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Factors That Prospective Teachers at Utah State University Considered Important in Their Decision to Enter Teacher Preparation

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FACTORS THAT PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS AT UTAH STATE
UNIVERSITY CONSIDERED IMPORTANT IN THEIR
DECISION TO ENTER TEACHER PREPARATION

by

Kenneth Ray Powell

A seminar report submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

Secondary Education

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1970

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Kenneth Ray Powell

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Teaching--time of decision	1
Influence from family, relatives, and teachers	2
Previous teaching experience	3
Summary of review of literature	3
Statement of the problem	4
Objectives	4
Definition of terms	5
Delimitations	5
Limitation	5
II. METHOD AND PROCEDURE	6
III. FINDINGS	8
Presentation of data	8
Teaching--time of decision	8
Influence from family members and relatives who are educators	10
Previous teaching experience	11
Summary of the subjects in the study	12
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	14
LITERATURE CITED	17
APPENDIX	19
VITA	22

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Summary of the periods during which applicants to education decided to enter teacher preparation	9
2. Summary of how many prospective teachers have relatives involved in education	10
3. Summary of teaching experience	12
4. Summary of the subjects in the study, sex, and choice of education	13

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A critical shortage of teachers became an acute threat to society following World War II according to Jantzen (1959). Because of the shortage of teachers, many institutions of higher learning and a number of interested groups have discussed and made studies on means of recruiting prospective teachers, as brought out by Riccio (1961). The studies that have been made on prospective teachers expounded mainly on the age students decided to become teachers and influences from parents, relative-teachers, teachers, guidance counselors, and teaching experience.

Teaching--time of decision

Fielstra (1955) reported that 50 percent of the 230 students enrolled in an introductory education course at the University of California at Los Angeles decided to enter teaching before graduation from high school. This was also supported by Stewart (1956) where 68 of 128 males and 132 females enrolled in a graduate class at George Peabody College had selected to teach by the time they entered college.

In 1959, Jantzen reported that 78 percent of the 226 college students he surveyed at the College of the Pacific had the desire to enter the teaching field before they graduated from high school.

Stier (1961) pointed out that of 782 students enrolled in classes in child development and adolescent development, 42 percent decided to be a teacher while still in the elementary grades--one through eight.

Of the subjects, 48 percent decided that they wanted to become a teacher during high school or college. The study indicated they were in favor of teaching by the age of fifteen and 48 percent had reached a decision to become a teacher between the ages of sixteen and twenty. Saxe (1969) and Bartel and Coppedge (1969) reported similar results that support the previous studies reviewed.

Influence from family, relatives, and teachers

Many prospective teachers have indicated that influence from teachers, relative-teachers, and parents have been a very large factor in their decision to enter the teaching profession. Ringness (1952) reported that students were influenced greatest by teachers and that parents were the next greatest influence on their choice in selecting teaching as a profession. This study involved sixty-three men and thirty-seven women at the University of Wisconsin. In 1953, Willcox and Beigel made a study of 152 first-semester freshman students at the State Teacher College and University in New York. The students mentioned a particular teacher or teachers slightly more than family as deciding influences. Fielstra (1955) reported in his study of 230 students and Ostlie (1956) in his study of 1,374 college students of eight schools of education in Southern California that teachers were the most important influence in their decision to become a teacher.

Stewart (1956) reported that of 230 students at George Peabody College, 46 percent of the students felt that relatives influenced their choice in becoming a teacher. A similar study, Yale-Fairfield by Burns et al. (1956), found that the 230 junior and senior students reported

influence from parents slightly more than teachers in their decision to pursue teaching as a career.

Later studies reported that teachers are more influential than parents and relatives. This is supported by Jantzen (1959) where he reports that 53 percent of the men and 55 percent of the women felt that enthusiasm of former teachers influenced them to enter the teaching profession.

Allilunas (1965) and Saxe (1969) report that students felt that teachers were the most influential in their decision to become a teacher and that parents were next in order of importance.

Previous teaching experience

One important question to consider is "Have prospective teachers had some type of teaching experience before teacher preparation?"

A survey of 405 undergraduate students in the College of Education at the University of Utah reported that 58 percent of the students had prior teaching experience and felt it was an influence in the decision to enter teaching according to Orton (1949). Rickey and Fox (1948) reported that 78 percent of 100 Indiana freshman, who were preparing for teaching, had early teaching experience. At the University of Wisconsin, senior students taking an undergraduate class reported that 58 percent of the students had led school classes on occasion and 73 percent had early teaching experience, as reported in a study by Ringness (1952).

Summary of review of literature

The period of schooling that prospective teachers decided to enter teacher preparation was during the last years of high school, according

to the studies cited. The majority of students were motivated to this end before graduation from high school, and the remaining students decided during the first few years of college.

Prospective teachers indicated that influence from teachers, relative-teachers, and parents have the largest influence on their decision to enter the teaching profession. The majority of students felt that teachers were the greatest influential factor in their decision to enter teaching and parents were next in importance.

A majority of prospective teachers had some informal teaching experience prior to entering teacher preparation.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to isolate the factors that prospective teachers at Utah State University considered important in making their decision to start teacher preparation.

In 1967, the College of Education started to tape interviews of applicants to teacher education at Utah State University. After reviewing a sample of the taped interviews collected, the author found that the following objectives could be obtained from the uninstructed interviews.

Objectives

1. To determine the period of schooling during which applicants to teacher education decided to enter teacher preparation.
2. To discover the percentage of prospective teachers at Utah State University who have relatives involved in education.
3. To find out how many prospective teachers have had some type of teaching experience prior to entering teacher preparation.

Definition of terms

Teaching experience. Teaching experience ranges from an informal setting where an individual has conducted a small or large class in elementary school, junior high school, high school, or college; a sports instructor or director where lessons are provided for one or a group of individuals; teaching a group or class in some type of church organization and teaching or demonstration concepts during military service.

Delimitations

The scope of this study was a randomized selection of 203 applicants to teacher education at Utah State University.

Limitation

The interviews were conducted by staff members of the College of Education. The interviews were unstructured, other than the initial question or statement, "Where or when did your interest in education germinate." From this initial question the applicants responded and the interviewer directed questions in relation to the emerging data.

A structured interview presenting the same questions to each applicant concerning when the applicant chose to enter teacher preparation, family members who were educators, and some type of informal teaching experience, would have provided more reliable data.

CHAPTER II
METHOD AND PROCEDURE

To answer the objectives stated in Chapter I (time of decision, prospective teachers with relatives involved in education, and previous teaching experience) taped interviews of applicants to teacher education at Utah State University were reviewed. The information was recorded from interviews from 1967 to Spring, 1970. A random sample was obtained by numbering consecutively the fifty-two taped reels that were collected over this period of time. By using a table of random numbers, published by Rand Corporation, the selection of the reels was decided. Each reel contained between twenty-five to forty interviews which were approximately fifteen to twenty-five minutes in length. So that an adequate sample could be obtained, seven different reels were used to provide a sufficiently large sample.

The applicants were first asked how they became interested in education and from this initial statement the following questions are developed or implied:

1. When did you decide to become a teacher?
2. Are there members of your family involved in education?
3. Have you had some type of informal teaching experience?

The responses were recorded by tallying the numbers into the following categories:

A. When applicant to teacher education decided to enter into teaching

1. Elementary school

2. Junior high school
 3. High school
 4. College
 5. Between high school and college
- B. Members of family involved in education
1. Parents
 2. Brother or sister
 3. Relative-teacher
 4. Husband or wife
 5. None
- C. Previous teaching experience
1. School
 2. Instructor or coach in some area of sports
 3. Church
 4. Military
 5. Others
 6. None

The report is divided into the three categories as stated above. Following each category results, decisions, or conclusions are determined and discussed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

The purpose of this paper was to isolate the factors that prospective teachers considered important in making their decision to start teacher preparation. The factors are time of decision, influence from family members who are educators, and previous teaching experience.

The study covers a random sample of applicants to teacher education between 1967 to Spring, 1970. Information was obtained by reviewing taped interviews conducted by the College of Education. A random sample was obtained by numbering the fifty-two taped reels, and by using a table of random numbers, the selection of the seven reels was determined. From the seven taped reels that were selected, the responses of each applicant's interview was recorded. A sample of 203 subjects was utilized for the study.

Presentation of data

The major divisions for the information are the time of decision, family members who are educators, and previous teaching experience, which are presented separately in the report. The data are presented in tables with the number of responses and the percentage of responses for each category.

Teaching--time of decision

Table 1 presents the time of decision--elementary school, junior high school, high school, college, or between high school and college.

Table 1. Summary of the periods during which applicants to education decided to enter teacher preparation

Periods	Number	Percentage
Elementary school	29	14.2
Junior high school	12	5.9
High school	31	15.2
College	96	47.3
Between high school and college	5	2.4
No response	30	14.2

The elementary and high school periods maintain about the same number of responses. The decision made during elementary school might have been precipitated by an enthusiastic teacher for whom the applicant had great admiration. It might also have been a result of success in subject matter or school in general. These same reasons might hold for high school students.

There were 35.3 percent of the applicants to teacher education who decided to enter teacher preparation before graduation from high school as compared to 47.3 percent who made their decision to teach after entering college. Many of the applicants indicated they had thought about entering education before graduation from high school, but their final decision was not made until after entering college.

Some of the variables that could enter into the decision of college students who are pursuing teacher preparation are the need for a career and enthusiasm of teachers and friends. Other variables are dissatisfaction

in other fields. Many students who before entering college had considered entering teacher preparation were motivated to make a final decision in this direction because of the opportunities to teach.

Influence from family members and
relatives who are educators

Table 2 presents the number of applicants who have family members who are educators.

Table 2. Summary of how many prospective teachers have relatives involved in education

Relation to applicant	Number	Percentage
Parents	40	19.7
Brother or sister	25	12.3
Relative-teacher	28	13.7
Husband or wife	10	4.8
None	40	19.7
No response	73	35.9

In Table 2 parents who are educators constitute 19.7 percent of the responses while relative-teachers make up 13.7 percent. Those who have a brother or sister who are teachers comprise 12.3 percent. There were more parents who had been teachers than other relative-teachers or brothers and sisters.

There were 50.5 percent of the applicants to teacher education who had relatives in education compared with 19.7 percent who indicated that they had no relatives who were educators.

The applicants who had relatives who were educators had been influenced by these relatives to pursue teaching as a career. Many of the respondents indicated that parents and brothers or sisters who were educators provided motivation for them to enter the teaching profession.

There were 35.9 percent of the applicants who did not respond to this particular question and thus could not be categorized.

Aside from the number of prospective teachers who had educators in their family, it was observed that many of the applicants to teacher education felt that teachers were a major influential factor in their decision upon entering teaching as a career. Since this area had not been predetermined, these responses had not been tallied and so are not reported.

Previous teaching experience

Table 3 presents the categories in which prospective teachers have been involved in some type of informal teaching experience.

Some applicants had prior teaching experience in more than one category. The category with the largest percent of teaching experience responses is church. Of the applicants, 48.2 percent had previous teaching experience. The large percentage of teaching experience in religious areas is a direct result of the teaching opportunities offered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (L.D.S.), which is the predominate religion in the region which furnishes the bulk of the students for Utah State University. The experiences which provided opportunities to teach in the L.D.S. Church are Sunday School, Primary, Mutual Improvement Association (M.I.A.), and missionary work.

Table 3. Summary of teaching experience

Area of teaching experience	Number	Percentage
School	26	12.8
Coach or instructor	15	7.3
Church	98	48.2
Military	7	3.4
Others	12	5.9
None	12	5.9
No response	46	22.6

It was apparent that church teaching experiences were among the strongest influences at Utah State University on prospective teachers' decisions to enter teaching.

A small percentage, 12.8 percent, of the applicants had teaching experiences in public schools, trade schools, colleges, or universities. The category, coach or instructor, is an area where applicants had coached ball teams, taught swimming, music, dance, or arts and crafts in camps, churches, or civic centers.

There were 5.9 percent of the applicants who indicated that they had no previous teaching experiences. There were 22.6 percent of the applicants who did not respond to the category called "previous teaching experience."

Summary of the subjects in the study

Table 4 presents the number and percentage of subjects who applied

for teacher education at Utah State University, male or female, and their choice of elementary or secondary education reviewed in the study.

Table 4. Summary of the subjects in the study, sex, and choice of education

	Number	Percentage
Sex:		
Male	87	42.8
Female	116	57.6
Level of preparation:		
Secondary	138	67.4
Elementary	55	27.6

CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To answer the objectives (time of decision, prospective teachers with relatives who are educators, and previous teaching experience) the author reviewed a random sample of applicants to teacher education at Utah State University between 1967 to Spring, 1970. Information was obtained by reviewing taped interviews conducted by the College of Education. A random sample was obtained by numbering the fifty-two taped reels, and by using a table of random numbers, the selection of the seven reels was determined. From the seven taped reels that were selected, the responses of each applicant's interview were recorded. The interviews were approximately fifteen to twenty-five minutes in length. A sample of 203 subjects were utilized for the study.

More than one-third of the applicants to teacher education at Utah State University reached a decision to enter teaching as a career before graduation from high school, and approximately one-half decided to enter teaching during college. Many of the applicants who made their decision to enter teaching while in college had contemplated becoming a teacher before graduation from high school. This seemed to indicate that the recruitment of prospective teachers would be most effective during high school and the first year of college.

More than one-half of the applicants to teacher education had family members and relatives who were educators. It was apparent that influences from parents, brothers and/or sisters, and other teacher-relatives were influential factors in the decision of prospective teachers

to enter teacher preparation.

It was observed that many students indicated that influence from previous teachers was a very important factor in their decision to enter teaching. This was especially true for students who had thought about teaching for a career before graduation from high school.

A large majority of the prospective teachers had some type of informal teaching experience in one or more of the categories listed in the study. There were only 5.9 percent of the applicants who had no previous teaching experience and 22.6 percent who did not respond. Therefore, previous teaching experience appeared to be a very influential factor in motivating students to become prospective teachers.

Slightly more than one-third of the applicants to teacher education at Utah State University decided to enter teaching before graduation from high school compared with previous studies reviewed in which approximately 50 percent of the subjects were motivated by this means. Approximately 50 percent of the applicants at Utah State University decided to enter teaching during college compared with about one-third in previous studies. It appears that the time of decision for applicants to teacher education at Utah State University is a reverse of the previous studies reviewed.

Both the previous studies reviewed and the present study at Utah State University indicate that influence from teachers, relative-teachers, and parents have the largest influential effect on prospective teachers' decisions to enter teaching.

The studies reviewed indicated that a majority of prospective teachers had some informal teaching experience prior to entering teacher

preparation. Previous teaching experience was in such activities as informal school classes, sport director or instructor, music and dance instructor, or military service teaching. This agrees with the findings of this report except that teaching experience in church organizations is the major area for previous teaching experience at Utah State University, whereas this is a minor contribution in the reviewed studies. There were 48.2 percent of the subjects reviewed in the study who had previous teaching experience in church. This seems to be a direct result of the teaching opportunities in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which is a predominant religion in the region from which the majority of Utah State University students originate.

In conclusion, the most important factors in career decision with regard to teaching appear to be relatives who are teachers or other teachers. The other important factor and perhaps the strongest at Utah State University is the student's experience in teaching, directing, and guiding children prior to entering teacher preparation.

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APPENDIX

VITA

Kenneth Ray Powell

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Education

Seminar Report: Factors That Prospective Teachers at Utah State University Considered Important in Their Decision to Enter Teacher Preparation

Major Field: Math Education or Mathematics

Biographical Information:

Personal Data: Born at Salina, Utah, October 14, 1946, son of Ray L. and Phyllis Ann Crane Powell; married Lynadale Madsen March 19, 1968; one child--Shelly Lyn.

Education: Attended elementary school in Salina, Utah; completed elementary school in Salt Lake City; graduated from West High School, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1964; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Utah State University, with a major in mathematics and a minor in physics in 1969.

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