

Educational Leaders as Change Agents

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Abstract

This paper will explore effective way for university support providers to effectively support and supervise pre-service teachers to ensure academically prepared K-12 students in the United States. Professors of education are change agents in relation to preparing pre-service teachers to impact the future of K-12 learners. In the United States, educators have struggled to bring K-12 students' academic levels to the highest level possible to remain competitive globally. The goal of the presentation/paper is to present specific strategies, i.e. cognitive coaching, inter-rater reliability of clinical practice evidence writing rubrics, prompt, specific feedback regarding pre-service teachers' skills, affect, and dispositions, all the while, exude a caring element that truly personifies the professor as change agent. Theory in supporting pre-service teachers with the above strategies will be based on the work of Johnson and Johnson (2000), Churchill, Mulholland, and Cepello (2008), and Barrera and Kramer (2009).

Keywords: pre service teachers, cognitive coaching, mentoring, dispositions

INTRODUCTION

When No Child Left Behind (2001) was enacted by America's top educational and governmental leaders, it called for "Highly Qualified Teachers". Fifteen years later, "No Child Left Behind (2001) has failed our educators and students in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and through the last year of high school, otherwise known as twelfth grade (PK-12). The legislation may have failed, but the push for highly educated students in those grades guided by competent teachers continues!

New programs have sprouted in the United States such as Teach for America... "the national corps of top recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity (Farr, 2010, p. 269). Large school districts in California, such as Los Angeles Unified School District and San Diego Unified School, have been known to form their own internship to guide new teachers. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) conform to the State Department Commission on Teacher Credentialing to mentor novice teachers under an intern program while gainfully employed by the school district.

Currently, teacher in the public system who fit into the generational group known as "baby boomers" are reaching their 70's or have already passed that "golden age" indicative of retirement. With more "baby boomers" retiring from the public school system, gaps are left in the school district as administrators feverously search for novice teachers to fill those gaps.

With an influx of new teachers come waves of the unknown! Districts worry that new interns are competent enough to take on the responsibility of adequately instructing PK-12

learners in a manner that will lead them to academic proficiency! As recent as April 1, 2014, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing mandated new regulations governing candidates wishing to become interns (PSA, 1306). The mandate called for more stringent support and supervision for all interns who are considered teachers of record, responsible for curriculum and evaluation of K-12 learners and under contract with a school district as a full time teacher. Once candidates meet all intern qualifications the candidate is issued an Intern Credential either as an Education Specialist teacher of record or a general education teacher of record. The credential is good for two years. While the candidate hold the intern credential they must be supervised no less than 144 hours in the year. Fortunately, the hours are shared between the interns' employer and the university.

QUESTION

With all the new movements come the question, does implementing new regulations, spearheading new organizations to support novice teachers and/or replacing seasoned teachers with novices, lead to the best education possible for learners in the PK-12 educational setting?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper, is to establish strategies to support novice teachers so that the question posed in this treatise can be answered positively.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT PROVIDERS

Before one can discuss proper strategies employed by university support providers to enhance the education of novice teachers for the benefit of PK-12 learners, one has to consider attributes and dispositions of a truly qualified university support provider.

In the Institute of Higher Education (IHE), the university support provider (USP) is expected to hold the same credential the candidate is working toward. Not only is the USP expected to hold the same credential it must be a clear credential meaning the USP has met all the maximum qualifying conditions of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The IHE also expects the USP to hold a Master's Degree, preferably in a subject related to education. Often, when considering a prospective university support provider, the IHE will look for previous experience with other institutions of higher education, especially in regard to supervising pre service teachers. Not only do all the above qualifications need to be met, the person considered for a USP position should exude a caring, patient attitude, much as Carl Rogers would determine as "unconditional positive regard" (Kottler, 1991).

Since the Y2K scare of 2000, "baby boomers" are expected to compete technologically with the X generation for positions that require digitized forms. Such is the case for a university support provider. The IHE prefers the supervisor to be well seasoned in mentoring novice teachers, but at the same time, expects the USP to have full command of the computer. Most universities track the pre service teachers' clinical practice on digitized forms, requiring input from the USP to be entered in cyberspace.

STRATEGIES TO FURTHER THE NOVICE

Previously a question was posed in this paper that queried whether new educational movements, regulations mandated by Commission on Teacher Credentialing or an influx of novice teachers add to the benefit of PK-12 learners?

The tenant of this paper rests on the premise that not only does the novice pre service teacher need a qualified support provider, the support provider should be able to participate in ongoing professional development.

One such professional development is known as “Mentoring Matters”. Another term for this scenario based support for pre service teachers is also known as Cognitive Coaching, [is] a synthesis of modern research, theory, and practice drawing on the work of Robert Anderson, Morris Cogan, and Robert Goldhammer (Clinical supervision)...(Costa & Garmston, 2005, p. iii). The intention of Cognitive Coaching is to “transform the effectiveness of decision-making, mental models, thoughts, and perceptions and habituate reflection”. To further the purpose of Cognitive Coaching, one must “enhance and habituate self-directed learning: self-managing, self-monitoring, self-modifying. Criteria for judgement is ever present and begs the question, “How will you know you’re successful?” (ibid, p. 6).

An additional solution to the problem of the influx of novice teachers to replace seasoned “baby boomers” and fill the gap (which has now caused a teacher shortage in the state of California), is to calibrate the support providers. California, as well as other states in the Nation, have adopted Teacher Performance Assessments for pre service candidates in general education. The supervisor, evaluating the candidates’ TPAs, is mandated by the state in which the

assessment takes place, to be calibrated. In other words, every supervisor who evaluates candidates' TPAs must evaluate them in the same manner.

One IHE has implemented calibration training and ultimate precision for all university supervisors using digitized documents to document their candidate's knowledge, skills, and content mastery. Before the supervisor can support a pre service, novice teacher, they must be "calibrated" thereby insuring inter-rater reliability when scoring clinical practice assessments.

Finally, one must not overlook the principles of actual observation as described by Johnson and Johnson (2000) by the well qualified university support provider:

The process includes goal setting, communication, leadership, use of power, decision making, and conflict resolution. Gaining competence in observing involves consciously engaging in formal observations with a wide variety of observation schedules... Such automaticity is developed by repetition and the use of a variety of procedures (p. 61).

Hence, to support pre service teachers who are often novices in the profession, one must consider the various strategies discussed here, but provide the caring support only a well qualified, season support provider can give.

One must not overlook the fact, in spite of adequate support, the pre service teacher suffers "burnout". Churchill, Mulholland and Cepello (2008) offer important tenants to follow to prevent; their last two are most impressive:

- 1) Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world
- 2) Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.

CONCLUSION

Only by supporting seasoned university support providers that have met the adequate qualifications can the influx of novice pre service teachers be met with successful outcomes for PK-12 students. This paper has brought forth various strategies to accomplish continual support and supervision (CTC, 1306) for candidates seeking their teaching credential. Above all else, respect for the individual is paramount!

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