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The Impact of Preparation Programs on Pre-Service Teachers

Kayleigh Caswell

St. John Fisher College, kaycas11@gmail.com

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Abstract

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By

Kayleigh Caswell

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Abstract

Teacher preparation programs are crucial in readying pre-service teachers for taking over their own classrooms. Each college and university prepares teachers differently, producing variations within teacher knowledge. However, there is potential that an excellent program could produce candidates without gaps. A carefully designed online survey was sent out to teachers who have been teaching for three years or less, inquiring about where teachers felt preparation programs were beneficial, and where the programs were lacking. Teachers surveyed felt that the most beneficial courses were: classroom management, student teaching, and education methodology, while the areas teachers felt they were unprepared for were: classroom management, time management/collaboration, and age of population being taught.

The Impact of Teacher Preparation Programs on Pre-Service Teachers

Teachers must go through rigorous preparation programs via colleges or universities in order to educate students. These programs are designed to prepare pre-service teachers on how to best help students learn and build a successful classroom environment. Every college's program varies slightly allowing for differences in educational programs, and impacting pre-service teachers. Education programs are constantly evolving to keep up to date with national, state, and local educational standards. However, teaching is a profession that cannot solely be taught through lecturing or in a class. Real life experience is crucial, and there is a lot of learning done on the job. This means teachers need to be prepared and have previous experience within a classroom setting before setting out into their own classrooms, to obtain a positive experience and achieve the best results.

To conduct my research, I created an online Qualtrics survey and sent it out to novice teachers in the United States. The survey consisted of eleven open-ended questions, and was designed for teachers who have been teaching for one month to three years. After analyzing my data, I found consistent themes in which teachers showed the same two common deficiencies in their education. These deficiencies consisted of classroom management, and time management/collaboration with other professionals.

Literature Review

Challenging student behaviors play a large role in teacher burnout and stress rates. Aggression, noncompliance, defiance, tantrums and property destruction have been identified as the most common types of problem behavior in young children (Strain & Timm, 2001). Classroom based teachers need adequate training in order to work effectively with students that exhibit challenging behaviors both with and without disabilities. When asked in a survey to identify their

training needs in one North Carolina County, the most frequent request was: How to address behavior challenges of children with disabilities (Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, Miels, 2011).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Since Public Law 94-142 (PL 94-142), The Education for All Handicapped Children act was passed in 1975; the United States education system has undergone a profound change in perspectives. Shady, Luther and Richman (2013) noted, “In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was legislated... Through the current IDEA (PL 108-446) there are 13 recognized disability categories” (p. 169-170).

Least restrictive environment.

There are many provisions provided to students who qualify into one or more of the thirteen disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, students with disabilities are afforded the right to a ‘Free and Appropriate Public Education’ (FAPE) in the ‘Least Restrictive Environment’ (LRE) (Keaney, M. 2012).

Classrooms should be the least restrictive in order to promote social, academic and emotional growth. According to Kearney (2012), classroom restrictiveness is “determined by the percentage of the school day that the special education student spends in a general education setting—the more time a student spends in a general education setting, the less restrictive the environment” (p. 828). Therefore, by law schools are required to provide students with disabilities a variety of placements, classrooms and accommodations.

Under IDEA, it is encouraged that students with disabilities be included within general education classes as frequently as possible. It is very clear that “Children should only be removed from a general educational environment when the disability is such that satisfactory learning could not be achieved in the confines of a regular classroom setting” (Shady, et al.,

2013, p. 170). Unless a student's disability is so profound that learning within a general education setting is not possible, all students should be encouraged to learn with peers as frequently as possible.

Inclusion

By promoting students with disabilities to be in general education classes, inclusion is introduced into the educational setting. In Hardman and Dawson's study (as cited by Schrave and Jolly, 2010) "Inclusive education is a more recent interpretation of educational procedures that began during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s." In the world of education, inclusion has not been around for a long time, and is still a continuous work in progress.

The goal of inclusion is to prepare all students to become productive members of society. Nowicki and Brown found that: "successful inclusion depends on the implementation of effective policies and practices (2013, p. 253)." Implementation of effective policies and practices falls into the hands of administration, parents, students and teachers. In order to obtain the best results possible for students, appropriate training, communication, and trust need to be implemented.

Since IDEA is a public law, funding for modifications and accommodations come from the government. Under the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, Russo and Osborne (2005) noted that the Act has increased authorized levels for funding excess costs associated with educating students with disabilities by about \$2.3 billion each year, although they were not mandatory. This means the government is choosing to use additional funds to benefit individuals with disabilities, and provide funding to meet their needs.

Individual Education Program

Under IDEA, students who fall under one of the thirteen disabilities are placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), suited to meet individual student needs. This is a legal document that is drafted after a full comprehensive evaluation required by a multidisciplinary team (deBettencourt, 2002). Within the IEP are specific learning goals, which must be monitored periodically, and discussed at least once a year at an annual review.

At the annual review, there are specific people required to be present at the IEP meeting. These members include, but are not limited to: a general education teacher of the child, the parents, a special education provider of the child, a representative of the public school district, and anyone parents use their discretion to invite (deBettencourt, 2002). This IEP team then discusses student achievements, services provided, and any changes to the program they feel necessary for the next year. These new plans are then amended into the IEP, any services, accommodations and goals added must be implemented, or else a legal document is being disobeyed.

Section 504

However, there are incidences when a student does not fall under one of the thirteen categories of IDEA, and the state does not need to provide funding to assist this child. Since “IDEA only pertains to students who meet 1 of the 13 disability categories” and have a severe negative impact on the child’s academics to qualify for services (Schrave, & Jolly, 2010, p. 429). Students who might fall under one of these thirteen categories but do not qualify for services may otherwise struggle through school without related services. This is where the section 504 Federal Law comes into action in the public education setting.

As described by deBettencourt “IDEA is a federal law that governs all special education services in the United States ... In contrast, Section 504 is a civil rights statute, rather than a federal, programmatic statute” (deBettencourt 2002, p. 16). Section 504 is a more broad protection policy, and although it is often confused with IDEA, it is an older piece of legislation (Schrave & Jolly, 2010).

One of the main differences between section 504 and IDEA are how the laws are implemented within the school (see figure 1.1). In deBettencourt’s study (2002), it was noted that under Section 504, students do not need to have parental consent for assessing student needs and minor changes in placement, while under IDEA parental consent and constant reevaluation of the student is necessary. Under Section 504 teachers are provided leeway to work with and provide students with necessary services they may not otherwise receive under IDEA.

Figure 1.1

Difference in Responsibilities to Provide Free And Appropriate Education (FAPE)	
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Section 504
Requires an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	Does NOT require an IEP, but does require a plan
Appropriate education means a program designed to provide an educational benefit for an individual with disabilities.	Appropriate education means an education comparable to an education provided to students who are not disabled.
Placement may be any combination of special education and general education classes.	Placement is usually in a general education class.
Related services, if required.	Related services, if needed.
Specific federal funding sources	General federal funding sources

Funding

Providing assistive services for students can become expensive for school districts. In Schrave and Jolly's study (2008), it was found that "When civil rights violations of students with disabilities is demonstrated, any federal funds can be pulled, whereas under IDEA, only those specific IDEA funds will be revoked for violations (p. 40)." Districts are so focused on meeting the regulations of IDEA, so the broader picture scope of Section 504 is not always taken into consideration.

When Section 504 is not abided by, it becomes a civil rights violation, which can have a negative impact on a large scale. This could put individuals at risk, teacher reputations, as well as a district as a whole. Teachers who are well versed in IDEA and Section 504 need to understand the differences and be able to implement these laws appropriately within their classrooms in order for a successful education program to be implemented.

Preparing teachers to work with special needs students

When an individual first decides to become a teacher, he or she enrolls in college or a university to receive the necessary certification and preparation. After the passage of Public Law 108-446 in 2004, American schools have been pushed towards adopting inclusion for people with disabilities. The passage of this law meant that more individuals with disabilities would be expected to be educated in a general education setting for at least a portion of the day (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). In turn, teacher preparation programs are shifting to accommodate for these changes in education.

For teachers going into the field of education, there are a few routes they can take in order to prepare for inclusive classrooms. Young asserts, "These routes include requiring general educators to take one or a few special education courses; other programs have created a

collaborative infusion model; and others have created dual certification programs” (p. 483). No matter what route pre-service teachers choose to take to prepare for inclusive classrooms, confidence in the strategies and techniques needs to be built.

Teacher Attitudes

Attitude plays a large role towards teacher and student success within the classroom. Scruggs and Mastopieri found that “65% of teachers surveyed are in agreement with the basic concept of inclusive practices, only 40% believe that integrating students with disabilities into the general education environment is realistic” (as cited in Shady, et al., 2013). If not all teachers are on board with the ideals behind inclusion; there becomes a rift in which teacher preparation may be disregarded.

As a result of prospective teacher candidates feeling inadequately prepared to teach children, confidence levels dramatically decrease causing teacher preparation programs to become scrutinized. Some of the low self-esteem come from prospective teacher candidates “learn theory in isolation from practice and typically have brief encounters with classroom practice divorced from theory, which further contributes to the gap between research and practice” (Banks, 2014, p. 60). The disconnect between learning theory and practicing the theories in a classroom produce teachers who do not feel prepared to meet the educational needs of their students.

Pre-service learning is the most powerful tool a teacher has within teacher preparation programs. It is necessary for prospective teachers to have university-based teacher preparation programs, as opposed to those like Americorps or Teach for America (Banks, 2014). Teacher preparation is not a topic to be taken lightly, and in order to produce highly effective teachers, strong educational programs need to be implemented.

As teachers are being presented with the ideals and practices of inclusive education and integrated classrooms, there are many factors that go into maintaining successful teaching practices. The “importance of a supportive learning environment that addresses the academic and social needs of children with disabilities within the regular classroom” is key in promoting a positive learning environment (Nowicki & Brown, 2013, p. 253). If the classroom teacher does not have a positive attitude or does not feel confident in her practices, setting up a supportive learning environment becomes a challenge.

One of the flaws of the current teacher education system is that it is based on a fail first, act second system. Currently the field of education “has been focused on the ‘failure’ of teacher education programs and the inequitable distribution of teachers” (Banks, 2015, p. 62). Failure first is not an option for schools who would like to serve students first, and retain teachers for years to come.

Teacher Retention

With teacher preparation programs leaving teachers feeling unprepared and focusing on the failures, administrators within schools are looking for ways in which to keep teachers in the schools. According to Banks (2015), researchers have been struggling with how to measure the qualifications of incoming teachers into the field. The lack of consistency across the country about teacher standards leads to confusion amongst educators, parents and students, compromising the quality of education for students.

There are no set of standards that state what qualifies a teacher, other than completing the teacher preparation courses and tests that the state determines appropriate. Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that teachers lacking in adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession than teachers with adequate preparation. With the implementation of a comprehensive

induction program involving collaboration and planning with other teachers, “there is a positive effect on teacher retention” (Darling-Hammond, 2003). By implementing more of these programs district and statewide, the potential that teachers remain within the profession is more likely to increase.

Teachers leaving the profession are not an uncommon occurrence. It has been shown through research “that one out of every two beginning teachers, almost 50% leave the profession during their first five years of teaching with at least 30% of new teachers leaving by the end of their first year and even more within 3 years” (Gourneau, 2014, p. 299). This is an alarmingly high percentage of teachers leaving the profession, and a reform is needed. Whether these teachers are quitting out of lack of preparedness, frustration, or personal reasons, this is an incredibly high turnover rate.

On top of planning, teaching, and accommodating for students, teachers are expected to keep up with paperwork. This large workload can be taxing on teachers, and as Leithwood and McAdie (2007) suggest, “that when teachers perceive their workload to be imbalanced compared to that of their peers, teacher stress is increased, teacher morale is weakened, and teacher commitment to schools become a concern” (Cited by Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat, 2015).

When this happens, teacher burnout is more likely to occur, accounting for part of the high teacher turnover rate.

Inclusive Classroom Preparation

Within each preparation program, teachers learn and acquire different methods, techniques, and skills required to work with a population of students ranging from gifted and talented, to those with moderate to severe disabilities. However, teacher preparation does not necessarily reflect on how prepared a new teacher feels when he or she enters inclusive classrooms

(California State University, 2006). Rather, it demonstrates that the teacher was capable of going through training and simulations, but may not be prepared upon entering a classroom.

One of the difficulties teachers face, especially if they have moved from where their degree was obtained, is consistency in implementing inclusive education. In Keany's study (2012) he stated: "Without any judicial consensus on the issue, states and local districts have developed and applied different procedures for determining when it is appropriate to place children with disabilities into an integrated classroom setting" (p.832). With no consistent standards set in place within a district, county or state, teachers have no guidance in which to base their practices. This is detrimental to student learning, especially students who require services within the inclusion setting.

There is hope, however, for teachers in the field of education and individuals who wish to become teachers. Preparation through mentor teachers, districts, state, and professional development are meant to arm teachers against the difficulties faced within the classroom (Banks, 2014.) Programs aimed at assisting teachers through the difficult first years include inclusive classroom training, professional development, and working with families.

Over time, teacher preparation and understanding of students with disabilities has increased, allowing for these students to spend more time in an integrated classroom.

Keany's (2012) study found: For instance, in 1989, less than 32% of special education students between the ages of six and twenty-one spent 20% or less of their class time in segregated special education classrooms. In contrast, by 2008, 58% of special education students spent 20% or less of their class time in segregated classrooms. Furthermore, in 1989, nearly 25% of special education students spent more than 60% of the school day in

segregated classrooms; in 2008, only 15% of special education students spent more than 60% of their day in segregated classrooms or facilities (p. 82).

This means that from 1989 to 2008 there has been a substantial decrease of students spending time in segregated classrooms, and those students who are spending times segregated are spending a smaller percentage of their day away from non-disabled peers.

Behavior Intervention Plans

Not all children entering school have previous experiences in an educational setting or have interacted in a classroom amongst peers. “When teachers do not have the skills to address or to teach preschoolers’ social competence, there are significant child consequences: difficulties in social and behavior and preschool failure,” state Fox & Smith (2007). Providing teachers with behavioral intervention and support plans are important in order to provide students with the most positive classroom experience and learning environment.

No matter how effective a teacher is at creating a sense of community or matches the academic levels of learners, there will always be times and ways in which students disrupt the classroom learning environment. According to Jones, “Many teachers report that responding to disruptive behavior is the area of classroom management for which they are least prepared, and that such problems that leads them to consider leaving the profession” (p. 183). Therefore, it is crucial that teacher preparation and comprehensive classroom management must provide teachers with the skills to be effective and respectful when responding to disruptive student behavior.

Professional Development

Professional development encompasses a broad range of trainings, lectures and ways in which teachers learn to become better at teaching and helping students. As cited in Pugach & Winn’s

(2011) studies, research found that targeted and ongoing professional development is critical in developing and supporting co-teaching in schools (Cited in Shady, et al., 2013). Since inclusive education often involves a team of teachers working together, at times co-teaching, it is important that they are able to attend the same trainings and use this knowledge towards helping students.

Teacher preparation programs may not always train pre-service teachers adequately for all situations, which is why professional development is ongoing. According to Shady, et al. (2013) “Professional development workshops positively impact teacher’ abilities to teach students with specific learning disorders,” which mean even if a teacher did not learn about a specific topic in school, there is still an opportunity to learn (p. 172). Although professional development may not always be offered, it is provided as a supplement to improve teacher quality.

Part of professional development is being observed by an outside source while teaching. Observers may include: administrators, coaches, or peer teachers, checking for specific goals to be met during their time observing. In Shaha, Glassett, & Copas’ (2015) research, the “data showed that students of teachers observed more frequently, as part of a coordinated undertaking...collectively had greater gains in the performance of their students than those who had fewer observations” (p. 60). Therein lies proof that when teachers are exposed to and participate in professional development, students can reap the benefits.

Conclusion

Teacher preparation programs are an ongoing process that require constant renewal and cover a vast range of subjects, laws, and strategies. Without proper teacher training and professional development, teacher confidence decreases, and turnover rates increase. Inclusive education is an

expanding idea in which students with and without disabilities welcome each other within the classroom setting to learn together. It is up to the teacher and her knowledge of student needs, to create a sense of community and belonging to all students within this setting. By following through with federal laws, such as IDEA and Section 504, students required needs are met, and students are more likely to find success both academically and socially.

Context of Study

This study took place through a Qualtrics survey distributed electronically. Participants are novice teachers who have been teaching for up to three years, teaching any grade, age, or subject. Teachers who participated in the survey are from the United States, and the survey was sent out via email and social media, spread through a snowball method.

The purpose of the study was to gain insight on teacher perspectives about the preparation programs they were enrolled in. This gave me the chance to see where educational programs are excelling, and what additional courses or trainings would be beneficial for teachers to enroll in before entering their own classrooms. I chose to do this study because when I first entered the classroom, I felt as though there were certain areas of teaching that I was very confident in, and other areas where I felt immensely unprepared and overwhelmed.

Method

1.How will I collect data?

I collected data through a Qualtrics survey

2. Participants.

Participants invited were teachers who have been teaching 1 month-3 years, across a broad range of states and grades and distributed through snowballing. Participants' identity was

anonymous, in order to protect their opinions and statements. All participants voluntarily responded electronically through the Qualtrics survey.

3. Data analysis.

I analyzed my data based on patterns within teacher responses.

Research/Findings

After conducting this survey, there were several common themes found between teachers that graduated from state colleges and private colleges. A majority of teachers who participated in this survey felt that they were best prepared for their own classrooms through three major categories. These categories include: student teaching, classroom/behavior management, and technology.

While some courses prepared teachers for their classroom endeavors, I found two major themes in which teachers felt their programs did not prepare them well enough for. These two areas are: classroom/behavior management, and planning/collaborating with peers and parents.

Of the teachers who participated in the survey, ten have their master's degree in education, six are currently enrolled in master's programs, and three have not started their master's programs. Nineteen teachers took the survey, sixteen who have been teaching for three years or less, and three have been teaching for more than three years. Data from the three teachers who have been teaching for more than three years reviewed, but did not fit within the parameters of the survey so this data not been included in the final results. Therefore, the data represented and discussed, unless otherwise mentioned is based on the results of the sixteen teachers' responses.

In this section I am analyzing the data and breaking the information up into groups based on responses to questions asked in the survey I sent out. I further broke the data down by giving

a background of what areas each teacher is certified to teach, and public vs. private college graduates, each of which is followed by a discussion of my findings.

Certifications

Looking at the sixteen teachers who fit the criteria of having taught for three years or less, there are a vast number of certifications and degrees obtained. Of these teachers, ten have earned one or more master's degree in education, certifying them in multiple disciplines. The next section includes a breakdown of all the various degrees obtained by the eligible teachers who completed this survey.

The most common degree held by teachers participating in this survey was in elementary education, which includes first through sixth grade. Eight of the teachers were certified in elementary education (grades one through six), with three-quarters of these teachers also holding a degree in special education. Of these eight teachers with degrees in elementary and special education, one teacher also held a third degree in technology, and another teacher held degrees in biology grades six through nine, and special education at the high school level. Two of the teachers certified to teach elementary education also had a degree in early childhood education, from birth to second grade.

Following elementary education, special/inclusive/gifted education was the second most common degree, with seven out of the sixteen teachers holding a degree in this area. Of these seven teachers, four are certified to teach special education in elementary education, one is certified to teach special education from birth to second grade, and one teacher is certified to teach special education from sixth to eighth grade.

Three teachers held various degrees in Social Studies from grades seven through twelve. Of these three teachers, two have multiple degrees, one teacher holds a degree in literacy, grades five through twelve, and the second holds a degree in special education.

Two of the sixteen teachers hold a degree in technology education for grades one through twelve, and of these teachers one has a degree in driver's education as well.

Of the following teachers, none hold a second degree in education as of right now. There is one teacher has a degree in English grades seven through twelve. One teacher holds a degree in library sciences for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. The last teacher holds a degree in mathematics, grades seven through twelve. For further clarification on degrees obtained, see *Figure C* in the appendix.

Looking at these areas of certification, I noticed that a ten out of the sixteen participants had obtained a second degree within the first three years of their teaching. Since all participants were from New York State, this could be contributed to the five-year plan- where teachers need to have their master's degree within five years of obtaining their bachelor's degree in education. However, noticing that some of the teachers surveyed had multiple areas in which they were certified, I believe it is in the nature of teachers to persevere and choose to learn more in order to benefit their students.

Another observation I made was that half the teachers who completed the survey were certified in elementary education (grades 1-6). The reason for this could be that my bachelor's degree is in childhood education, and most of my peers are also certified in the same area.

Consistent with what was found in the literature review, approximately half the teachers are certified or have an understanding of special education. Most teachers involved in this study who initially had a degree in one subject area and went back to school for another certification

area ended up being certified in special education, literacy, or getting an extension (birth- second grade for elementary educators). In the United States, especially in New York, there has been a big push over the past twenty years for inclusive classrooms. Inclusive classrooms mean students with disabilities are integrated into a general education setting, learning alongside his or her own peers in the least restrictive environment.

While the idea of inclusion is to prevent students from being segregated and provide the best education possible for students, without proper research and teacher preparation, finding success can be difficult. Teachers in inclusive classrooms might not hold a degree in special education, however are expected to fulfill duties as both the general education and special education teacher with minimal knowledge on best practices.

The work required of teachers put in this position can be burdensome, sacrificing student education, teachers' time, and creating confusion for everyone involved. Since most classrooms have at least one student with an identified disability, it is crucial that teachers have an in depth understanding of the public, state, and district laws in order to teach to the best of their abilities.

For those teachers who do hold a degree in special education, "a majority of special education pre-service programs continue to train candidates by categorical content, evaluation measures, and separate professional standards" (Anderson, Smith, Olsen, Algozzine, 2015, p. 30). With these specified programs, novice teachers leave their programs feeling ready for the classroom, only to be placed in a collaborative teaching setting, which varies immensely from the training received in college preparation courses. This leads to a disconnect between learning and experience, causing the teacher to learn on the spot, as opposed to having the confidence prior to being in that specific setting.

Schools

The sixteen participants in this study attended a total of thirteen different colleges or universities. All data obtained in this study maintains confidentiality, using pseudonyms in order to preserve integrity of individuals, as well as colleges and universities. The largest number of participants who attended a single college was three, who attended Cord College, a SUNY (State University of New York) school. Newson College, A private college in New York State was the alma mater of two teachers who participated in the study. Other than these two colleges/universities, all other participants earned their educational degree at different universities.

Of the thirteen colleges/universities that teaches in this study attended, four were private schools, and nine were public or state schools. All of the eligible participants in this study attended a New York State college or University.

One consistent theme with teachers who answered this survey was that every teacher attended a college or university in upstate or central New York State. While I was not able to determine whether public or private schools had better preparation programs with the data I was working with, I was able to make other findings, as discussed below.

Having participants from thirteen different colleges and universities, both public and private gave me a broad range and brief overview about how teachers felt their university preparation program stood up to their real world experience. Since this matter is based on teacher opinion, personal learning styles, the data collected is completely subjective.

Beneficial Classes

One of the questions in the survey asked teachers “What is the most beneficial class you took during your teacher preparation program? What made it so valuable to you?” Four of the sixteen teachers stated student teaching, all of whom went to state schools.

Classroom management tied with student teaching, with four teachers claiming their management course as the most beneficial. Of the four teachers who felt classroom management was their most important class, two went to state colleges, and two went to private colleges.

There were three teachers who responded that education methodology were the courses that impacted them the most. Methodology includes, but is not limited to: working with students with disabilities, the process of planning lessons, accommodations/modifications, and learning how to understand students in order to teach and hold them accountable.

Two teachers mentioned that technology was their most beneficial class, one who is currently working on a master’s degree in technology, and the other saying that technology integration is a component of the school day. Both of these teachers attended state colleges. Of the sixteen participants counted in this survey, only fourteen responded to this particular question. The remaining two teachers did not respond to the question. For a visual of answers, see *Figure A* in the appendix.

Going into a classroom for the first time can be overwhelming for any teacher, especially without knowing strategies and ways in which to engage student learning. Here, I found that student teaching and classroom management were the two most helpful courses in pre-service teacher preparation programs.

While unsurprising, I find it difficult to believe that colleges and universities in New York State only require 150 hours of field placement hours for pre-service teachers. This means the

pre-service teacher spends about eight weeks getting to know, taking over and teaching a group of students before moving to the next group. However it is during this short period of time that pre-service teachers learn the most.

What this tells me is that education programs need to spend more time in the field, and less time being lectured to in a classroom. If students are getting the most experience and learning the most out of student teaching, programs might want to consider doing a clinical student teaching placement, integrating methodology courses simultaneously. This would give students a more gradual takeover of the classroom, and give students real life situations to help them understand what a day in the classroom is truly like.

In a clinical student teaching placement, pre-service teachers would be given one placement for the entire semester. The first three to four weeks of the placement would be like a practicum, with the teacher getting to know the students, observing and getting to know the routines and school community.

During this time the student teacher would take methodology courses, such as classroom management, organization, collaboration and other life skills courses that are best learned through experience. When meeting for advisement, students could then apply their own classroom experiences, causing them to directly reflect on what was taught in class. This would make the methodology more meaningful, and allow students to directly apply their knowledge in the classroom immediately.

Classroom management is pertinent in order for order to be maintained, students to feel safe, and successful learning to be achieved. Management techniques can be cycled through, giving teachers the unique opportunity to mix up the routine while still keeping consistency. One of the

more difficult parts of classroom management is remembering the various strategies and techniques learned, and when to apply them.

Knowing that management classes are a course that teachers felt was beneficial, it would be prudent for universities and colleges to consider offering more management courses and strategies than the one or two offered during pedagogical classes. Classes such as engagement strategies, organization, or teaching students how to recognize their preferences while learning would be incredibly helpful for teachers to maintain a peaceful classroom, and hold students accountable for their actions.

Technology usage in the classroom has become almost inevitable. Walk into any classroom and there will be at least some sort of electronic technology- iPads, netbooks, computers, smartboards, FM systems and many other devices. The generation of students currently in school right now have been born and raised using technology, so it's up to teachers to adapt and incorporate technology into their classrooms.

By continuously learning about technology and integrating it into the classroom, teachers can stay up to date and help each other out. Also, student engagement increases, since learning is done through interfaces they are used to using. There are thousands of educational applications that can be used, so instead of shunning students for using their phones, as teachers we can teach students how many learning opportunities they have on their mobile devices.

Unprepared For

Of the sixteen teachers who had data eligible for this survey, thirteen answered what aspects of teaching they felt least prepared for. There were four teachers who graduated from private colleges, and nine teachers who graduated from state schools that answered this particular question. The question asked was "What didn't your educational program prepare you for?"

The most common answer was classroom/behavior management, with seven teachers feeling as though they went into their classrooms without enough experience in this aspect of teaching. Of the seven teachers, five graduated from state colleges, and the remaining two graduated from private colleges.

The second most popular response that teachers felt unprepared for in this survey was time management/collaboration with other teachers. Five teachers felt that they were not prepared for how much time they must spend to plan and work on school work, and the collaboration required between other teachers, administrators, and parents. Of the five teachers who felt ill-prepared for management/collaboration, one graduated from a private college, and four graduated from state colleges.

One of the teachers in the survey holds degrees from first to twelfth grade in special education, general education first through ninth grade, and biology sixth through ninth grade. In this particular case, the teacher felt ill prepared to work with the older age population, and felt that was an area in which needed improvement within the preparation program. For a visual breakdown of answers, see *Figure B* in the appendix

Teaching is a profession that cannot be learned through lecture, but rather requires hands on experience. Going into the field of education can be daunting for pre-service teachers, who may have little to no previous experience within a classroom before starting their first field placement or practicum.

In light of this, a person can hear about all kinds of management strategies, but until he or she gets the opportunity to use them, the strategies don't mean a whole lot. Going back to what course most teachers helped prepare them the most, classroom management; I found it ironic that this was very same aspect of the classroom teachers felt the most ill prepared.

Looking at the participants in my study, it tells me that while classroom management is a crucial course in college preparation, it might not be touched upon deep enough. Each college and university teaches management differently, but it might be wise to implement management strategies throughout different courses, as well as provide a general classroom management course as part of pre-service teacher preparation.

This also goes back to the idea of getting more experience within an actual classroom, rather than a room full of pre-service teacher peers, who may be acting out scenarios. Learning and implementing these strategies early into educational programs could impact how preservice teachers learn to plan lessons, forcing them to think about how to captivate student attention and maintain composure in the classroom.

Seeing that some of the teachers participating in the survey felt ill prepared for collaboration, preparation and communication did not surprise me. This is something that is barely brushed upon in educational programs, other than collaborative projects. The amount of time teachers spend outside of the school day to fulfill the bare essentials can be overwhelming, especially for a novice teacher.

There might be some colleges that prepare pre-service teachers with how to interact with parents, and broach subjects with administration and other teachers, however this is something expected to be learned through experience. So if nobody is taught how to go about time management, or when to take a break, they are likely going to flounder when they are sent off on their own to do it.

Conclusion

I found that although teachers felt their classroom management courses were the most beneficial, they felt they would have benefitted with a deeper understanding of these strategies.

About half the teachers surveyed felt that they were unprepared for classroom management upon entering their classrooms, which can significantly impact the learning community.

Also, experiential learning seemed to have the biggest impact on the teachers surveyed, rather than strictly methods based classes. Another area in which teachers felt they would benefit would be a course on time management, and collaboration with peers. Out of the thirteen teachers who answered this particular question, four felt that they were not adequately prepared to manage their planning time, or find time to communicate ideas with teachers on their team.

With the push for teachers to have the knowledge of special education laws, and requirement to have a master's degree to be a teacher in New York State, it is almost necessary to have a second degree in either special education or literacy. Instead of having teachers go back for a master's degree in only one specific area, I believe that teacher preparation programs should be a five-year undergraduate program. Within this program, teachers would obtain their generalist degree in the subject of their choice, and then earn an additional certification in another subject area. This would give pre-service teachers more time to have experience out in the field, and allow for a broader range of knowledge for when they get their own classrooms.

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Appendix

Figure A: Courses teachers felt prepared them (13 responses, 3 unanswered)

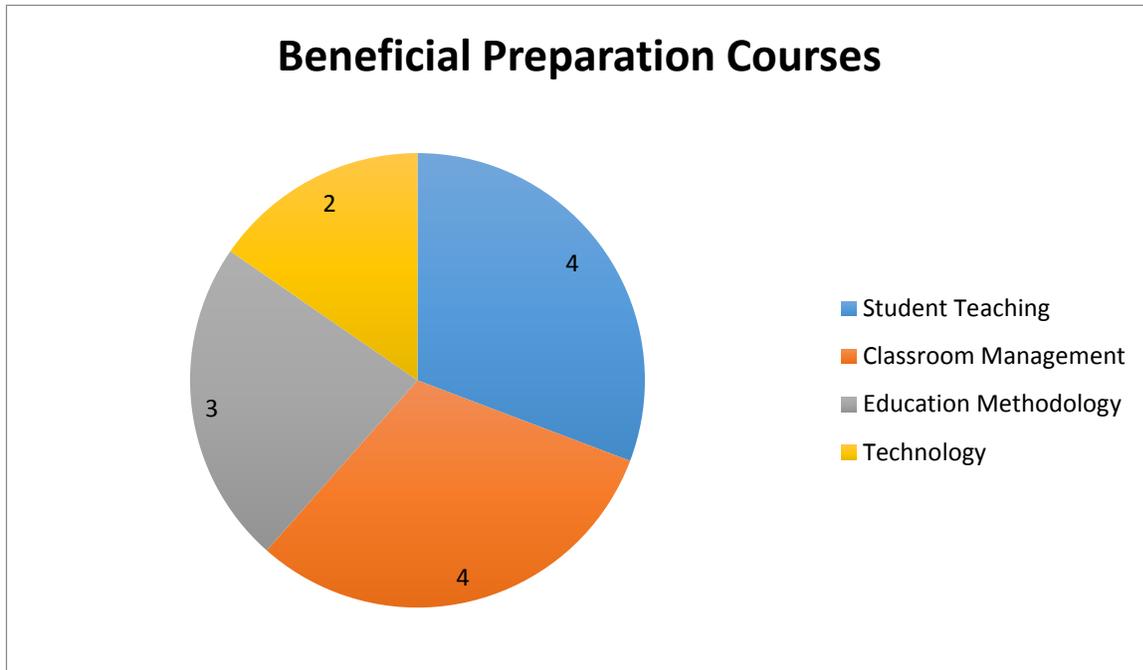


Figure B: Courses teachers felt unprepared for (13 responses, 3 unanswered)

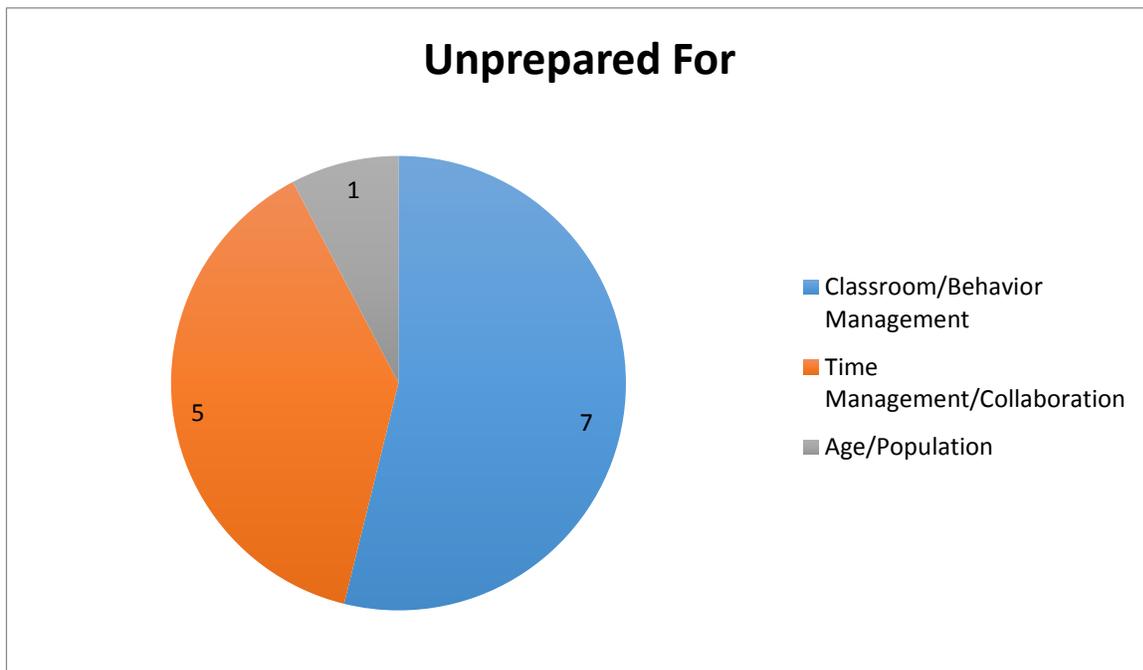


Figure C: Certifications of Teachers Participating in this Survey

Participating Teachers' Certification Fields	Certified Subjects	Birth-Second grade (general)	First-Sixth Grade (general)	Special Education (Grades one-six)	Special Education (Grades seven-twelve)	Math	Social Studies (Grades seven-twelve)	Library Science (Kindergarten-twelfth grade)	English (Grades seven-twelve)	Biology (Grades six- nine)	Literacy (Kindergarten-twelfth grade)
	1		X	X							
	2		X	X	X					X	
	3	X	X	X							
	4	X	X	X							
	5		X	X							
	6		X	X							
	7		X								
	8		X								
	9	X									X
	10						X				X
	11				X		X				
	12						X				
	13										
	14								X		
	15							X			
16					X						