars, nor the cars to one another, and the Board of Directors is not even sure where the train should go." (p. 270). His quote illustrates the need for more rigorous program requirements with more time and energy being focused on field experiences of pre-service teachers. A higher quality program and properly constructed field experiences can improve the quality of teacher education programs. Cochran-Smith writes that teacher quality is one of the most important factors in student achievement (2004). With this in mind it becomes essential to improve pre-service teacher programs as a conduit to increased student achievement and school improvement.

Field experiences have been cited by the American Education Research Association as a priority area of research in teacher education. Field experiences are seen as an opportunity to create learning experiences that can bring about behavior change (Cochran-Smith et al., 2005; Putnam & Barko, 2000). It is evident through the literature that behavior change is the goal of many teacher educators. Field experiences provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to practice instructional decision making but the research shows that many field experience

relationships do not provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to practice do to a disconnect of beliefs and ideals between the theories and practices of the university faculty and the cooperating teacher.

The value of school-based experience features strongly in discussions on what constitutes critical aspects of teacher education programs (Zeichner, 1992, 1993; Northfield, 1993; Collins, 1998) yet it is also recognized as one of the most costly components of the programs to implement.

The question remains on how to best provide pre-service teacher field experiences that offer support and feedback from the teacher educator that is in congruence with the ideals and beliefs of the university. The best model would be to have a university supervisor in the field at all times but this is not feasible and not affordable based in current structures. As a result of the high stakes of teacher preparation, it is important to gather data on the best available model of delivering field experiences to pre-service teachers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As demand for highly qualified and adequately prepared teachers continues to grow it is imperative to find effective, efficient, and economical ways to prepare our future teachers. Research has proven that teachers are the single biggest factor affecting the academic growth of students (Sanders, 1998). Despite the importance of highly qualified teachers, the education and support pre-service teachers need in order to excel in the classroom are not always available (PA Governor's Commission, 2006). Recommendations from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as well as Pennsylvania's Governor's Commission on Training America's Teachers (2006) emphasizes the importance and need for high quality and extended early field experiences before pre-service teachers enter student teaching. Most recently the Pennsylvania Board of Education (2006) enacted Chapter 49-2 requirements on institutions of higher education that prepare educators. One of the most significant changes to these requirements is that each pre-service teacher complete 190 hours of clinical field placements before entering into student teaching (www.pde.psu.edu, 2007). This requirement will force teacher education programs to find alternative effective ways to deliver meaningful early field experiences without putting a tremendous burden on the K-12 school system.

The focus of this study is to understand the phenomenon of how the development of pre-service teachers are impacted during early field experiences, more specifically the principal investigator will look to see if a virtual component to an early field experience may have

different effect on the development of pre-service teachers. This chapter describes the procedure used to study the early field experience and the impact of an alternative to the early field experience, a virtual field experience. The impact will be evaluated from the perspective of the pre-service teachers, the teacher educator, the cooperating teachers, and the principal investigator. The data will be examined to determine the effectiveness of the early field experience on pre-service teacher development.   This chapter is divided into seven sections: design, organization of the study, instrumentation, participants, data analysis, role of the principal investigator, and ethical considerations.

<div align="center">**Design**</div>

Methodology of the Study

Qualitative research offers the principal investigator an in-depth look at data that cannot be easily quantified. Looking at research through a qualitative lens allows the principal investigator to be open-ended. Qualitative research allows the researcher to use multiple approaches to answer research questions, rather than restricting the methodology to one approach. The data analysis method used for the purpose of this phenomenological study is content analysis.

Content analysis has been described as any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1969). Kimberly Neuendorf (2002) offers a more modern and expansive definition:

Content analysis is an in-depth analysis using quantitative and qualitative techniques of messages using a scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a prior design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not

limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented.

Dr. Klaus Krippendorff (1980, 2004) identified six questions that must be addressed in every content analysis. They include:

Which data are analyzed?

How are they defined?

What is the population from which they are drawn?

What is the context relative to which the data are analyzed?

What are the boundaries of the analysis?

What is the target of the inferences?

The design of this study and the data gathered will allow the researcher to be able to answer the primary research question of this study.

Organization of the Study

This study took place in the fall of 2009 and the winter 2010. The preliminary work for the study, including the letter of intent, the IRB approval at both East Stroudsburg University and King's College, and final approval of the proposal occurred during the summer of 2009.

In an effort to understand the overall phenomenon of the early field experience at the college it was necessary for this study to include participants from all perspective of the experience. As a result there were twenty-three pre-service teachers that participated in the study, four cooperating teachers, and one teacher educator/supervisor.

Pre-Service teacher participants were selected on a volunteer basis from a pool of pre-service teachers that were willing to participate in either the traditional field experience with the virtual

component, known as the VEFE group, or just the traditional early field experience, known as the TEFE group. Cooperating teacher participants were asked to participate if they were chosen to host a pre-service teacher that volunteered to participate in the VEFE group. And the teacher educator agreed to participate in the study after being approached by the principal investigator regarding this research. All participants that participated in this study, either through interview or focus group participation, knew that they had the right to voluntarily withdraw from this study at anytime without penalty in accordance with the IRB application and corresponding signed consent form.

All of the pre-service teacher participants completed their field experiences in secondary classrooms in a variety of school districts throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. In addition all cooperating teachers that participated in the study were certified to teach in the secondary content area in which they were hosting the pre-service teacher.

Traditional Early Field Experience

The traditional early field experience (TEFE) at King's College consisted of the students taking their first steps into the classroom to focus on students and the teaching and learning process. The current King's College early field experience manual requires that participants report to the school site ten times throughout the semester. The objectives were outlined in the aforementioned manual:

- Observe and try to become familiar with the traits of students at the grade level one will be teaching.
- Observe the teaching procedures and intergroup techniques used by a professional teacher in their subject.

- Participate in routine non-instructional procedures.

- Obtain some insight into non-instructional procedures.

- Obtain some insight into classroom problems through discussions with the teacher.

- Obtain some experience with instructional and motivational techniques by giving pupils individual help when needed.

- To instruct a couple lessons under the supervision of the cooperating teacher.

The pre-service teachers evaluate themselves using the King's College Early Field Experience Observation/Reflection Guide Grading Rubric (Appendix C) from the Early Field Experience manual. This is a structured observation form that attempts to force pre-service teachers to be reflective about effective practices and important components to lesson plans.

Virtual Early Field Experience

The virtual early field experience (VEFE) participants completed the same steps as the TEFE participants with the addition of the virtual lesson delivery. The virtual experience will require that the pre-service teacher participants to deliver an instructional lesson to the students in the classroom in which they have completed their other early field experience requirements. The VEFE pre-service teachers utilized Elumminate Live learning management software to deliver instruction.

During this phase of the early field experience, the pre-service teachers designed an original lesson to fit into a pedagogical style for the instructional delivery tool that was utilized. The pre-service teacher delivered instruction from the college setting alongside the teacher educator. The

role of the teacher educator was to serve as a mentor or instructional coach both during and after the lesson.

Preparing for the Study

Prior to the fall of 2009 informal discussions were had with the department chairperson at the college to discuss this proposed research study. After gaining approval from the department chairperson I began to discuss this study with the teacher educator that participated in this study. This individual was approached because they were the only full-time faculty member at the college that was involved in the early field experience for secondary teachers in the fall of 2009. The teacher educator agreed and signed the letter of consent that was approved by the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board. At this time the data collection methods as well as the interview and focus group questions were shared with the teacher educator.

Several weeks into the fall semester, the principal investigator attended two different classes of secondary pre-service teachers at the college to discuss the study and the different levels of participation, either the VEFE or TEFE groups, the pre-service teachers could participate in. At that time each of the prospective participants was provided with an overview of the study and contact information for both the principal investigator and the sponsoring dissertation chair from East Stroudsburg University in case they had any questions or concerns about participating in the study.

The following week the principal investigator returned to the classes to identify the pre-service teachers that were willing to participate in the study and collect the signed consent forms from those participants. After identifying the pre-service teachers that consented to participate I was able to identify the cooperating teachers that were hosting the pre-service teachers

participating in the VEFE group. After identifying the cooperating teachers I contacted the

Superintendents in those districts to explain the study and gain there written consent. After

gaining their consent I contacted the cooperating teachers to then explain the study and gain their

written consent to participate.

    As stated above, a letter of consent was sent to each participant in this study, explaining that

the research was being conducted as a doctoral study through Indiana University of Pennsylvania

and East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. The letter clarified that participation was

voluntary and that information gathered from observation, interviews and record collection

would be kept confidential. Due to the nature of the participants in the study, identifying

information was also kept confidential, meaning that names, when mentioned, were withheld.

<center>**Instrumentation**</center>

Data Collection

    The first data collection component to the study was the principal interview. This data

collection method was used to collect data from VEFE participants, the cooperating teachers, and

the teacher educator/supervisor. Interview questions for all of the aforementioned participants

were established prior to conducting the interviews. The use of this qualitative research method

allowed the principal investigator to modify the questions and ask follow up questions based on

the data collected through the scripted interview questions.

    The researcher interviewed each of the VEFE pre-service teachers using scripted interview

questions to gain insight on their experiences during the early field experience. The interview

questions were designed to get an overall understanding of the experience with a focus on

gathering data to answer the primary research questions of this study. The questions asked of the VEFE participants include:

1. When thinking about completing the teaching requirements for early field experience placement, which method of delivery, traditional or virtual, concerned you more?

2. Did you feel like you were forced into a particular pedagogical approach based on the type of lesson delivery you were using?

3. Did you have to spend much more time designing and preparing for one method of delivery versus the other? If yes which one? Why?

4. How comfortable did you feel teaching your lesson in the regular classroom? What were the positive and negative aspects of the experience?

5. Could your professor or college have done anything different to help you with this experience?

6. Was the cooperating teacher helpful? Could your cooperating teacher have done anything differently to help you during this experience?

7. How comfortable did you feel delivering your lesson in a virtual environment? What were the positive and negative aspects of this experience?

8. Could your professor or college have done anything different to help you with this experience?

9. Was the cooperating teacher helpful? Could your cooperating teacher have done anything differently to help you during this experience?

10. How much and what type of feedback did you receive from the professor during the traditional teaching experience? The virtual? Did you feel that you had more support

from your professor during the traditional teaching experience versus the virtual teaching experience?

11. How much and what type of feedback did you receive from the cooperating teacher during the traditional teaching experience? The virtual? Did you feel like you had more support from the cooperating teacher during the traditional experience versus the virtual experience?

The researcher also had a separate script to interview each of the cooperating teachers that participated in the study. The interview questions included:

1. Are you aware of the college's objectives for pre-service teachers when completing their early field experience in your classroom? How responsible do you feel in helping these students meet their goals?

2. Do you feel connected to the college? Do you feel supported by the college faculty?

3. What do you feel your role is in providing support to the pre-service teacher during the traditional experience? The virtual experience?

4. What do you feel your role is in providing feedback to the pre-service teacher after their lessons? Do you feel adequately prepared to do this?

5. What could the college do better to help support you when working with pre-service teachers?

6. Do you like hosting pre-service teachers in your classroom? Why or Why not? Is hosting classroom teachers in this format intrusive to your regular classroom instruction?

Lastly, the researcher had a separate interview script for the teacher educator in an effort to gain an understanding of their role and perspective. The interview questions include:

1. What are your goals and objectives for your pre-service teachers that are participating in the early field experience component to the teacher education program?

2. How much control do you feel you have in making sure that your students are meeting their goals and objectives during this experience?

3. How do you communicate those goals and objectives to the cooperating teachers that host your students in their classrooms?

4. Do you feel that you have adequate opportunity to coach your students during the instructional phase of the early field experience?

5. What do you feel are some of the positive and negative aspects of having pre-service teachers teach in a traditional setting? A virtual setting?

6. How much and what type of feedback do you feel you can provide to your students when they teach in a traditional setting? A virtual setting? What are the barriers that you face?

7. Do you believe that the current Early Field Experience program is structured the right way to help pre-service teachers develop and learn?

The second data collection method implemented was the focus group interview. This data collection method was used to capture the experiences of the TEFE pre-service teacher participants. The guiding questions were scripted and follow up questions were asked as a result of the data being collected. The focus group interview guiding questions were:

1) Do you feel that the standards for the EFE are clearly defined for you before you got to your placement?

2) Do you feel that there is good communication between the College and the Cooperating teachers in the field? Do they support you meeting the requirements of the field experience?

3) When completing your EFE do feel that the support or guidance given to you from the cooperating teacher in aligned to what you have been taught throughout the teacher prep program at King's?

4) What type of feedback do you generally receive from your professor after you teach your two lessons? What type of feedback do you receive from the Cooperating Teacher?

5) Do you think that the cooperating teachers feel they are connected to the program at King's and have an understanding of the way you were instructed on how to teach. Is there a disconnection between what you were taught and how the teachers in the field expect you to teach?

6) Should the coursework be changed to better prepare you to teach. What classes should be added? What classes should be dropped?

7) Do you feel that there is a better way to complete the EFE, what other ways can you be provided with more support?

8) How does a virtual early field experience compare with a traditional on-site field experience in pre-service teacher development as it relates to developing a common clear vision of good teaching as well as well defined standards of teaching?

9) Will a virtual field experience provide a more meaningful early field experience than a traditional early field experience?(This implies that you will study both groups) Will one

of these experiences help to develop a better relationship(what about better teaching)

between the K-12 schools and the college?

10) Does a virtual field experience allow for student to receive more feedback compared to a

traditional early field experience counterpart? Are virtual and on-site experiences

intensely supervised and aligned to the standards established by the college?

Participants

Participants from this study come from three different perspectives. Pre-service teacher, both

TEFE and VEFE made up one of the perspective. All of the pre-service teachers were pursuing

secondary content certification and was enrolled in course EDUC 350 – Secondary Classroom

Management during the fall 2009 semester. There were seven pre-service teachers that

participated in the VEFE, and there were sixteen pre-service teachers that participated in the

TEFE group.

A second perspective was captured by the cooperating teacher participants. Four cooperating

teachers participated in this study. A cooperating teacher was eligible to participate in this study

if they were hosting a VEFE pre-service teacher. A third perspective captured for the purpose of

this study was that of the teacher educator/supervisor. There was one teacher educator that

participated in the study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process will begin upon completion of the data collection phase of this

research study. The researcher will analyze the qualitative data using the constant comparative

method. During the analysis of the data, the researcher coded data from the pre-service teacher

interview transcripts, cooperating teacher interview transcripts, and the transcript from the

interview with the teacher educator in order to be able to triangulate the data. In addition focus group interview data from the TEFE pre-service participants was analyzed to help answer the overarching research questions of this study. The coded data was examined to identify patterns and themes in the data.

Principal Investigator's Role

The principal investigator is situated into the research study. Before conducting a qualitative study, a researcher must do three things. The principal investigator must adopt the stance suggested by the characteristics of the naturalist paradigm. In addition, the principal investigator must develop the level of skill needed to collect and interpret data. Finally, the principal investigator must prepare a research design that utilizes accepted strategies for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

For the purpose o f this study the principal investigator will serve in a variety of roles. First, the researcher will be responsible for introducing the Elluminate Live software package to the subjects. The subjects will have the opportunity to attend one of two training sessions or both training sessions that were conducted by the principal investigator and an instructional technologist. After the trainings the principal investigator will also make himself available to answer questions on utilizing the system as they prepare for lesson delivery.

The second role of the principal investigator in this study was to serve as an observer from a variety of perspectives. The principal investigator will observe lesson being taught from the instructional side of the system, which means that the principal investigator will observe the pre-service teacher deliver the virtual lesson and the interaction between the pre-service teacher and the teacher educator throughout that process. The principal investigator will also observe from

the classroom side of the system. The researcher will observe the lesson from the classroom to observe delivery and the interaction between the pre-service teacher and the cooperating teacher. The third observation perspective is that the principal investigator will observe the class from within the learning management system.

Protection of Human Subjects

Due to the nature of the study and because this research included human subjects as participants, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and granted by the principal investigator prior to the beginning of the study. Meetings were scheduled with the department chair at the college and the teacher educator to discuss the study and receive written permission. At that time it became necessary to also gain approval from the Institutional Review Board at the college as well.

After gaining approval from both the East Stroudsburg University IRB and the King's College IRB, letters of consent were distributed to prospective participants in the study. There were separate letters for pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, and the college professor. Each of the letters explained the research that was being conducted and that it was part of a doctoral research study through Indiana University of Pennsylvania and East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. The letter emphasized that participation was completely voluntary and information would be gathered through interviews and observations. It was also emphasized that there was minimal risk to the participants and that research bias may exist at some levels, especially during the examination and interpretation of qualitative data.

Summary

The goal of this study was to examine the phenomenon of the early field experience as it relates to the framework of exemplary field experiences and to determine whether or not a virtual component to that field experience produces a different outcome. In order to gather data the researcher utilized guiding research questions to gather data and identify themes in the data. The data was gathered from three distinct perspectives among the participants in the early field experience, the pre-service teachers (VEFE and TEFE), the cooperating teachers, and the teacher educator. Through an analysis of collected data the researcher was able to make judgments about the research questions that serve as the foundation of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Does the pre student teacher field experience meet the criteria of an exemplary field experience? Do pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers have clear standards for promoting a top-quality early field experience? Do pre-service teachers participating in a virtual component to the early field experience receive better feedback from their college supervisor/teacher educator compared to pre-service teachers who have the traditional on-site early field experience? Do on-site pre-service teachers feel that they receive sufficient support from the cooperating teacher during the early field experience? This chapter reports the results of the study and attempts to answer these research questions.

In this chapter the data gathered from the perspectives of the participants is detailed to serve as a basis to answer the above listed research questions. The perspectives of the pre-service teachers' participating in the virtual component to the early field experience were obtained through interviews and principal investigator observations.   Data representing the perspective of the on-site secondary cooperating teachers was collected using interviews.   The college supervisors were interviewed to determine their attitude toward both the traditional experience and the virtual experience. Data representing the perceptions of pre-service teachers participating in the traditional early field experience was obtained through focus group interviews.

Table 1

Demographic Information of VEFE Pre-Service Teachers.

Participant	Gender	Traditional Student	Secondary Content Area	Grade Level
Amanda	F	Yes	English	11-12
Becky	F	Yes	English	11-12
Jenn	F	No	English	11
Mary	F	Yes	Mathematics	10-11
Jessica	F	Yes	French/Social Studies	10-11
Gina	F	No	Mathematics	7-8
Hannah	F	Yes	Social Studies	7

Table 1 represents some demographic information about the eight female pre-service teachers that chose to participate in a virtual early field experience component as part of the overall early field experience at King's College in the fall of 2009. Four of the participants were traditional four - year pre-service teachers and two were non-traditional pre-service teachers. Two participants were math majors, two were English majors, and the remaining were teaching social studies and French.

Table 2

Cooperating Teachers Related to VEFE Pre-Service Teachers

Cooperating Teacher	Secondary Content Area	Pre-Service Teacher Assigned
Amanda	Mathematics	Mary
Anthony	Mathematics	Gina
Jennifer	Mathematics	Amanda
Theresa	Social Studies/English	Hannah/Jenn

Table 2 represents some demographic information about the cooperating teachers that participated in this study. Each of the pre-services teachers were assigned a cooperating teacher, but only four of the six (67%) of the cooperating teachers consented to participate in this research study.

There was one college supervisor/teacher educator that participated in this study. That individual is referred to as Mark in this study. Mark, at the time of the study, was an Associate Professor in the Department of Education and his responsibilities included teaching courses in Secondary Methods and Secondary Classroom Management in addition to supervising pre-service teachers during the early field and student teaching experiences.

There were three separate focus groups facilitated by the principal investigator. All participants voluntarily participated. The following three tables represent the demographics of the participants.

Table 3

Demographic Data Representing Focus Group 1of TEFE Participants

Participant	Gender	Traditional	Student	Secondary Content Area
1	M	Yes		Social Studies/Special Education
2	M	Yes		Social Studies
3	M	Yes		Social Studies
4	M	Yes		Social Studies
5	M	Yes		Social Studies

Table 4

Demographic Data Representing Focus Group 2 of TEFE Participants

Participant	Gender	Traditional Student	Secondary Content Area
1	M	Yes	Citizenship
2	M	Yes	Math
3	F	Yes	English
4	F	Yes	English
5	F	Yes	Math

Table 5

Demographic Data Representing Focus Group 3of TEFE Participants

Participant	Gender	Traditional Student	Secondary Content Area
1	F	No	Citizenship
2	F	No	English
3	F	No	Science
4	M	No	English
5	F	No	Citizenship
6	M	No	Citizenship

Statement of the Problem

The overarching research question of this study as stated: Does the early field experience address the standards of an exemplary field experience?   As stated in Chapter 1, the defined criteria of an exemplary field experience is a common and clear vision of good teaching as well as well defined standards of teaching.

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1

The first research question: How does a virtual early field experience compare with a traditional on-site field experience in pre-service teacher development as it relates to developing a common clear vision of good teaching as well as well defined standards of teaching?

After analyzing the data gathered from on-site students and those assigned to the virtual experience it is evident that there are mixed perceptions on whether there is a common and clear vision of what good teaching is. Follow-up questions helped to clarify an understanding on how

the participant's vision for good teaching relates to preparation, pedagogy, feedback, and reflection in both the traditional and virtual environments.

It appears that through an examination of data collected from both the VEFE and TEFE participants, the majority of the pre-service teachers from both experiences perceive that they have a clear understanding of what good teaching is and what it looks like. Although these participants have a strong belief that they understand the vision, they never mention or discuss good teaching behaviors throughout the interview process. Additionally there seems to be a shared perceptual issue among the pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers. The vision of good teaching is shared by the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers are incongruent with the thoughts and beliefs of the college supervisor.

The college supervisor, Mark, who participated in the study, was in agreement with the majority of the VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers. Mark expressed the view that all of the pre-service students had a clear understanding of good teaching strategies and what good teaching looks like before they left the classroom and headed for their early field experience. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Mark stated:

 "As the supervisor responsible for the pre-service students in the field I try to ensure that all of them have a good foundation for effective teaching and in the same sense I try to communicate with the cooperating teachers when I can. I used to have regular contact with all of the cooperating teachers that hosted my students, but as assignments changed I lost contact with the teachers in the field so I am not sure what their views are about good teaching and learning."

It was very interesting to the researcher that Mark never discussed what good teaching looks like and what type of behaviors are exhibited by outstanding teachers. I followed Mark's previous response to asking him to define good teaching. In the same interview setting (December, 2009), Mark responding by saying, "Our students should know that good teaching is student-centered, standard driven, and integrates multiple learning theories and multiple instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of the educational communities they are teaching in." This seems to be the vision and mission of the teacher preparation program at the college, but it does not seem to correlate to what is happening in the field.

The pre-service teachers that participated in the traditional early field experience (TEFE) reported a more positive response in expressing a clear understanding of good teaching is as it relates to their requirements for completion of the early field experience than their counterparts that participated in virtual early field experience (VEFE).

The researcher found that approximately 75% of all TEFE participants felt they had a clear understanding of good teaching as it relates to preparation, planning and delivery of instruction. From the researchers perspective it was interesting to note that the TEFE pre-service teachers appeared to be much more focused on the procedural components of the lesson, such as hitting each component of the lesson plan instead of differentiating between average, good, or outstanding teaching.

TEFE participants in three focus group interviews (April, 2010) indicated they perceive that the college did a good job throughout the teacher preparation program of developing a clear understanding of what good teaching looks like through proper preparation and delivery. This clear standard of good teaching, as it relates to lesson plan formatting for delivering instruction,

is reinforced in the Early Field Experience handbook provided to every pre-service teacher to take with them into the field. It appears that the college's preparation program emphasizes the procedural pieces of the lesson instead of fostering creative and innovative lessons.

TEFE pre-service teachers during the focus group 2 interview (April, 2010) expanded on this issue. A focus group 2 interview participant stated, "I really think that the college needs to spend more time preparing us to create different types of lessons that are more interesting to the students rather than drilling us about the lesson planning format." After this statement was made the researcher noted a lot of nodding by the other focus group 2 participants. This led the researcher to ask, "What do you feel should be being taught to help you create more effective lessons?" This question appeared to create interest and several focus group 2 participants responded. One of the focus group 2 participants (April, 2010) stated, "Lesson planning needs to be taught differently, less focus on the procedures and more on how standards should relate to good teaching." Another participant capitalized on the previous comment and said, "We need more help in learning to create lessons that incorporate real world content to engage students and less time reviewing the same standard lesson plans." These comments are very telling and seem to be a real issue for some of the pre-service teachers that are looking to do more than just meet the requirements.

Four out of seven (57%) of the VEFE component participants expressed a clear understanding in regard to preparation as it relates to good teaching. This is significantly less than their counterparts in that participated exclusively in the VEFE.

VEFE participants that responded that they believe they understand the common and clear vision of good teaching that was taught to them throughout their teacher preparation program

seemed to be focused on the superficial components of the lesson and do not represent a depth of knowledge about learning theory or good teaching. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Becky stated, "I think that I was very well prepared to get in front of the class to teach. From my coursework and observations I know what good teaching should look like." Additionally, in an interview setting (December, 2009) Jessica stated, "I believe I know what good teaching looks like, meaning I know how to design the essential components of lesson to meet my objectives." I responded by responding by asking Jessica, "How does covering the essential components of a lesson relate to the common and clear vision of good teaching?" Jessica responded, "The way I design the lesson and take the students through the steps of the lesson shows that I understand how to teach."

In further support of the assertion that there is a perceptual problem between what the college teaches as a common and clear vision of good teaching versus what the pre-service teachers perceive that to mean can be the way VEFE participant Amanda responded to this interview question. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Amanda stated, "It really does not matter what type of environment I am going to be teaching in, I feel prepared to deliver the content, I will figure out the best way to break it down and present it in an effective manner." When I asked Amanda to clarify, in the same interview setting (December, 2009), Amanda said, "The components of an effective lesson are the same no matter what environment I am delivering instruction, I just had to think about it more and be more creative in the virtual setting."

VEFE participant Hannah also perceived that she had a good understanding of the common and clear vision of good teaching. In an interview setting (December, 2009) she stated, "I think the college sets pretty clear expectations about what is expected as part of the teaching and

learning process, they teach us the lesson planning format in methods class and it remains the same throughout the other classes." Again, from the perspective of the researcher, Hannah's understanding is off base from the true intent of the college and is centered on meeting requirements than utilizing learning theories or effective instructional strategies. I followed up by asking Hannah, "What do you mean when you referred to the teaching and learning process?" Hannah replied, "I mean being able to plan for a lesson to be able to move through the steps of the lesson plan to go from bell ringer to closing activity and assessment." This response seems to be synonymous with the thoughts and beliefs of others.

Three of the VEFE participants responded that they did not have a clear understanding of what the vision is for good teaching. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Gina stated:

I feel good about what is expected as part of moving through a lesson, but I don't think I really am prepared to be able to explain what the college's vision is for good teaching. I can review what the evaluation criteria states in the pre-service teacher handbook, but I am not sure what all of that really looks like in practice.

It appears that Gina is thinking about the question more aligned to what the true intent of what "good teaching" is meant to be. I asked Gina if she would answer the question differently if she if it was asked specifically about good teaching in the virtual or traditional environment only. In the same interview setting Gina responded, "I would answer the same but I really don't think I understand what good teaching looks like in the virtual environment because I haven't received a lot of training in that area."

Jennifer, another VEFE participant, also felt that she did not have an understanding of the common and clear vision of good teaching. In an interview setting (December, 2009), Jennifer

stated, "I know what the cooperating teacher expects to see when I am running the class but I am not sure exactly what the college would want to see. I feel confident that I would be able to manage the class." VEFE participant Mary also felt she did not have an understanding of the college's vision of good teaching behaviors. In an interview setting (December, 2009) she stated, "I know the criteria I am being judged upon when I am teaching I am not sure what all of the different criteria actually look likes in the classroom." I responded by asking her what she means by "not knowing what the criteria looks like in the classroom?" She said, "I understand what they actually mean but I believe that the college really doesn't teach us what all of this really looks like."

All four (100%) of the participating cooperating teachers reported that they were aware of the teaching framework taught at the college as well as the requirements of the pre-service teachers working in their classrooms. In addition, all four (100%) of the participating cooperating teachers acknowledged that by accepting a pre-service teacher into their classroom, they are accepting a piece of the responsibility to foster the philosophy of the teacher preparation program throughout the early field experience.

Amanda, one of the cooperating teachers that participated in the study, in an interview setting (January, 2010) stated, "I think that I know what the college professors want me to do when the pre-service teachers come to my classroom. It is really about making sure they meet the requirements for the early field experience." I responded by asking Amanda, "What do you think the college supervisor wants you to do to help the pre-service teachers develop?" Amanda responded by saying, "I think the expectation is that I help to support the pre-service teachers to

complete the requirements delineated in the early field experience handbook and to provide support as needed to help them complete their lessons."

Another cooperating teacher, Jen, also expressed views during her interview that are similar to those of Amanda. In an interview setting (January, 2010), Jen stated:

Whenever I have a pre-service teacher, I receive a handbook as well as additional handouts that answer my questions and help me understand my responsibilities. This year I received a rubric for scoring the pre-service teachers, which was very helpful. Pre-service teachers usually don't know exactly what is going on in education until they are actually out there.

I responded by asking her how the handbook expresses a vision for good teaching. Jen responded by saying, "The program is delineated and the rubrics to assess the pre-service teachers performance are relatively easy to understand. Colleges can only prepare a student so much. I think there should be lots of field experiences and less theory."

Further analysis of the data collected from the cooperating teachers interviews reveal some of the same thoughts as above. Cooperating teacher Anthony also felt that the college's vision is laid out in the requirements of delineated in the early field experience handbook. In an interview setting (January, 2010) Anthony said, "I feel comfortable that I know what the college expects of me when I am mentoring a pre-service teacher in my classroom. I understand what they need to accomplish and I know what my role is in providing them support." I immediately asked Anthony, "What do you mean when you say you know what the college expects of you?" Anthony said, "I know what the expectations are for the pre-service teachers when they teach their lessons. I wasn't really sure about the virtual environment but I know what a good lesson looks like."

Lastly, cooperating teacher Theresa also supported the theme developing from the other participating cooperating teachers in this study. In an interview setting (January, 2010), Theresa stated, "As a graduate of the program I know most of the professors and have a good understanding of what the expectations are for the students when they are teaching in the field." I thought it was interesting that Theresa did not mention any specific teaching behaviors or teaching strategies. Therefore, when I followed up, I asked her, "What do some of those expectations look like in action?" Theresa responded by saying, "It looks like a teacher being able to manage and lead a class through an effective lesson that includes standards, instruction, practice, and assessment."

It was interesting to note from that observers perspective that all four of the cooperating teachers that volunteered to host VEFE students had a connection to the college prior to serving in the role of cooperating teacher. Three of four (75%) of the cooperating teachers were graduates of the college.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: Do pre-service teachers participating in a virtual component to the early field experience (Virtual) receive more feedback from the college supervisor/teacher educator compared to pre-service teachers that only participate in a traditional early field experience (Traditional)?

The VEFE participants completed both a virtual component to the early field experience which was two weeks long in conjunction with a traditional early field experience that was eight

weeks in duration.   The TEFE participants participated in an on-site experience that lasted ten weeks.

Seventy one percent of the pre-service teachers who participated in the virtual component of the early field experience felt that they had received more feedback during their virtual lesson delivery since they didn't get any feedback from their college supervisor during the traditional supervisory mode. Therefore when they received almost no feedback after the traditional lesson they felt more supported in the virtual setting. From the perspective of this researcher, it is important to identify whether the feedback the virtual participants are receiving is superficial feedback such as "Good Lesson" or "Nice Work" versus constructive feedback that will help the pre-service teachers improve instruction.

In an interview setting (December 2009), Mary stated, "I did not receive any feedback from my traditional lesson. I received a lot more support during the virtual lesson. The researcher then asked, "What type of support did you receive?" Mary responded by saying, "It seemed that the professor and I were learning together, he was like a teammate. He helped by providing encouragement during the lesson but also telling me when to question further and in some cases what to ask." Additionally, in an interview setting (December, 2009), Becky stated, "I definitely felt more supported in the virtual lesson, not only did the professor work with me through the technical issues, I would have freaked, but he helped me with questioning and pacing throughout the lesson." The researcher followed up by asking Becky, "What did the professor say that helped you during the lesson?" Becky responded by saying, "It was just comforting to know that it was not just me and the class, I guess it was more psychological at that point." I further

questioned her by asking, "What specific things did your professor say to you that helped you during the lesson in regard to questioning and pacing as you stated above?" Becky stated:

Some of it was comments like "Good, now move on" but other feedback was him asking me the question, "Why do you think the student responded that way? How should you respond? Or this is an opportunity to dig deeper."

In another interview setting (December, 2009), Jenn stated, "Coaching throughout the virtual lesson was very helpful, I knew that I was missing out on some of the questioning opportunities." I asked Jenn to expand on what she means when she talks about the coaching relationship and missing some questioning opportunities. Jenn responded by saying:

I felt like it was a relationship with the professor that was intended as a learning experience instead of a just an evaluation. When I was delivering the lesson in the virtual setting the cooperating teacher sat with me and was able to provide me support. And as far as questioning, he provided me with some specific examples after the lesson that demonstrated to me that I could have made the students think a little more about certain topics I questioned them on. I let them provide short and direct responses without tying things together.

When further encouraged by the researcher to explain how the prompting from the college supervisor helped her achieve the goals of her lesson, Jenn responded, "Instead of just asking a scripted question, I began to ask questions that required more thought on the students part and gave me, as the teacher, more insight on how they were thinking."I further questioned Jenn about what she thought the most important thing is that she learned after reflecting on her lesson. She responded by saying, "After reviewing the lesson I realized that I don't need to be so married to my scripted lesson."

Further evidence to the support the sentiments of Mary, Becky, and Jenn can be found in data gathered from two other participants, Amanda and Hannah. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Amanda stated, "I definitely got more feedback from my professor during and after the virtual lesson than I did during the classroom lesson I taught." I took this opportunity to further question Amanda about the support she received. In fact, she made remarks similar to those made by Mary in regards to coaching. I asked Amanda, "What were the positives you took away from your virtual lesson delivery and feedback from the college supervisor?" Amanda responded by saying:

> The college supervisor served more as a coach than an observer, like somebody that was part of the instructional process. I was able to move through my lesson knowing that someone was next to me to help if I faltered. The other great benefit to me was the ability to debrief with the college professor immediately after I finished my lesson.

Hannah also had similar experiences as the other VEFE participants that reported they had received more feedback and support during their virtual lesson compared to the feedback they received during their traditional instructional lesson. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Hannah stated, "I had a higher degree of comfort in delivering my lesson in the virtual setting because I felt more supported by having the professor along for the ride." I asked Hannah why she felt more supported and she responded by saying:

> I was able to really focus on delivering content and moving through the parts of the lesson plan. The cooperating teacher was providing support on the student end of the lesson and I the professor was there as a safety net if I needed one.

I continued to follow up on Hannah's last response by probing why she focused on just moving through the lesson plan by asking, "Was the main goal of the virtual experience to just move through the lesson plan and did you find it harder to plan for the virtual lesson?" Hannah responded by expressing that her main goal was student learning but she talked about moving through the lesson plan because she really over prepared for the virtual lesson and knew exactly when she was transitioning from one part of the lesson to the other. In addition the professor gave her feedback on how well she did with her transitions throughout the lesson. Hannah stated:

I definitely spent more time preparing for the virtual lesson, it really made me think outside the box for my lesson planning and delivery. I was definitely over prepared. I felt like I had to be more scripted for the virtual lesson but when I got going with it I felt comfortable enough to ask questions as appropriate and move away from the script.

Two of the seven (29%) participants felt they received better feedback and more support during the planning and instruction process in the traditional learning environment. Through the interview process it appears to the researcher that these two individuals followed a different process in the steps they took before teaching in the traditional environment. Both of these participants, Gina and Jessica, had met with their professor to review and discuss their lessons prior to the day they actually taught the lesson. And in the case of Jessica, the professor observed her lesson and conducted a post conference afterwards.

Through my discussions with Jessica compared to my discussions with the other VEFE participants, it is evident that Jessica's experience was dissimilar compared to the other

participants. She was the only participant that had the benefit of having the college professor

travel to the traditional setting to observe her lesson. Jessica believed that personal contact

promoted a positive experience and the reason why she felt so supported in the traditional

setting. In the interview (December, 2009), Jessica stated:

> I was able to meet with my professor before my lesson and then he was able to come out and
>
> see me teach. He gave me great feedback on my interactions with the students, but I know he
>
> did not get out observing the lessons of others in my class. The virtual setting made me more
>
> nervous because it was just the two of us just sitting in the office while I delivered the virtual
>
> instruction to students in the classroom.

Jessica seems to be the only participant that received an on-site observation during the clinical

supervision cycle.

Gina also expressed that she felt more supported and received more feedback after her lesson

was delivered in the traditional setting. Although the professor was not able to attend the lesson,

Gina was able to make time to meet with the professor prior to the lesson being delivered and

then again after the lesson was delivered. During the interview setting (January, 2010), Gina

stated:

> My professor went over my lesson with me before I delivered it and then I again met with him
>
> after I completed my traditional lesson. As a result I feel I received good feedback from my
>
> professor during my traditional lesson; he knew what I was going to teach and was able to sit
>
> down and review the rubric that was completed by my cooperating teacher after I taught the
>
> lesson with him to discuss the lesson.

Again, similar to Jessica's experience, Gina's experience appears to be unique because the other VEFE participants did not discuss experiences similar to Jessica and Gina. It is unclear on why their experiences seem to be different from the norm and it is also unclear on whether or not they sought out this extra support or if the professor decided to engage them differently. In fact Gina's and Jessica's experiences also differ because Jessica was observed in the traditional setting and Gina was not. As a result of this the researcher asked the professor, Mark, about the differences. The college supervisor, Mark, did not discuss any special arrangements made with individual students during his interview (December, 2009). During his interview (December, 2009) Mark stated:

> I make the offer to all of the pre-service teachers that I supervise that I am here for them to discuss their lessons before and/or after they teach and I will attend their lessons if they request it. The reality is that very few students take me up on this offer because it is not a requirement.

The results of the TEFE interviews validate the beliefs of the 71% of VEFE participants that reported they received more feedback after the virtual lesson compared to their experiences with the traditional lesson. TEFE pre-service teachers that participated in the focus group interviews (April, 2010) expressed a variety of opinions related to the minimal feedback they received from the college supervisor. Among the three focus groups, the researcher observed nearly 100% consensus that the TEFE teachers do not receive much feedback at all from the college supervisor. During the TEFE focus group 1 interview (April, 2010), one of the participants stated, "I got zero feedback from my professor, I do not even know if he ever saw the evaluations that my cooperating teacher filled out." When the rest of TEFE focus group 1 participants were

asked to share their thoughts it was much of the same. During the same focus group interview, another TEFE focus group 1 participant stated:

> The college supervisor really wasn't involved in the early field experience for the exception of going over the field experience handbook with the class and making sure we understood all the steps in the process. Then we were to turn in all the lessons and evaluation forms at the completion of this field experience.

Similar sentiments were echoed during the TEFE focus group 2 interviews. During the interview session (April, 2010), a pre-service Math teacher stated, "I completed my two lessons in the classroom as part of the requirements of the early field experience and handed in all of my paperwork to Mark but I didn't receive any feedback except for my overall class grade." This sentiment was seconded by another pre-service Math teacher in the group, she stated, "The college professor really wasn't part of the field experience as far as my lesson planning and delivery. We had some discussion in class about our observations in the field, but never had discussions about the lessons we taught in the field." And a pre-service English teacher from the same focus group stated, "As a class, none of us really knew what type of response to expect from our professor about the lessons we taught in the field. I really had to rely on my cooperating teacher for feedback."

I then asked the group, "Why they thought they were not getting feedback from the professor on their lessons being taught in the field?" The same pre-service English teacher immediately responded by saying, "We teach our lessons, complete the required post-lesson reflection, and turn everything in to the professor the last day of class for the semester, there isn't any

opportunity for him to respond to us." The previous thought was seconded a pre-service

Citizenship teacher who said:

> The way the field experience is set up doesn't really give us a lot of interaction with the
>
> professor outside of when we are scheduled for class. We meet the requirements detailed in
>
> the Early Field Experience Handbook and turn in our work and the end of the semester.
>
> There really isn't much of a system in place to talk about our lessons with our professor.

There is further evidence that leads the researcher to believe that there are systematic

problems with allowing the pre-service teachers to receive feedback upon completing their

lessons in the traditional setting. During the TEFE focus group 3 interview (April, 2010) a bold

statement was made by a pre-service Science teacher regarding the lack of support and contact

with the professor during the early field experience. She said, "I didn't receive any feedback

whatsoever from my professor both during and after my lesson, nothing…zero." It was evident

that she was annoyed by this fact and it almost seemed like there was animosity over this

situation. I asked her directly, "Why do you think you were not able to receive any feedback

from your professor regarding the lessons you taught in the classroom?" She responded by

saying, "It is impossible for him to be able to get out to all of our schools and see all of our

lessons, so what is the point." This statement led me to believe that she was frustrated over the

system and not angry at the professor. This is something I thought would be interesting to inquire

about further but thought it might not be appropriate in a group setting.

There seems to be consistency between VEFE participants and TEFE participants and

members of TEFE focus group 1, TEFE focus group 2, and TEFE focus group 3 about the lack

of feedback provided to them after they complete their lesson in the traditional setting. During

the interview with the college professor it was evident that there are organizational issues that do not allow for him to provide as much feedback and support to student completing the TEFE.

From the perspective of the college supervisor, Mark also noted some distinct differences between trying to provide feedback to both VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers. Mark indicated that in the traditional settings it really varies on how much interaction and feedback he gets to provide to TEFE participants. In an interview setting (December, 2009), Mark stated, "Depending on the student and depending on my schedule versus their schedule, really determines the amount and type of feedback and supports I can provide the pre-service teachers in the field." When asked by the researcher to explain the differences, in an interview setting (December, 2009), Mark stated:

> Some students I am able to meet with on a regular basis, review their lessons prior to them going into the field to teach, and sit in the classroom while they deliver instruction, while in other cases all I get to see is the feedback from the cooperating teacher, the videotape, and the post lesson reflection.

Mark went on to explain that it really come down to the barriers that you face in getting into the schools to see the pre-service teachers. When asked what those barriers are in the traditional setting, in an interview setting (December, 2009), Mark stated, "The main barriers that I face are location and travel time. In some cases it will take a half day to be able to travel to the school site, watch the lesson, conduct a post-lesson conference, and travel back to campus." In the same interview setting Mark went on to say, "There is not enough time in anyone's schedule to get to everyone of their students lessons."

The researcher then asked Mark his thoughts on his ability to provide feedback and support to VEFE pre-service teachers. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Mark stated, "Supervising and providing feedback to pre-service teachers during the VEFE can be much more efficient, in regards to time, rather than trying to supervise students during TEFE." It also became evident that the feedback and support for the VEFE pre-service teachers during their lesson takes on a different look, it is more immediate and sometimes occurs during the actual lesson. In the same interview setting, Mark stated, "I can block out about an hour of time and be there with the pre-service teacher while they are delivering their lesson. My role looks like coaching versus just providing feedback." The researcher then asked Mark, "What if you cannot be available when the pre-service teacher is scheduled to deliver their lesson?" In the same interview setting, Mark stated, "If I can't be with a pre-service teacher during their VEFE lesson, I can always review the recorded lesson at a later date, along with the pre-service teacher, and be able to provide real-time feedback."

It was quickly pointed out by both the college supervisor and the cooperating teachers who participated in this study, that even though it can be more efficient to observe and support pre-service teachers in the VEFE, there are also limitations with implementing this type of early field experience. In an interview Mark stated, "You do take a risk of things going wrong with the technology, both on the instructional delivery side as well as on the student side." Participants Mary and Theresa both alluded to similar concerns during their respective interviews. In an interview setting VEFE participant Mary stated, "It was kind of scary to have to worry whether or not the technology would work the right way. If it wasn't for my cooperating teacher setting up everything in the classroom I would have not been able to do this." Cooperating teacher

Theresa also made some distinctions between providing feedback to the pre-service teachers. In an interview setting (December, 2009), Theresa stated, "During the VEFE, my role was to keep the technology running and keeping the students on task, but during the TEFE I am more of a traditional observer that provides feedback at the end."

After a thorough analysis of the data, it appears that the participants in this study who participated in the virtual experience received more support and feedback both during and after their lesson delivery in that environment compared to their experiences when teaching in the traditional setting. A lack of feedback and support from the college professor for the pre-service teachers during their traditional lesson delivery was fairly consistent theme among the TEFE participants. The college supervisor had several reasons why he was able to provide more feedback in the virtual environment rather than in the traditional environment, but he was quick to mention that there are some students that he does get to provide a lot of support to in the field.

Research Question 3

Do VEFE pre-service teachers feel they receive more support from their cooperating teachers during their virtual teaching experience when compared to the support they receive during their lesson in the traditional setting? Do VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers believe that they receive sufficient support from their cooperating teachers during the traditional early field experience?

The purpose of this question was to examine the impact of another component of the early field experience, the role of the cooperating teacher. The question queries the participants about their beliefs about the helpfulness of their cooperating teacher and looks to identify the types of supports pre-service teachers would find beneficial during this experience. Data was gathered

from pre-service teachers in the virtual and traditional settings as well as from the cooperating

teachers that hosted pre-service teachers who completed the early field experience requirements

in both the traditional and virtual settings.

Six out of the Seven (85.7%) of the virtual participants reported that they felt their

cooperating teacher was more helpful during the virtual teaching experience compared to their

experience in the traditional setting. In an interview setting (2009), participant Gina stated, "My

co-op was wonderful, she reassured me throughout and handled some of the minor details during

the lesson." I asked Gina what made her cooperating teacher, Anthony, so wonderful. Gina

replied by saying:

> He was just very supportive of me from the time that I first made contact with him through
>
> the time I taught both my traditional and virtual lessons. The time he gave me to ask
>
> questions, discuss my lessons prior to teaching, and helping to facilitate the classroom end
>
> during my virtual lesson provided me with a great sense of comfort while I was delivering
>
> instruction.

In addition I asked Gina to expand on what type of minor details her cooperating teacher took

care of during the lesson. Gina replied by saying:

> The was particularly true during my virtual lesson delivery, he helped to keep the students
>
> managed back in the classroom and sent me some messages through the software to give me
>
> feedback on how the students were reacting to the lesson. During the traditional lesson the
>
> teacher was more laid back and basically sat in the back and watched.

In a similar interview setting (December, 2009), Mary states, "My cooperating teacher was

most helpful, she was very interested in the software and very helpful throughout the lesson." I

followed up her response by asking Mary why she felt it was important enough to mention that her cooperating teacher was interested in the technology. Mary responded by saying:

Because I think that she was so interested in how cool it was, she was with me from the beginning; designing the lesson, testing the equipment, and delivering the lesson. She really wanted to know more about how it worked and we had discussion about the different possibilities that open up as part of using a learning management system.

Secondly, I followed up with Mary by asking her how her cooperating teacher was "most helpful" and why she thought she was so helpful. Mary responded by stating, "I felt like she supported me through guidance and discussion in every aspect of completing my field experience, she didn't leave me hanging, she was always very positive and responsive to me." I countered by asking Mary how her cooperating teacher was responsive to her. Mary said:

She responded to me by answering all of my questions, providing me with materials and resources, and serving as a sounding board for my ideas. I thought that she was a very good role model for me as a beginning teacher and that it was nice to work with someone that isn't 50 years old. She was like 25 and it was nice to see how successful she was.

I then proceeded to ask Mary if she thought the cooperating teacher's age had any effect on the overall experience. Mary responded by saying, "I think it helped me to relate to her but I think I was really able to relate to her because she came through the same teacher education program that I am in." Lastly I asked Mary about her experiences in the traditional setting. In the same interview setting Mary responded by saying, "My cooperating teacher was still helpful and supportive but was less involved in the lesson planning and the process for instruction. She completed my observation form after my lesson and said good job."

Another Virtual participant, Jessica, echoed some of the same sentiments as Gina and Mary. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Jessica stated, "My cooperating teacher was very helpful and supportive throughout this experience. She allowed me to experiment with the necessary support." The issue of helpfulness on the part of the cooperating teachers seems to be consistent from the perspective of the virtual participants, but I felt it was necessary to ask Jessica what types of things her cooperating teacher did to help her feel supported. Jessica responded by saying:

I was very uncomfortable as I prepared to teach in the virtual lesson and my cooperating teacher helped to provide a sense of comfort by helping to make sure everything was in place in the classroom end both prior to and during the lesson. In addition to the coordination on the student end we had a lot of dialogue about the lesson and how the students might react to this type of instruction.

I continued to probe Jessica about her experience. Specifically I was looking for her to clarify what she meant by her statement that she was able to experiment with support. Jessica responded by saying, "Initially I was very concerned about delivering instruction in the virtual environment because I felt that the virtual environment limited the way I would do discussion, it eliminated some discussion methods. I was limited to direct instruction." I again followed up Jessica's response by asking her, "What specifically do you mean by experimenting with support?" Jessica responded by saying:

By having a feeling of support from my cooperating teacher I was willing to design and implement an authentic lesson using the software without the fear of being hung out to dry on my own if things didn't go well or if the technology failed.

This is a similar feeling that was supported by virtual participant Jenn as well. In an interview setting (December, 2009), Jenn stated, "I was originally very concerned about delivering instruction in the virtual environment because it was new, but my cooperating provided me to a lot of positive support to help with student interaction." I responded to Jenn by asking her how the cooperating teacher supported in helping her engage the students. Jenn responded by saying, "The students seemed more willing to participate in the virtual lesson, especially when they got to use the chat room. This medium engaged the students and helped them to become more comfortable which in turn made me more comfortable which in turn made me feel more comfortable while instructing."

I followed up by asking Jenn, "What specific supports did your cooperating teacher provide to you before or during the virtual lesson." Jenn responded:

There were several things that my cooperating teacher did to help me. She took me to the technology director to test the software and computers prior to the lesson, she acted in the role of the student so I was able to practice my lesson delivery, and during the lesson I was able to count on her to keep the students organized and on-task during the lesson delivery.

I asked Jenn, "How was the cooperating teachers support and feedback after the traditional lesson compared to what you have told me about the virtual experience?" Jenn responded by saying, "My cooperating teacher pretty much completed my observation form and gave it to me after the lesson." I asked Jenn, "What else would you like to know from your cooperating teacher?" Jenn stated, "I would like to hear about what really works and what a whole school year is like from start to finish."

In an interview setting (December, 2009), Becky stated, "I thought my cooperating was helpful in helping me to design and deliver my lesson in the virtual environment. She was interested in how the lesson would look being delivered through the learning management software." I followed up by asking Becky what types of specific things her cooperating teacher did to help her to get ready to teach. In the same interview setting Becky reported:

My cooperating teacher worked with me on lesson delivery and what she thought would capture the students' interests and she made some contacts for me with the technology director to make sure we would be able to run smoothly the day of instruction.

Lastly I followed up with Becky by asking her, "What were results of the efforts made by your cooperating teacher to assist you during the virtual component to your field experience?" Becky replied by saying:

At the suggestion of my cooperating teacher I included response activities that required the students to use the chat feature with the software. The students really got into the chat features within the learning management system; they were really engaged and interactive. I was very happy with this.

It seemed through the review of the interview data, Becky's cooperating teacher was more interested in technology part of the virtual lesson compared to the actual lesson itself. Lastly, I asked Becky to draw a comparison between the support and feedback from the virtual lesson to the support and feedback she received during her traditional lesson delivery. In an interview setting (December, 2009) participant Becky stated:

My cooperating teacher was really into my traditional lesson, she gave me a lot of good feedback about what I did well and areas in which I could improve. During the virtual lesson my cooperating teacher supported me but it was more about using the technology instead of being about the lesson.

Hannah further supported the overall theme that the virtual pre-service teachers believe they received better support during their virtual lesson delivery when they compared it to their traditional lesson delivery. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Hannah stated, "My cooperating teacher was very helpful, she accommodated me in any way she could and I felt the students were very interactive with me." I followed up my initial question by asking Hannah why she thought her cooperating teacher was so interested in her lesson. Hannah replied by saying, "It was also my cooperating teacher's first time designing and delivering instruction in a virtual environment so I think that she was probably learning from this experience as well." I then followed up with Hannah by asking her what type of accommodations her cooperating teacher made for her. Hannah replied:

She was able to take time out of her schedule to make the arrangements with the technology coordinator, she allowed me to pick a part of the curriculum to teach I really thought I could teach well, and she reviewed my lesson with me prior to the day I was scheduled to teach.

It appears that Hannah had a positive experience while working with her cooperating teacher. I was interested to ask Hannah how the support she received from her cooperating teacher during the virtual lesson delivery was similar or different to the support she received from the cooperating teacher during the traditional lesson delivery.

Hannah responded by recounting her experience during the traditional lesson. Hannah stated, "During the traditional teaching experience my cooperating teacher was also helpful but she really just sat in the back of classroom and provided me some written feedback after I finished my lesson." I followed up by asking Hannah what type of feedback she received. Hannah said, "It was mostly positive stuff, like good questions, kept students attention, and good pacing." I then asked if this type of feedback was insightful to her about where she was as a pre-service teacher. Hannah said, "I not sure how helpful it was but it did make me feel more confident about what I was doing in front of a classroom full of students."

After Hannah detailed her experiences with her cooperating teacher regarding her virtual experience, I asked her to draw distinctions between the type and level of support she received from her cooperating teacher in the traditional setting. In the same interview setting (December, 2009) Hannah stated, "In regards to feedback on my teaching, the comments from my cooperating teacher was pretty much the same after both experiences, but my cooperating teachers was more interested and involved during my virtual lesson." I then asked Hannah if there was anything else she felt her cooperating teacher could have throughout the experience to help her as a pre-service teacher. Hannah responded, "I really would like to hear from in-service teachers about what types of things really work with students."

The analysis of data from the traditional field experience participants reveal mixed results about the support they receive from their cooperating teachers during the TEFE. The consensus among the five participants that made up TEFE focus group 1 was mostly positive in regards to the support they received from their cooperating. The initial question I asked to TEFE focus group 1 was, "Was your cooperating teacher supportive and what type of feedback did you

receive regarding your lesson delivery?" In an focus group setting (April, 2010), one of the participants quickly responded by saying, "The cooperating teacher was welcoming and helpful in helping me meet the requirements of the early field experience, and the feedback I received, which was the only I received, was all positive."

I followed up by asking the first respondent, "What type of positive feedback did you receive from your cooperating teacher after you taught your lesson?" He responded by saying, "My cooperating teacher basically handed me my evaluation sheet, with all positive scores on it, and said nice job, good lesson, and it seemed like the kids (students) responded well to you." It appears that the theme of the pre-service teachers receiving nothing but superficial feedback from their cooperating is consistent among most participants.

A second participant from the TEFE focus group 1 responded in a similar way to my original question. This secondary Social Studies pre-service teacher responded by saying:

My cooperating teacher was very nice to work with; he showed me around and made me feel welcome in the classroom. In regards to feedback after my lesson, it was all positive and high ratings on the form the field experience handbook he used to rate me.

I followed up his response by asking, "What type of positive feedback and high ratings did you receive and how did that help and support you?" He responded by saying, "The teacher marked all five out of five on the observation form with a few positive words written on the form and that was about it."

A third member of the TEFE focus group 1(April, 2010) began to participate in the discussion. He was also a secondary pre-service teacher that felt he had a positive and supportive relationship with his cooperating teacher. He responded to the initial question posed

to the focus group by saying, "My cooperating teacher was helpful and nice to work with and really provided the only feedback I received after I taught my lesson in the field." I asked him to talk a little about the specific things that he felt the cooperating teacher did that was helpful as a pre-service teacher. In the same focus group setting he responded to my question by saying, "He showed me around the school, he introduced me to some of the teachers, introduced me to the classes, and helped me understand what was going on in the classroom to help get me ready to teach."

I then asked the participants of TEFE focus group 1 if they believed that their cooperating teacher was willing to provide the necessary feedback and support to them as a pre-service teacher. The reaction was overwhelmingly positive among the participants in this group. In a focus group setting (April, 2010) one of the pre-service secondary Social Studies participants responded by saying, "I think my cooperating teacher was into it, he was a graduate of King's College and told me that he hosts a lot of students from the college, so he must enjoy helping out." In the same focus group setting another participant with the same background stated, "My cooperating teacher seemed genuinely interested in helping me out throughout this experience, she welcomed from the beginning and seemed to know some of the classes I had and did spend some time talking to me about my teaching."

Lastly, in an effort to try and capture what the cooperating teachers are or are not doing to help develop the pre-service teachers, I asked the focus group participants, "Is there anything else the cooperating teacher could have done or any other format to complete the experience that would help or better support you as a pre-service teacher?" This question seemed to elicit a lot of reactions from the group members. In a focus group setting (April, 2010) a participant

responded by saying, "It would be helpful to complete fewer observations and do more with the class during the early field experience." Another participant stated, "We should be able to work with a variety of teachers throughout this experience, including being able to complete these hours in our home schools during semester breaks." A third member of the group stated:

We need to spend more time hearing from the teachers in the field and less about the theory behind it, some of the things I observed in the field related back to coursework but it seems like we waste a lot of classes.

I thought his response was really interesting, even though it moved away from the original intent of my questioning. I proceeded to ask him which classes he thought were wasteful as part of the teacher preparation curriculum. He responded by saying, I really don't understand why we take so many Core courses before getting into the actual education classes, it would seem to me that we concentrate more on teaching classes."

A fourth TEFE focus group 1 member stated, "I would like to work with the same cooperating teacher for all of the field experiences we have through student teaching." I asked him, "Why do think this is the best format?" He stated, "If you have a good working relationship with the cooperating teacher it seems natural to want to continue to work with that person, it will allow the two of you to form a relationship and they can help you progress as a pre-service teacher."

The data received from the participants of TEFE focus group 2 interviews overall was mixed and could be interpreted as slightly negative view of the cooperating teachers these teachers worked with during their early field experience. Similar to TEFE focus group 1, the initial question I asked to TEFE focus group 2 was, "Was your cooperating teacher supportive and what type of feedback did you receive regarding your lesson delivery?" Three of the five (60%) of the

participants responded to this question with some negative overtones about their experiences with their cooperating teacher and the feedback they received.   Of the three participants that had a negative impression of the feedback they received from the TEFE, all three of them were female and two were secondary English pre-service teachers and one was a secondary math pre-service teacher.

In a focus group setting (April, 2010) the first participant to respond to my initial question was a secondary English pre-service teacher who stated:

My cooperating teacher was just okay; I really didn't receive any feedback, just the written

form with the rating numbers circled. It seemed like my cooperating teacher was either not

interested in being a host teacher or didn't know how to provide feedback to me.

I immediately asked her to expand on what she meant when she said "not interested or not aware of how to provide feedback" She responded by saying, "There was really nothing relevant on the rating form, it was all short positive statements about nothing." I countered by asking her what you meant about the level of interest from her cooperating teacher not being interested. She responded by saying, "I really don't think my cooperating wanted to have anybody with her, in fact, she didn't even know I was coming"

Some of the same sentiments were reinforced by another participant in the TEFE focus group 2. In a focus group setting (April, 2010) a secondary Math pre-service teacher stated, "I really don't think my cooperating teacher knew what their role was during this experience. He handed me the rating form with all four's circled and said good job, I was hoping for a little more." This was also the sentiments expressed by a secondary English pre-service teacher that participated in TEFE focus group 2. In the same focus group setting (April, 2010) she said, "My cooperating

teacher was not aware of the early field experience requirements and what they were supposed to do to help me through this experience." I asked her, "How did the cooperating teachers lack of interest in your experience effect you?" She responded by saying, "I really felt uncomfortable and unwelcome throughout the experience, she gave me the impression that she could care less about me, the requirements of the experience, or college program itself."

It appears to the researcher that these three participants had negative experiences during their early field experience as a result of several issues that relate to the role of the cooperating teachers. It was interesting to compare the experiences of the participants and how they seem to be positive or negative based on the relationship the pre-service teacher maintains with the cooperating teacher. Two of the participants in TEFE focus group 2 reported positive experiences when I asked my initial question regarding feedback and support to the group.

In a focus group setting (April, 2010), a secondary Math pre-service teacher reported, "I thought my cooperating teacher was genuine with his intentions to help me throughout my field experience and to provide me proper feedback after I completed my lessons." I followed up his response by asking him to explain what he meant about proper feedback. He responded by saying:

I agree with the other members of the group that the cooperating teachers may not be completely prepared to provide constructive feedback to us in regards to our teaching, but I feel that my cooperating did the best he could on my behalf and was supportive of me getting a good experience.

The last participant in TEFE focus group 2 also reported feeling supported and receiving good feedback from their cooperating teacher. In a focus group setting (April, 2010), a secondary

Citizenship pre-service teacher said, "I don't have any complaints about the teacher I was assigned too, I guess I had a different experience than the rest. My cooperating teacher made me feel welcome and provided me some helpful feedback after my lesson."

The participants in TEFE focus group 3 reported experiences most similar to participants in TEFE focus group 1. The consensus among TEFE focus 3 participants was relatively positive in regards to the support and feedback they receive while completing the early field experience. All six members of the of TEFE focus group 3 reported receiving feedback from their cooperating teacher and no feedback from the college supervisor.

In a focus group setting (April, 2010) a secondary English pre-service teacher reported, "I felt comfortable in my field placement and thought I did a good job teaching my lesson, the feedback I got from the cooperating teacher reinforced my thoughts." I immediately asked, "What did your cooperating teacher say that reinforced your thoughts?" She responded by saying, "Well he told me that I did a good job, marked all four's out of four on my observation sheet, and made some nice comments on the written part of the observation form."

From the researcher's perspective it appears that this student's experience continues to reinforce the theory that although the cooperating teachers are providing feedback to the pre-service teachers they are hosting, it appears to be generally superficial in nature. The question still remains, is it because the cooperating teachers do not feel equipped to provide proper feedback or is it that they don't believe it is their role to do so.

This thought is further reinforced by the comments made by two other participants in TEFE focus group 3. In the same focus group setting (April, 2010) a female secondary Citizenship pre-service teacher and a female secondary Science pre-service teacher both reported receiving

positive feedback from their cooperating teachers after their lesson but referenced a concern that they felt their cooperating teachers were not giving them honest feedback. I immediately asked them why they felt that way. The Science pre-service teacher said, "I really didn't think my cooperating teacher gave me real feedback, he reported everything as positive but I don't think it went that well. I think he was afraid of hurting my feelings." And the Citizenship pre-service teacher responded by saying, "I really felt my cooperating left out the objective observations about how the lesson really went, I thought I managed to get through but I am sure there were things that he picked up I could have improved upon." I asked these two participants specifically, "Why do you think your cooperating teacher was not as up front with you as you would have liked?" Neither of them really new and said that they could only speculate that is was because they didn't want to upset them, didn't feel it was their place, or didn't feel equipped to do so.

Additionally in TEFE focus group 3 there was a male secondary citizenship pre-service teacher and a male secondary English pre-service teacher that felt the feedback they received was positive and appreciated. In a focus group setting (April, 2010) the two male pre-service teachers openly disagreed with their female peers by saying, "I think the cooperating teachers we worked with were genuine, we did a good job and their feedback reflected that." I found their comments very interesting because this focus group had a different dynamic than TEFE focus group 1 and TEFE focus group 2. I asked them why they believed that their lessons went that well and everything was positive. The English pre-service teacher stated, "I had a lot of confidence in what I was doing and I think the students reacted well to my lesson so I don't see why the cooperating teacher would provide me any negative feedback." I was surprised by this

and asked, "You don't think there was any constructive feedback the cooperating could have provided?" And he responded, "I don't think so."

Although TEFE focus group 3 reported relatively positive experiences, the participants in this focus group differed in how they perceived the positive feedback they received. It is worth noting that the variances may be a result of the cooperating teacher's perception of their role in this process and whether or not they feel prepared or knowledgeable enough to provide appropriate feedback to the cooperating teachers they are hosting.

After reviewing the analyzed data from the multiple pre-service teacher experiences from both the traditional and virtual settings, it was interesting to this researcher to examine these experiences from the perspective of the cooperating teachers that participated in the study.

The participating cooperating teachers were asked a series of interview questions, one focused on gaining their perceptions of their role in supporting the cooperating teachers they host within their classrooms and one that was focused on identifying what the cooperating teachers felt their role was in providing feedback to the pre-service teachers after they complete their lessons.

The first questions asked, "What do you feel your role is in providing support to the pre-service teachers during the traditional experience? The virtual experience?" In an interview setting (January, 2010) cooperating teacher Jennifer responded by saying, "I begin by trying to make the cooperating teacher feel welcome, I show them around, talk about my classes, and show them the resources I have available in my classroom." I asked Jennifer how she supports pre-service teachers as they get ready to teach in both the traditional and virtual settings. Jennifer said:

In the traditional setting I really just serve as a resource as they prepare and help monitor the class during the lesson. In the virtual setting I really spent some time ensuring that the technology would work and then organizing the class the day in which the virtual lesson was delivered.

Cooperating teacher Amanda saw her role in supporting the pre-service teacher she was hosting as a big responsibility. In an interview setting (January, 2010) Amanda said:

During the traditional experience, my role is to create a positive learning environment where the pre-service teacher can learn from both me and my students. They may watch for things such as wait time, teacher feedback, student grouping, etc to see ways in which instruction is varied. When they teach their lessons, it's my job to support them and offer positive feedback and constructive criticism.

I then asked Amanda about her thoughts on the virtual lesson. In the same interview setting Amanda said:

During the virtual experience, much more focus is put on the technology and making sure everything is up and running. In a perfect world this would be a non-issue, but that world just doesn't exist yet. In both cases, an important part of my job is to answer questions and address any concerns the pre-service teacher may have and also make sure their lessons are to par with what the student need to be learning.

A third participating cooperating teacher, Anthony, was also asked the same question. In an interview setting (January, 2010) Anthony said:

Initially I see my role in supporting pre-service teachers as playing host, tour guide, and

mentor all rolled into one. I need to be welcoming and make the pre-service teachers feel

comfortable enough with me and the classes to be able to concentrate on their learning.

I continued by asking him to explain how if his role is similar or different in the virtual setting.

Anthony responded by saying, "In the virtual setting I thought the biggest support I could give

was to ensure the technology was working and the class was organized and on-task the day of the

virtual lesson."

The last participating cooperating teacher Theresa also had a positive outlook about the

support she provides to the cooperating teachers she hosts within her classroom. In an interview

setting (January, 2010) she responded to the support question in a similar manner as Anthony,

she said, "My role is to play the overall host and mentor for the pre-service teacher during this

short field experience. In the traditional setting it is pretty much centered on integrating them

into the classes." I then asked about her perception on supporting the pre-service teachers in the

virtual setting. Again, Theresa responded similarly to the other cooperating teachers by

highlighting the need to focus on making sure the technology was prepared and functioning

properly.

Through the analysis of data, the researcher can conclude that the pre-service teachers and the

cooperating teachers have similar views of the support they receive as they prepare to teach in

both the traditional and virtual settings. The level of support seems to be consistent among the

cooperating teachers that participated in this study but may differ from others that did not

participate in the study.

The second question posed to the participating cooperating teachers centered on the type and amount of feedback they provide to the pre-service teachers they hosted in both the traditional and virtual settings. The focus of this question was to examine if the cooperating teachers are prepared to offer appropriate feedback to pre-service teacher in both the traditional and virtual environment.

The question posed to the cooperating teachers was, "What do you feel your role is in providing feedback to the pre-service teacher after their lessons? Do you feel adequately prepared to do this?

In an interview setting (January, 2010) Jennifer responded by saying:

I feel a little uncomfortable providing feedback since I'm such a young teacher. With the rubric, it's definitely a lot easier to provide feedback because it's like having a little check list. I always start out by saying something positive and then if need be, I'd give some constructive criticism, give tips on what that pre-service teacher could have done, etc.

I then asked Jennifer how often she has to provide constructive criticism to the pre-service teachers and why is that feedback important. Jennifer responded by saying, "I really haven't seen a need to do a lot of this. Although I do feel it is important because as future teachers they will never learn unless he/she recognizes mistakes."

Amanda responded to the previous question in a similar manner as Jennifer. In an interview setting (January, 2010) she responded to my question by stating:

I feel that it is my job to provide positive feedback and constructive criticism. If the pre-service teacher is doing something that works – make sure they know it. If I notice anything that isn't working with their lesson, it is my job to help them see why and come up with

adjustments they can use next time. Sometimes it is something as simple as telling them to slow down and relax.

I followed up on Amanda's response by asking her, "If you feel it is your job to correct their mistakes, how do you handle pre-service teachers that are not ready to student teach?" Amanda responded by saying:

I feel prepared to offer feedback and encouragement to pre-service teachers. If I had a pre-service teacher who I did not believe was prepared and on the right track I would contact the appropriate individual at Kings and share my concerns.

The third cooperating teacher I interviewed, Anthony, also viewed his role as a guide and mentor for the pre-service teachers. In an interview setting (January, 2010) Anthony responded to the question regarding feedback by saying, "For the most part I feel comfortable providing feedback to pre-service teachers in the traditional setting because I think I have a good understanding of what they should be doing in the classroom, both right and wrong." I followed up by asking him, "What are your feelings about providing feedback in the virtual setting?" Anthony replied, "I am not a sure about it because I haven't been trained in online teaching but I do when a teacher is being engaging with their students and I can provide feedback to them."

Lastly, Theresa was posed the same question regarding feedback. In a similar interview setting (January, 2010) she responded by saying:

I have never been trained to supervise teachers but I have been doing this a long time and I think I know what works with students and what doesn't work with students. This gives me a level of comfort to be able to provide feedback to pre-service teachers in both the traditional and virtual settings.

I continued to investigate her thought by asking her if she believed that the college could have provided additional support to prepare her for this experience. Theresa responded by saying:

I think I would benefit from more communication about what I should be looking for from the cooperating teacher, they send the Handbook, but that doesn't really talk about behaviors. I think I would also benefit from seeing a student profile to gain a better understanding of the student.

I felt Theresa's last comment warranted another question, "What would you be looking for in a student profile and how would that help you as a cooperating teacher?" Theresa responded by saying, "I am not really sure what should be included, but I think by knowing the person's background I would be able to develop a relationship with them faster which would allow us to both be more comfortable."

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter the researcher has laid out the analyzed data and has begun to identify themes focused on answering the research questions that serve as the theoretical foundation of this study. Each of the research questions were examined from multiple perspectives with the focus on comparing experiences between traditional and virtual participants as compared to the criteria for exemplary field experiences.

After reviewing the analyzed data related to research question 1, there were several themes that were beginning to emerge. It became evident that there is a perceptual problem that exists in the understanding of what the actual common and clear vision of good teaching is that is being taught by the college versus what it is perceived to be by the TEFE and VEFE pre-service teachers and the cooperating teachers.

The data gathered from the interview that focused on research question two also begin to allow the researcher to identify certain themes that are beginning to emerge. The main theme was that there was a difference in the amount of feedback and support VEFE participants received compared to the amount of feedback the TEFE participants receive from the college supervisor. Although this seemed to be the theme, it was found that there were exceptions to this trend.

The third research question also presented themes that warrant further discussion in the following chapter. The data analyzed relating to this research question reveals that there is not a significant difference between the amount of support the VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers receive from their cooperating teachers while they are completing the early field experience. But a difference did seem to emerge that shows that cooperating teachers that hosted VEFE students were more engaged and interested in planning and delivery of instruction.

A thorough discussion of all of these results and the resulting implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this research including the purpose of the study, summary of methodological procedures, and a summary of the findings. Conclusions based on the findings are discussed, and implications for pre-service teacher education, virtual components to field experiences, and future research conclude the chapter.

The purpose of this study was to compare the experiences of pre-service teachers as they participated in a traditional early field experience (TEFE) and a virtual early field experience (VEFE) as a component of the pre-service teacher education program at a small private urban university in northeastern Pennsylvania. The goal was to capture the experiences of the pre-service teachers that participated in the TEFE and VEFE, as well as the pre-service teachers that participated exclusively in the TEFE, and those of the cooperating teachers and teacher educator to analyze the phenomenon called the early field experience.

The problem is not putting an emphasis on early field experiences as part of the teacher education program but rather of how to effectively, efficiently, and economically implement the field experiences to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary guidance and support that any other beginning professional would receive. Despite the efforts by educational and government leaders, the question still remains on how to best educate and prepare pre-service teachers.

Does the pre student teacher field experience meet the criteria of an exemplary field experience? Do pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers have clear standards for promoting a top-quality early field experience? Do pre-service teachers participating in a virtual component to the early field experience receive better feedback from their college supervisor/teacher educator compared to pre-service teachers who have the traditional on-site early field experience? Do on-site pre-service teachers feel that they receive sufficient feedback and support from the cooperating teacher during the early field experience compared to pre-service teachers participating in a virtual environment? This chapter reports the results of the study and attempts to answer these research questions.

Findings and Interpretations

Research Question # 1

How does a virtual early field experience compare with a traditional on-site field experience in pre-service teacher development as it relates to developing a common clear vision of good teaching as well as defined standards of teaching?

The data indicates that there is a perceptual misunderstanding of what a common clear vision of good teaching is among the stakeholders in the teacher preparation process. When reflecting on the analyzed data from Chapter 4, it is clear that there are different levels of understanding of what it means to have a clear vision of good teaching. As reported in Chapter 4, 75% of the traditional field experience participants (TEFE) and 57% of virtual early field experience (VEFE) pre-service teachers reported they have a clear understanding of good teaching as it relates to preparation, planning and delivery of instruction.

These findings show that there is a difference in the level of perceived understanding of a common vision of good teaching between TEFE and VEFE participants. But the findings of the study also lead the researcher to believe that this perception may be a superficial understanding. The question becomes, Do pre-service teachers have a clear vision of good teaching and do they understand learning theory and how it applies to good teaching?

It is apparent that the pre-service teachers do not have a thorough understanding of what good teaching is and how good teaching relates to learning theory. It appears that both the VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers were more concerned with the procedural components of the early field experience and the content and pedagogy component of the lesson. Many of the respondents reported that they had a clear understanding of the expectations of good teaching but in reality the participants' responses to the interview and focus group questions paint a different picture. It is evident that the pre-service teachers as well as the cooperating teachers are more focused on the components of the lesson plan rather than focusing on how content is developed in relation to learning theory to produce good teaching.

Many of the participant's comments support this finding. VEFE participant Amanda stated, "The components of an effective lesson are the same no matter what environment I am delivering instruction, I just had to think about it more and be more creative in the virtual setting." And the feelings from focus group 2 was that the TEFE pre-service teachers appeared to be much more focused on the procedural components of the lesson, such as hitting each component of the lesson plan instead of differentiating between average, good, or outstanding teaching. Additionally, cooperating teacher Amanda stated, "I think the expectation is that I help

to support the pre-service teachers to complete the requirements delineated in the early field experience handbook and to provide support as needed to help them complete their lessons."

The results show a major disconnect between the common clear vision of good teaching that represents the college's perspective versus the perspective that is being taken to the field by the pre-service teachers that participated in the VEFE and the TEFE field experience. In the same interview setting (December, 2009), Mark stated, "Our students should know that good teaching is student-centered, standard driven, and integrates multiple learning theories and multiple instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of the educational communities they are teaching in." But the pre-service teachers in the field are being provided feedback from their cooperating teachers' that reflects their beliefs that they are only accountable to meet the minimum requirements of moving through the components of their lesson plan. The feedback that students receive from the cooperating teacher never really critiques the pre-service teachers on creating challenging or creative lessons. In reviewing the analyzed data from research question one, there is never a discussion about applying learning theory or designing lessons that force students to utilize higher order thinking skills.

After reviewing all of the collected data, the researcher feels comfortable in determining that neither type of early field experience, TEFE or VEFE, foster a common and clear vision of good teaching. The college professor believes that students are further along in their cognitive development than it appears many of the pre-service teachers really are. Even when a pre-service teacher believes they know what good teaching looks like there is never any data that shows a discussion about exemplary lessons, higher-order thinking skills, or applying specific learning theories. As evidenced by Jessica's comments regarding a common and clear vision of

good teaching. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Jessica stated, "I believe I know what good teaching looks like, meaning I know how to design the essential components of lesson to meet my objectives."

In addition to the communication gap between the college professor and pre-service teachers, the data shows cooperating teachers also had a communication gap with the college professor. Cooperating teachers reinforce the notion of simply going through the steps. In an interview setting (January, 2010), cooperating teacher Jen stated:

Whenever I have a pre-service teacher, I receive a handbook as well as additional handouts that answer my questions and help me understand my responsibilities. This year I received a rubric for scoring the pre-service teachers, which was very helpful. Pre-service teachers usually don't know exactly what is going on in education until they are actually out there.

This further reinforces the finding that there is clearly a communication gap between the college and the cooperating teachers.

In summarizing research question one, the misconceptions of the pre-service teachers from both the VEFE and TEFE group represent a clear misunderstanding of good teaching as taught by the college but not reinforced in the field.   It is evident that neither early field experience promotes a common clear vision of good teaching that is shared among the college faculty, cooperating teachers, and pre-service teachers. It can further be concluded that as a result of a the lack of a common and clear vision of good teaching this field experience does not meet this particular criteria for an exemplary field experience.

Research Question # 2

Do pre-service teachers participating in a virtual component to the early field experience (VEFE) receive more feedback from the college supervisor/teacher educator compared to pre-service teachers that only participate in a traditional early field experience (TEFE)?

After a complete analysis of interview and focus group data it is concluded that pre-service teachers that participated in VEFE component to the early field experience received more feedback and support from the college supervisor compared to their peers that participated exclusively in the TEFE.

Seventy one percent (71%) of the pre-service teachers who participated in the virtual component of the early field experience felt that they had received more feedback during their virtual lesson delivery compared to the feedback they received after delivering their lesson in the traditional setting. And in some cases the virtual feedback was 100% more effective even if the supervisor only made only one comment since most students got no feedback during the traditional early field experience.

VEFE participant Mary stated, "I did not receive any feedback from my traditional lesson. I received a lot more support during the virtual lesson. The researcher then asked, "What type of support did you receive?" Mary responded by saying, "It seemed that the professor and I were learning together, he was like a teammate. He helped by providing encouragement during the lesson but also telling me when to question further and in some cases what to ask." This type of support seemed pretty much the norm among the VEFE participants.

It seems that virtual teaching forced the college professor to become more involved in the virtual lesson delivery by having him present to provide feedback and support throughout the virtual lesson and immediately after the lesson. This can be seen as a positive result in supporting pre-service teachers as they transition from theory into practice as long as the support is substantive in nature. Unfortunately it appears that the feedback is superficial in nature as evidenced by some of the comments made by the VEFE pre-service teachers during their interviews. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Becky stated, "Most of the comments I received from my professor were along the lines of…good, now move on, nice job, and keep moving."

It was evident through the interview that affective and cognitive feedback was helpful to the pre-service participants as they were teaching and interacting with the students. Feedback seemed to provide them with a sense of comfort and support.   In an interview setting VEFE participant Jenn stated:

I felt like it was a relationship with the professor that was intended as a learning experience instead of a just an evaluation. When I was delivering the lesson in the virtual setting the cooperating teacher sat with me and was able to provide me support.   And as far as questioning, he provided me with some specific examples after the lesson that demonstrated to me that I could have made the students think a little more about certain topics I questioned them on. I let them provide short and direct responses without tying things together.

From the perspective of this researcher, it is clear that the feedback never went beyond superficial comments such as "Good Lesson" or "Nice Work" versus constructive feedback that will help the pre-service teachers improve their instruction. But it is clear that the majority of the

VEFE participants feel that they were better served by the college professor during their virtual experience compared to their traditional experience.

Two of the VEFE participants believed that they had received more support from the college professor during their lesson in the traditional environment. Through the analysis of data it was identified that these two participants had experiences with the college professor that were uncommon compared to the rest of the participants. It is interesting to note that there really was not a clear reason why these two pre-service teachers had the opportunities they had to interact with the college professor for the exception of responding to the offer he reported he extends to all of his students. In an interview setting (December, 2009) Mark stated:

> I make the offer to all of the pre-service teachers that I supervise that I am here for them to discuss their lessons before and/or after they teach and I will attend their lessons if they request it. The reality is that very few students take me up on this offer because it is not a requirement.

It is not clear how this offer provides support to the pre-service teachers because unless they experience it I do not believe they understand the value of that level of support.

VEFE participant Jessica commented on her experience with the college professor by saying, "I was able to meet with my professor before my lesson and then he was able to come out and see me teach. He gave me great feedback on my interactions with the students, but I know he did not get out observing the lessons of others in my class."

Although more (71%) of the VEFE participants reported receiving more support and feedback during their virtual lesson it appears that most of the feedback and support they received was

either affective and/or superficial in nature. The two VEFE participants (29%) that felt they

received more support and feedback in during the traditional experience seemed to have a much

richer experience that looked more like a clinical supervision cycle versus a stand-alone

observation.

Further evidence to support the finding that VEFE participants receive more support and

feedback compared to the TEFE participants can be found in the analysis of the three focus

group interviews. Nearly 100% of TEFE participants reported they received zero feedback from

their college professor during the field experience. Several of the TEFE participants made their

feelings very clear during the focus group interviews. One participant said (April, 2010), "I got

zero feedback from my professor, I do not even know if he ever saw the evaluations that my

cooperating teacher filled out." Other comments included (April, 2010), "I completed my two

lessons in the classroom as part of the requirements of the early field experience and handed in

all of my paperwork to Mark but I didn't receive any feedback except for my overall class

grade."

Through the analysis of data it appears that little emphasis is placed on supervising pre-

service teachers during the early field experience. The literature states that intensely supervised

field experiences and strong relationships with local K-12 schools are characteristics of

exemplary field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

As a result it seems that some of the pre-service teachers had become very frustrated by the

lack of involvement on the part of the college professor. There could be numerous reasons for

this but specific supervisory strategies were never really discussed by college professor. I do

believe that the number of pre-service students that a given college professor must supervise would make it extremely difficult to provide effective supervisory feedback.

Research Question # 3

Do on-site pre-service teachers feel that they receive sufficient feedback and support from the cooperating teacher during the early field experience compared to pre-service teachers participating in a virtual environment?

The results of this study reveal that VEFE participants believe they received more feedback and support from their cooperating teacher during the virtual lesson delivery compared to their traditional lesson. It is evident that the pre-service teachers felt a greater level of support during their virtual experience because they perceived they were working in partnership with their cooperating teachers. VEFE participant Mary stated (December, 2009):

Because I think that she was so interested in how cool it was, she was with me from the beginning; designing the lesson, testing the equipment, and delivering the lesson. She really wanted to know more about how it worked and we had discussion about the different possibilities that open up as part of using a learning management system.

Part of the belief from the perspective of the pre-service teachers was that the cooperating teachers had a lot of interest in the virtual lesson because it was something new to them as well. VEFE participant Hannah (December, 2009) stated, "It was also my cooperating teacher's first time designing and delivering instruction in a virtual environment so I think she was probably learning from this experience as well."

Although the VEFE participants reported they believed they were better supported during the virtual experience the results of this study reveal evidence that the support may be superficial in nature compared to some of the feedback participants reported receiving during the traditional experience. Evidence of this can be found in comments made by Becky (December, 2009):

My cooperating teacher was really into my traditional lesson, she gave me a lot of good feedback about what I did well and areas in which I could improve. During the virtual lesson my cooperating teacher supported me but it was more about using the technology instead of being about the lesson.

This statement leads me to believe that VEFE participants felt more supported during the virtual experience but in reality they appear to have had a richer learning experience, in the context of more feedback, during the traditional lesson. The issue still remains that the feedback given is relatively low level affective type statements rather than deeper cognitive type feedback that could help pre-service teachers develop into better teachers. This result supports the literature that cooperating teachers that are trained in methods of feedback provide better support and feedback to pre-service teachers (Aiken & Day, 1999).

It is interesting to note that through the analysis of data it appears that much of the support that the virtual pre-service teachers are receiving, during both their virtual and traditional lessons is superficial in nature. Should college faculty be more concerned about how in touch or connected the cooperating teachers are with a theory and vision of what good teaching really looks like. There seems to be a lack of communication among the college and the cooperating teachers in the field. Evidence can be found in the comments of a focus group 2 participant

(April, 2010) who said, "I really don't think my cooperating teacher wanted to have anybody with her, in fact, she didn't even know that I was coming."

Although the VEFE participants felt they were provided adequate support and feedback in both the traditional and virtual settings during their early field experiences, this was not the case for their counterparts that made up the TEFE group. Through the three focus group interviews, it was made clear by the TEFE participants that they had mixed feelings on the level of cooperation and support they received from their assigned cooperating teachers.

Results from focus group one were mainly positive but continued to reinforce the theme that the cooperating teachers were there to essentially assist the pre-service teachers in meeting the requirements of the field experience versus serving the role of mentor. Some of the comments from focus group 1 (April, 2010) included, "The cooperating teacher was welcoming and helpful in helping me meet the requirements of the early field experience, and the feedback I received was all positive." And "In regards to feedback after my lesson, it was all positive and high ratings on the form the field experience handbook he used to rate me."

Results from focus group 2 were mixed and could be interpreted as slightly negative. One of the participants jumped on my initial question about their cooperating teacher and stated (April, 2010):

My cooperating teacher was just okay. I really didn't receive any feedback, just the written form with the rating numbers circled. It seemed like my cooperating teacher was either not interested in being a host teacher or didn't know how to provide feedback to me.

This type of response further illustrates the conclusion that there is a lack of communication between the college and the cooperating teachers in the field. And it is evident that the lack of communication caused frustration for some of the pre-service teachers.

For those students in focus group 2 that reported positive experiences with their cooperating teacher the feedback they received still remained to be affective and superficial in nature. The concern becomes is it a lack of interest on the cooperating teachers part or a lack of communication from the college to help support the cooperating teachers in the field that are expected to provide mentoring and cognitive feedback to the pre-service teachers.

I also believe that it is interesting to note that focus group 2 participants seemed dissatisfied with their cooperating teachers. When reviewing the results of the focus group 3 interviews, the TEFE participants relayed mostly positive experiences similar to the thoughts and beliefs of the participants in focus group 1.

The results from the perspective of the cooperating teachers that participated in the study are limited to those cooperating teachers that hosted VEFE participants. It is interesting to note that there were six cooperating teachers but only four willing to participate in the study. The perspective of the cooperating teachers was valuable to gain their perspective on their roles and responsibilities in supporting and providing feedback to the cooperating teachers.

There was consensus among the cooperating teachers that their role is to serve a liaison for the school, to welcome them, show them around, and help them meet the requirements of the early field experience. Cooperating teacher Jenn (January, 2010) says, "I begin by trying to make the cooperating teacher feel welcome, I show them around, talk about my classes, and show them the resources I have available in my classroom."

Another common theme among the cooperating teachers was their belief that this was a big responsibility and they were willing to take on this role. Some because they liked the idea of serving as mentor and some because they were Alumni of the college and wanted to give back.

The results also support the beliefs of the VEFE participants about the level of support and interest they received from their cooperating teachers in both the traditional and virtual settings. There are noticeable differences in the perception of the role of the cooperating teachers depending on the type of environment they are supporting a pre-service teacher in.

In the virtual setting it became evident that their main focus was not on the pre-service teacher and instruction but rather on ensuring that the technology is functioning properly and the students are managed and on task. This is evidenced by the comments made by cooperating teacher Amanda (January, 2010) when she stated, "During the virtual experience, much more focus is put on the technology and making sure everything is up and running. In a perfect world this would be a non-issue, but that world just doesn't exist yet." And cooperating teacher Anthony stated, "In the virtual setting I thought the biggest support I could give was to ensure the technology was working and the class was organized and on-task the day of the virtual lesson."

In the traditional setting it seemed a common theme that the cooperating teachers took on a more traditional observer type role instead a mentoring role. In addition it appears that the cooperating teachers were more comfortable in this role because they are accustomed to it. Cooperating teacher Jenn (January, 2010) said, "In the traditional setting I really just serve as a resource as they prepare and help monitor the class during the lesson. Then I complete the evaluation form and hand it off."

In closing it is evident that overall pre-service teachers that participated in the VEFE were provide with more support from their cooperating teacher but that did not necessarily mean they received more feedback after completing both their traditional and virtual lessons. It appears that the VEFE participants cooperating teachers were more involved in the virtual lessons as a result of their interest in the use of technology, but the type of feedback provided to all participants seems superficial in nature.

Conclusions

After answering the research questions that set the foundation for this study it can be concluded that neither the virtual early field experience nor the traditional early field experience meet the criteria of an exemplary early field experience. Based on the criteria used for the purpose of this it can also be concluded that the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers have disconnection with the college and college supervisor over the common and clear vision of what good teaching is and the behaviors that contribute to effective teaching.

There appears to be a breakdown in communication between the college and the school district regarding supervision, supervisory functions, and the evaluation of teaching behavior as it relates to learning theory. The college of Education needs to establish and support a model supervisory program for pre-service teachers throughout their early field experience. This study seems to have found a disconnection between theory and application in regard to enhancing the teaching skills of education majors. As a result the college needs to develop better ways to support pre-service teachers during their field experience. This study found that the virtual experience has good potential for enhancing teaching skills and permits the college teacher to remain on campus thus saving a lot of travel time.

Positive benefits were found when pre-service teachers were afforded the opportunity to participate in an early field experience that mimicked a clinical observation cycle. Unfortunately, the college professor has limited access to the field and would not have enough time to be able to carry out a clinical observation cycle with every pre-service teacher he is responsible to supervise.

This places a level of responsibility on the cooperating teachers that host both VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers. There was interest from the majority of cooperating teachers that hosted both VEFE and TEFE pre-service teachers to fulfill this responsibility. The issue is whether or not they understand their role as cooperating teacher in fostering good teaching behaviors and providing substantive feedback instead of superficial feedback.

Implications for Practice

The findings indicate a lack of clearly established and commonly understood vision of what constitutes good teaching for pre-service teachers. The college will need to strategically think about how they will provide more effective support to pre-service teachers as they transition from the classroom to the field. Additionally, the college will need to implement methods to effectively engage and train cooperating teachers to be able to foster their vision of good teaching and techniques for providing effective feedback to pre-service teachers.

The first step to enhancing the early field experience is to clearly communicate what is expected of the student, the cooperating teacher, and the college supervisor. The college needs to consider developing supervisory workshops for college supervisors and cooperating teachers. Such training will promote a sense of partnership among the college and cooperating teachers

that are willing to host pre-service teachers from the college. These trainings will also serve as a mechanism to close the communication gaps identified in this study.

Secondly, it was found that it really does not matter whether it is in the traditional or virtual environment, the involvement of the college professor in the early field experience is beneficial to the teaching and learning process. The virtual experience allowed the college professor to be involved in a greater number of pre-service teachers' experiences, but the college will need to research methods to foster this approach. The college will need to include instruction in teaching in a virtual environment as part of its secondary methods curriculum as well as offering training to the professors at the college and the cooperating teachers in the field.

The next implication for future practice would be for the college to develop a better handbook. The handbook should be limited to two pages and be accompanied by a DVD illustrating effective teaching strategies. The DVD could contain examples of what an "A" teacher looks like in practice versus a "B" teacher or "C" teacher. The college will need to make an investment in more staff to be able to carry out this practice. But this would real put an emphasis on how important it is for pre-service teachers to make the connection between what they learn in the classroom and how it is applied in the classroom.

Fourth, the college needs to engage cooperating teachers to become active partners in the process of carrying out the vision of the college as it relates to effective teaching. One method of closing the communication gap and fostering uniformity would be only assign pre-service teachers to cooperating teachers that have been willing to attend professional development at the college. In exchange the college can pay a stipend to the cooperating teachers or provide them the opportunity to earn graduate credits for their time and work.

In closing, there are several areas outlined above that, if implemented, will add to the overall early field experience at the college. By fostering and common and clear vision of good teaching, providing adequate and appropriate college supervisor support and identifying trained cooperating teachers to host pre-service teachers in the field the college will develop better novice teachers.

Future Research Considerations

After considering the results of the study there are many more questions that need to be answered. One area of major concern is trying to measure levels of connectedness between the college and the cooperating teachers in the field supporting pre-service teachers. Research shows that one of the biggest reasons field experiences are ineffective is because of the lack of coherence between the coursework and practice in the field (University, 2010).

A research topic of interest under this category would be to explore how to effectively communicate the vision of the college regarding good teaching practice to cooperating teachers in the field and how to promote good teaching practice in the field. The study would look to focus on how the theoretical framework for good teaching is communicated between the university and cooperating teachers and how those cooperating teachers model those behaviors as they mentor pre-service teachers.

A second research topic related to the communication and connectedness issue would be to conduct a study to examine whether or not pre-service teachers experiences differ based on the type of training their cooperating teacher received prior to becoming an in-service teacher. Variables that could be examined include whether or not the cooperating was trained at the

college, was the cooperating teacher trained in a traditional or non-traditional program, and whether or not demographics play a role.

The results of the study also continue to leave the researcher with questions regarding the level of support pre-service teachers are receiving from their cooperating teachers in the traditional classroom setting. A study I would like to explore in this area would be examining the impact of supervisory training with a cohort of cooperating teachers. Such a study might focus upon addressing the issues of understanding the common vision of good teaching and providing more effective feedback to the pre-service teachers that is aligned to theory being taught in the campus classroom. Research supports the notion that training cooperating teachers to provide feedback helps cooperating teachers to provide more constructive feedback to pre-service teachers (Aiken & Day, 1999).

A study examining the characteristics of effective cooperating teachers would be beneficial for the college to identify in-service teachers that can assist the pre-service teachers at the college.

Another interesting study that would help to communicate the schools vision and expectations as well as providing support to cooperating teachers would be to conduct a comparison study of pre-service teachers participating in stand-alone field experiences versus pre-service teachers completing their early field experiences as part of a professional development school (PDS) model.

A third focus for further research would be to examine ways for the college to take a more active role in guiding and supervising the early field experience. An interesting study would be to have the university assign education department faculty to small cohort groups of students.

The faculty role would be to serve as a mentor for their cohort group and be available to discuss observations as well as supervising the lessons of the pre-service teachers in the field.

Another interesting research study would focus on pre-service teachers who participated exclusively in a virtual early field experience. Such a study would allow researchers to examine possible benefits of having structured observations in which the pre-service teachers can discuss their observation and learn alongside the college professor on a regular basis. Their experiences could then be compared to pre-service teachers participating in a traditional early field experience.

This would require pre-service teachers to be trained in teaching in a virtual environment and become comfortable with designing virtual lessons and delivering instruction through a learning management system. I would design the virtual early field experience to include the class conducting guided virtual observations from a remote location under the direct supervision of the college supervisor. Then the pre-service teachers would deliver their lesson to classes via a learning management system. The college supervisor would provide each of the students support and feedback. This would eliminate the reliance on cooperating teachers to support pre-service teachers during early field experience. Similar to the current study, I would compare the experiences of the virtual participants to the traditional participants.

Beyond conducting further research that examines the early field experience being delivered in a virtual and traditional setting, I believe it would be interesting to conduct a study that looked at the early field experience of pre-service teachers that are being prepared by virtual teacher preparation institutions. The research questions would be similar to those in this study and the

results would look to determine whether or not that field experience meets the criteria of an exemplary field experience.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study was the limited number of pre-service teacher participants and the fact that they were all volunteers. A second limitation was a small sample size of cooperating teachers that participated in the study. There were only four cooperating teachers three of the four were graduates of the college's teacher education program. A third limitation of the study was that all of the virtual early field experience participants were female.

Conclusion

This study began as a way to examine the early field experience component of the teacher preparation program at a small private urban college in northeastern Pennsylvania. Throughout this study the researcher has gained a better understanding of each of the "triad" of perspectives make up the relationships among the pre-service teacher, the cooperating teachers, and the teacher educator. The purpose of this study was to three-fold: to add to existing literature, to add to the current understanding and procedures of the college's early field experience, and to examine compare the experience of the pre-service teachers that added a virtual component to their overall early field experience.

The researcher found limited research on virtual field experiences; research exists but typically focuses on cases from online teacher preparation programs. This research will add to the current base because it is an actual study that compared experiences based on research based criteria of exemplary field experiences.

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