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A Comparison Among Trained Facilitators, Face-to-Face, and On-Line Students' on the Presence of Particular Behavioral Attributes Associated with Successful Urban Teaching

Sueanne McKinney & Cynthia Tomovic

Abstract

This study examined the degree of agreement between three trained facilitators' interviews and preservice teachers' self-evaluation on the presence of behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching. Using a quasi-experimental design research methodology, data for this investigation was collected from 29 preservice teacher candidates in both traditional and on-line environments who are enrolled in an urban, metropolitan, co-educational research university. The Star Teacher Selection Interview and the Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment served as the measures for this investigation. Scores were compared using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the trained interviewers rated participants much lower on the seven behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching than did the participating subjects; and that, whether the assessments were conducted face-to-face or online, made no difference.

Introduction

The challenges that often plague urban school districts, including questionable teacher qualifications and certifications, poor working conditions, and under resourced environments, have been the focus of attention in national legislation, educational scholarship, and improvement and reform efforts for decades. Nonetheless, the bleak portrait of urban districts and observable disparities remain (Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Feng, 2010; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Haberman, 2005; Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017; Howard, 2015; Payne, 2008). Urban districts continue to report difficulty attracting and retaining effective teachers (Creasey, Mays, Lee, & D'Santiago, 2016; Haberman, 2005, 1995; Ingelsoll, 2004). For those teachers who do commit to teaching in an urban environment, 50% leave within their first 3 years of teaching (Haberman, 1995, 2005). Equally devastating, Allen (2017) communicates that many classrooms are “. . . run by long-term substitutes, teachers with provisional licenses, or teachers who are teaching outside their area of expertise” (p. 9). In light of these challenges, and given the emergence of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) that focuses on low performing schools, developing teachers for the urban context should be at the forefront of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2016; Haberman, 2017, 2005, 1995; Leland & Murtadha, 2011; Weiner & Jerome, 2016). Spirited debates continue over what routes and experiences best prepare teacher education students to work in urban environments.

The majority of preservice teacher candidates continue to be made up of white, middle class females from suburban areas. The demographic trends and cultural composition of public school students, however, have changed. In 2012, it was projected that minority school populations will exceed majority populations across the United States by 2019 (Frank Bass, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Given the demographic changes, current preservice teachers will be working in multicultural and diverse environments. This experience is likely to be much different from the personal schooling experiences of today's students in teacher preparation programs (Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Shaffer, Gleich-Bope, & Copich, 2014). Moreover, although the millennial generation of preservice teachers have been exposed to greater diversity and multicultural experiences than previous generations, it cannot be assumed that millennials are prepared to work effectively in urban high needs contexts (Bauml, Castro, Field, & Morowski, 2016; Castro, 2010). Educational scholars and school district personnel often espouse that high-quality, effective, urban teachers possess unique knowledge, dispositions, characteristics, skills, and behaviors required to be successful in urban classrooms. Dr. Martin Haberman, a leading scholar in urban teacher preparation, conducted extensive research on the identification of behavioral attributes that underpin successful urban teaching. Haberman identified particular behavioral attributes as predictors of successful urban teacher behaviors that manifest themselves in future practices. He identified those teachers who possess these behavioral attributes as “Star Teachers.” According to Haberman (1995) star teachers

“... are outstandingly successful: their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers (p. 1).

Haberman (2005, 1995) argues that a teacher’s disposition to teach and work with at-risk students is the most formidable indicator of successful urban teaching. Nonetheless, teachers who fail in urban environments often believe that their lack of success can be attributed to societal factors such as poverty, drugs, single-family homes and the like. These unsuccessful teachers also tend to place the blame on the children. Haberman (2005, 1995) contends that effective urban teachers believe differently. They tend to fault the schools, curricular, and pedagogy for placing students at-risk of failure. A brief description of star teacher attributes of successful urban teachers as identified by Haberman are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Effective Urban Teacher Characteristics as Identified by Haberman

Star Teacher Functions (Behavioral Attributes)	Descriptions
Persistence	Stars believe it is their responsibility to engage students in the learning process. They persist in meeting the needs of their students.
Response to Authority	Stars believe that learning is to be preserved. They negotiate with administrators to teach in non-traditional ways.
Application of Generalization	Stars can conceive and conceptualize ideas with specific actions; theory to practice.
Approach to At-risk Youth (Youth that are a year or more behind in their assigned grade level are considered at-risk).	Stars do not blame the victim. They learn about their student’s lives, and are able to develop meaningful relationships.
Professional vs. Personal Orientation	Stars know how to teach and do, not rely on “love” as a condition for learning.
Burnout	Stars understand that the bureaucracy can burn out teachers, and work in ways to limit the negative impact on their teaching.
Fallibility	Stars recognize and own their mistakes.
Protecting Children’s Learning	Star teachers are able to capitalize on all learning opportunities.
Emotional and Physical Stamina	Star teachers are able to endure the challenges and crises of urban settings.
Organizational Ability	Stars have extraordinary organizational and managerial skills.
Real Teaching	Star teachers engage in active teaching instead of direct instruction.
Making Students Feel Needed	Stars are able to make the students feel needed and wanted in the classroom.
Gentle Teaching in a Violent Society	A star teacher’s ideology is promising, even

	in light of a violent society.
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The purpose of this investigation was to examine the degree of agreement between trained facilitators' interviews and face-to-face and web-ex preservice teachers' self-evaluation of behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching. Specifically, this investigation questioned the practice of implementing self-selection tools as a means to identify and place teacher candidates, especially those in urban areas.

Using the Haberman Star Teacher Selection Interview and the Haberman-based Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment, the research question guiding this investigation was:

1. Is there a significant difference between how trained facilitators score preservice teacher candidates on behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teachers from the self-generated scores by face-to-face and web-ex preservice teacher candidates?

Methodology

This study examined the degree of agreement between three Haberman Foundation-trained facilitators' interviews and preservice teachers' self-evaluation of behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching. Both face-to-face and web-ex students were involved in this study. For the purpose of this investigation, effective urban teacher behavioral attributes were those mid-range functions as defined by Haberman: (a) Persistence, (b) Response to Authority, (c) Application of Generalization, (d) Approach to At-risk Youth, (e) Professional vs. Personal Orientation, (f) Burnout, (g) and Fallibility (Haberman 2017, 2005, 1995). Using the Star Teaching Selection Interview, the interviewers asked participants to respond to questions that probed their behavioral responses to particular situations or scenarios. Using a quasi-experimental research design methodology, the subjects were asked to identify to what degree they believed they possessed the behavioral attributes on the Haberman-based Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment.

Participants

Data for this investigation were collected from 29 preservice teacher candidates enrolled in an urban, metropolitan university. All participants were registered for a Classroom Management – Practicum course that is taken near the conclusion of their undergraduate course work; 13 subjects were students in a traditional classroom setting, while 16 were enrolled in a web-ex setting. The candidates have spent roughly 40 hours of their course work in public school settings. In regards to demographics of the preservice teachers, 23 were Caucasian, four were African-American, and two was Asian. Females made up the majority of the participant population; 27 subjects were females, while two were males. Ages of the participants ranged from 22-31.

Procedures

All participants were administered the Star Teacher Selection Interview by three Haberman Foundation-trained facilitators. A total score was calculated for each participant, by averaging the scores of the facilitators. The participants were then administered the Haberman-based Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment and asked to score themselves, based on a Likert-like scale ranging from 0 (I do not possess this behavior) to 6 (I possess this behavior). Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for the Star Teacher Selection Interview and Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessments

Urban Teacher Behavioral Attributes							
	Persistence	Response to Authority	Application of Generalization	Approach to At-risk Students	Professional/Personal Orientation	Burnout	Fallibility

Interviewer Assessment							
Mean	3.0	3.3	4.5	2.8	4.2	3.4	3.8
T	3.3	3.5	4.0	2.5	4.0	3.0	3.0
WX							
Participant Self-Evaluation Assessment							
Mean	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.3	5.4	5.3	5.4
T	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.5
WX							

N=29

T=Traditional Student

WX=Web-Ex Student

Results

Data from the Star Teacher Selection Interview and the Haberman-based Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment was analyzed. For each assessment, the mean was calculated for each of the behavioral attributes. Based on the results in Table 2, the majority of mean scores between the trained interviewer and the participants were different, regardless of whether participants were face-to-face or online students. The interviewer ratings were notably lower than those of the participants of both groups. Approach to At-risk Students was rated the lowest behavioral attribute by both the interviewer and each group of participants. This rating is of particular importance because, according to Haberman (2005, 1995), the most powerful indicator of effective urban teachers is the Approach to At-risk Students. According to Haberman (1995), “There is no question that those predisposed to blame the victim will fail as teachers, while those whose natural inclination is constantly to see more effective teaching strategies, regardless of youngsters’ backgrounds or the obstacles youngsters face, have a fighting chance of becoming effective teachers of children in poverty” (p. 53).

Implications

Results suggest that self-evaluation of effective urban teacher behavioral attributes (mid-range functions), as defined by Haberman, is not be an effective means for identifying potential urban teacher candidates. This investigation is not proposing that self-evaluation is not a worthwhile and powerful tool as other studies have supported the use of self-evaluation assessments (Curtis & Cheng, 2001; Towndrow & Tan, 2009). However, this study does raise questions, about whether teacher preparation programs are identifying the most likely successful preservice teacher candidates who, based on the presence of particular behavioral attributes, could be successful as urban teachers in the future.

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