

Determining Impact: A Case Study of the Mentor-led, Field-based, Cohort Model



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In Progress – 2018-2019 Academic Year



Overview and Purpose

Colleges of Education across the nation have been under scrutiny over the years, with one of the most recent attacks within the April 27, 2018 issue of *The Chronicle Review of The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Programs find themselves grappling with increasing accountability measures such as providing convincing evidence of the impact of teacher education programs on P-12 student learning. In response to external forces and the desire to continually analyze and enhance our programs, we, a group of faculty, were prompted to analyze our program to better understand its history and current practices as well as share our findings with others.

Context for Study

The John H. Lounsbury College of Education utilizes the Mentor-led, Field-based, Cohort (MLFBC) Model for all face-to-face initial teacher certification programs. This model has proven to be flexible and effective in responding to a wide range of challenges for nearly 30 years. It combines the support and direction of a **knowledgeable faculty mentor** (Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwend, 2015; Owen, 2015; Savage, Cannon, & Sutters, 2015); **quality field experiences** (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), and **relationships developed within a cohort** (Branyon, 2008; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Seed, 2008). The researchers are not aware of studies that specifically focus on the interactions among these three elements. However, the work of Jay and Miller (2016), studied three successful teacher preparation programs and sought to determine “the key components that can be generalized from studying such programs” (p. 169). They found the key components to be cohorts, mentoring, and learning communities as well programs which were “clinically rich.” They noted that the quality programs they studied had not been sustainable; however, the MLFBC Model has persisted for nearly 30 years.

Research Question

What is the Mentor-led, Field-based, Cohort Model of teacher preparation and how does it influence teacher candidate development?

Methods

Yin (2008) states that case study “is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 8). Using this definition as the guide, case study was chosen as an appropriate method of inquiry for investigation of the Mentor-led, Field-based, Cohort Model.

Data Sources

- *Semi-structured Interviews* - original developers of the model, Mentor Leaders, current teacher candidates, program completers, Partner Teachers, school administrators, non-Mentor Leader faculty, past and current GC administrators
- *Surveys* - original developers of the model, Mentor Leaders, current teacher candidates, program completers, Partner Teachers, school administrators, non-Mentor Leader faculty, past and current GC administrators
- *edTPA scores*
- *Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators® (GACE®) scores*
- *Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs)*
- *Number of graduates who enter the field/graduate school related to education*
- *Retention rates in teaching field*
- *Anecdotal data received from teacher candidates, program completers, and administrators*
- *Accreditation reports*
- *College of Education Completer Perception Survey Results*

Results

The study is currently a work in progress; however, current data gathered on the model suggests that arguments can be substantiated that the multi-faceted components of the teacher preparation model support the development of competent, thoughtful professionals who feel they are well prepared for their roles as educators. This is supported by evidence that many graduates go on to complete advanced degrees and meet or exceed the expectations of the state teacher evaluation system.

Significance

Due to the complexity of the teaching profession, rising college costs, teacher education reform, and the continuous focus of value-added measures, quality education programs are and will continue to be held highly accountable. Therefore, it is imperative for educational leaders and teacher education faculty to seek creative and collaborative ways to address teacher preparation efforts that foster student learning and communicate a level of effectiveness to others. This study provides an opportunity to analyze and evaluate the Mentor-led, Field-based, Cohort Model of teacher preparation and its influences on teacher candidates and their performance as professionals.



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