

Faculty Research Grant
Final Report
Arkansas Tech University

Mid-South Educational Research Association

Lexington, KY

November 7 - 9, 2012

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January 31, 2013

B. Restatement of Problem

The Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) Annual Meeting was held in Lexington, Kentucky, November 7 – 9, 2012. My paper “Regaining Time in the Classroom” and “Growth in Intern Pedagogical Skills,” a paper coauthored with Drs. Womack, Hanna, and Bell, were both presented at this conference. This venue offered an excellent opportunity for the dissemination of our research results. Additionally, being a Presider of a session at the conference proved to be informative and beneficial as I was able to make professional contacts.

My paper, “Regaining Time in the Classroom,” addresses how to regain time in the elementary classroom. I was interested to discover what challenges elementary teachers encounter with time management and how my teaching experience might prove beneficial in helping them consider various procedures. As a result of this research, I wrote a book chapter entitled “Regaining Time in the Elementary Classroom” now in the early stages of publication.

In the co-presentation, “Growth in Intern Pedagogical Skills,” authored by Drs. Womack, Hanna, and Bell, length of internship was discussed. Currently, in teacher education, there seems to be an assumption that “more is better” when it comes to the duration of field experiences. Arkansas is considering lengthening the internship (student teaching) from one semester to two. Consequently, a study was undertaken that examined data on intern pedagogical effectiveness to determine whether the length of a field experience is linearly beneficial.

C. Brief Review of the Research Procedure Utilized

The MSERA Annual Meeting afforded me the opportunity to interact with other professionals from across six states to present papers and discuss current research trends and local, state and national initiatives. My first presentation concerned regaining time in the

elementary classroom. A survey was completed by approximately 450 Arkansas educators in the fall of 2011 to ascertain the extent of time spent on non-teaching issues. The questions asked were: 1) How much of your instructional time is spent on classroom management, regardless of whether the cause is your own classroom management style or due to the situation; 2) How much do you perceive routines and procedures to be time savers in the classroom for both teachers and students; and 3) On average, during the week of record, how many times per day was your instructional time interrupted by the actions of other adults?

The paper that I presented with Dr. Shellie Hanna focused on length of internship and explored whether or not it is beneficial to increase the internship experience from one semester to two. Data were collected from 416 observations of 130 interns to determine: 1) whether there was improvement in intern performance over the course of the internship experience; 2) whether the trend of improvement in total intern performance was linear or non-linear in nature; and 3) if trends in subscale performance were different from that of intern performance as measured by the total instrument. An Analysis of Variance indicated that the most significant improvements in intern performance were achieved by the third observation, an observation that had usually occurred by the tenth week of the internship experience.

D. Summary of Findings

Elementary teachers completed a survey that asked questions concerning the operation of a classroom over a “typical” work week. The results indicated that a significant amount of time is lost due to classroom management, that effective routines and procedures play an important role when trying to maximize instructional time and that interruptions can accumulate to the

point that they too become a “lost time” factor. Being cognizant of where time is spent helps to optimize it.

The second paper presented at MSERA concerned ATU interns and their pedagogical growth. The data revealed that the most significant increase in intern performance was usually achieved by the third observation/evaluation. It should be noted that the third observation often coincided with the teaching of the intern’s own chosen “Best Lesson” which was a part of the unit planned and taught by the intern. Our findings reveal that if the internship were administratively lengthened for some reason, little further improvement in teaching effectiveness should be expected. This is not to say that all attempts to lengthen the internship experience should be discouraged; however, there may need to be changes in the expectations of candidates during the extended time. “More of the same” in this study did not demonstrate a benefit in terms of effectiveness and/or pedagogical skills.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

Arkansas educators continually seek ways to improve their instructional effectiveness. As the survey revealed, a vast majority of educators take work home, spend extra time on the campus and use their own resources to purchase needed items for the classroom. My book chapter addresses some of these issues by offering time-tested techniques for optimizing instructional time.

Since the state of Arkansas is considering lengthening the internship from one semester to two, a study was undertaken that examined data on intern pedagogical effectiveness in relation to the length of a field experience. After reviewing the data, it was found that lengthening the

internship experience from one to two semesters is not beneficial in regard to pedagogy and performance.

Regaining Time

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Abstract

As the amount of available time for instruction shrinks due to accountability measures, educators and administrators alike must be vigilant in their quest for the optimal classroom environment. Approximately 400 classroom educators and 50 administrators were surveyed in order to assess how much time is lost due to managing the classroom and stopping/restarting as the result of interruptions. The questions asked were: 1) How much of your instructional time is spent on classroom management, regardless of whether the cause is your own classroom management style or due to the situation; 2) How much do you perceive routines and procedures to be time savers in the classroom for both teachers and students; and 3) On average, during the week of record, how many times per day was your instructional time interrupted by the actions of other adults? The results of the survey indicated that a significant amount of time is lost due to classroom management, that effective routines and procedures play an important role when trying to maximize instructional time and that interruptions can accumulate to the point that they too become a “lost time” factor. Being cognizant of where time is spent helps to optimize it.

Growth in Intern Pedagogical Skills

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Abstract

Differences in intern performance were found between interns assessed across four scheduled observations of their teaching when evaluated with an instrument similar to the one used with Praxis III. The most significant improvements in intern performance were achieved by the third observation which had usually occurred by the tenth week of the internship experience. It should be noted that the third observation often coincided with the teaching of the intern's own chosen "Best Lesson" which was a part of the unit planned and taught by the intern. A limited number of fifth and sixth observations were obtained among some of the candidates; however, these observations did not reveal substantial increased performance beyond the third observation. Unless the nature or format of the internship experience is modified, the authors question the efficacy or usefulness of extending the internship beyond one semester.

