

Public Abstract

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Title:PRESERVICE TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT EDUCATION FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES AS K-12 STUDENTS AND MEMBERS OF AN ADOLESCENT SUBCULTURE

Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress test over the past 35 years have not shown significant improvement of 17 year olds in math or reading. Four decades of unsuccessful reform effort suggest cultural barriers and/or institutional structures that prevent change. The purpose of the study was to describe beliefs preservice teachers bring to teacher preparation programs that arise from their K-12 experience and as members of an adolescent or youth subculture. From a sample of 162 preservice teachers, 11 themes were identified depicting preservice teacher beliefs about education. The influence of an adolescent or youth subculture in the 11 identified themes seems obvious in four, related in four, and having no apparent connection to three of the themes. A mechanism of recycling beliefs about education through preservice teachers back to K-12 students is presented that illustrates how emerging adolescent beliefs may enter and how older, outdated beliefs are maintained within the culture of education. Implications for practice include the development of preservice teacher screening procedures that are able to identify the range of beliefs preservice teachers have about education. Once identified, teacher preparation programs must develop curriculum that will address those preservice teacher beliefs that run counter to program goals through guided reflection and increased exposure to desired behavior. Implications for future research include the need to better characterize boundaries between other culturally definable subunits of public education; longitudinal studies to better capture the essence of the teaching experience from preservice teachers to veteran teachers; and research that will help define an individuals immersion into and out of youth culture. Data from such studies will be useful to teacher preparation programs and K-12 education as they screen applicants, modify programs, improve teacher retention, and improve professional development.