

THE TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF NEW FCS EMERGENCY PERMIT TEACHERS

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This qualitative study examined the teaching experiences of new Family and Consumer Sciences teachers with emergency permits. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews with 9 new FCS emergency permit teachers (EPTs) either in person or by telephone. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed using the constant comparison method. Findings reveal individual student behaviors and discipline procedures, as well as classroom and program management were the primary problems encountered by the EPTs. Other problems were an inability to organize resources, plan curriculum, and assess student learning. They felt overwhelmed and experienced frustration, fear, nervousness, isolation, insecurity, and exhaustion. Attending credential classes after teaching all day caused frustration and additional pressure. Mentors, departmental colleagues, principals, and other faculty members provided support, and self-confidence increased as the school year progressed. Most EPTs attributed their success to determination and personal abilities, and all would make the same decision to teach as an EPT if given the opportunity.

The field of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) is facing a large number of teacher retirements and a shortage of new teachers. With fewer students in Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE) programs, there are not enough teachers to fill the vacancies when they occur. These realities, along with a rise in the number of individuals who are ready to make career changes from industry to education, have created a need for an increase in the hiring of FCS emergency permit teachers (EPTs) - individuals who want to teach but are not yet credentialed.

As new FCS teachers take emergency permit teaching positions, they begin to openly discuss with their university instructors and classmates the job-related problems and concerns they are experiencing. Receiving a monthly paycheck is viewed as a valuable benefit to these new teachers; however, the problems they encounter as new teachers who are not yet trained seem overwhelming to them.

Attrition rates for new teachers are highest within the first three to five years of teaching (Berry, 2001; Chapelle & Eubanks, 2001; Turley & Nakai, 1999; Whiting & Klotz, 2000), but attrition rates for alternatively certified teachers (including emergency permit teachers) are even higher. These studies suggested a need to know more about the teaching experiences of emergency permit teachers as they struggle to balance full-time teaching, college coursework, and home life.

The FCS credential program coordinators are concerned with the classroom experiences of new, non-credentialed teachers. Will new FCS EPTs burn out and leave the profession sooner than their traditionally prepared counterparts? Are their students learning? Will negative teaching experiences have long term effects on their teaching habits? There is limited research available on the teaching experiences of EPTs and none is reported in the field of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Review of Literature

Since the 1990s there has been a shortage of teachers across the nation. According to Whiting and Klotz (2000), statistics indicated that by the year 2008, 2.2 million teachers will be needed to fill open teaching positions. Teacher shortages can be attributed to increased enrollments due to population growth, decreasing teacher education undergraduate majors, and attrition due to retirement and leaving the profession (Bradshaw, 1998). Although qualified teachers are needed to teach every subject some areas are facing increased shortages at alarming rates. A study conducted by Lucke (1998) revealed a significant foreign language teacher shortage. In a study of students with disabilities, Ludlow and Wienke (1994) found that the shortage of educational personnel to serve them in the nation's schools is nearing crisis proportion. Current and continuing shortages of Family and Consumer Sciences educators have created a crisis for many states (Bull, Uerz, & Yoakum, 2000, Jackman & Rehm, 1994; Mimbs, 2000; Travers, 1994). Mimbs' (2000) study on the retention of certified FCS teachers in a large Midwestern state found 77 open FCS teaching positions for the 2000-01 school year, with many more unreported.

The teacher shortage across the nation has led many states to adopt non-traditional certification procedures for entrance into the profession. The traditional route for teacher certification requires the completion of a four-year baccalaureate degree and completion of a state approved teacher education program, which includes student teaching in addition to other requirements specified by the college's approved program (Bradshaw, 1998). A method of entrance into the profession or requirement for licensure for those who are not traditionally trained as teachers is commonly referred to as alternative certification.

Many states offer alternative and emergency certificate programs as a means of solving the teacher shortage problems; however, programs vary from state to state. Some states have various programs that lead to obtaining a teaching credential. In 1993, Bradshaw reported that all states offered alternative licensure programs (Berry, 2001).

Alternative and emergency certificated teachers are typically assigned to a fully licensed and experienced mentor and participate in a shortened program of course work and professional development related to pedagogical theory and application concurrent with employment (Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Neumann, 1994). Alternative certification programs may include course formats comprised of evening, weekend, and summer classes with training that lasts from four to six weeks (Berry, 2001; Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Lee, 1998; Neumann, 1994). Alternative certification differs from emergency certification in that under certain circumstances, schools are permitted to hire teachers without proper certification on the basis of completing certain requirements in a specified timeframe. Emergency permit certificated teachers complete regular certification requirements through night and summer courses at institutions of higher education while teaching during the day (Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Neumann, 1994).

Attrition rates of teachers can be attributed to an increase in issues related to classroom management, discipline, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Although the literature on attrition rates of first year or beginning teachers varies, the findings are disconcerting. Attrition rates are highest within the first three to five years of teaching (Berry, 2001; Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Turley & Nakai, 1999; Whiting & Klotz, 2000). A statewide evaluation conducted by the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (Mitchell, Scott, Hendrick, & Boyns, 1998) found that over fifty percent of classroom teachers quit the profession within two years. Attrition rates for alternatively certified teachers are even more distressing. Neu and Hale (2000) stated that 40 percent of EPTs leave the profession within the first five years. Berry

(2001) found that 60 percent of teachers who enter the profession by alternative routes leave within the first three years as compared to 30 percent of traditionally trained teachers. Other researchers indicate that alternatively licensed teachers may leave the first year of teaching (Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley & Wilson, 2003). For example, Berry (2001) stated that fifteen percent of alternatively licensed teachers in New York quit two months into the school year.

Literature specific to the area of teaching within one's subject matter expertise revealed that teachers with greater subject-matter knowledge have less anxiety on matters related to instruction (Wayman, Fosler, Mantle-Bromley & Wilson, 2003). Some states, however, may not require demonstration of subject matter proficiency when issuing emergency teaching permits, instead allowing EPTs to fulfill that requirement within the timeframe of their permit, which is usually five years.

Even if teachers who are prepared through alternative certification or emergency permit programs may be proficient in the subject area they teach, the literature revealed that they lacked basic pedagogical skills. Studies indicated that coursework related to teaching methods and theory was necessary for acquisition of pedagogical skills and knowledge (Bradshaw, 1998; Neumann, 1994; Otoy, 1992). Traditionally certificated teachers get the opportunity to develop, refine, and experience these skills first hand through student teaching (Neu & Hale, 2000); alternatively certificated teachers however, bypass the opportunity to experience student teaching and may lack knowledge related to teaching, and emergency permit teachers often begin teaching before they have acquired that knowledge through classes in pedagogy.

Previous studies on new teacher induction and alternatively certified teachers report student behavior and classroom management as the primary concerns and frustrations of EPTs (Nakai & Turley, 2003; Neumann, 1994). Neumann's study on the experiences encountered in the first five months of teaching by emergency certificated teachers in a rural town in California revealed that 52 percent of the respondents (n = 55) reported frustration in the absence or inadequacy of training in classroom management, discipline, and teaching methods. Additionally, Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley, and Wilson (2003) stated concern regarding the differences that existed in the areas specific to pedagogy and instructional preparation between traditionally and alternatively licensed teachers. Studies specific to this area have concluded that alternatively certified teachers are less prepared in pedagogical skills. According to Nougaret (2002), traditionally licensed teachers significantly and substantially outperformed alternatively licensed teachers in all domains assessed.

Turley and Nakai's (1999) study revealed that in addition to the struggles EPTs encounter with their students and teaching in general, they may also encounter a lack of collegiality, as EPTs reported a lack of respect from other teachers due to their licensure status. Communicating with parents, and working with students who had special needs caused concern and frustration for several teachers, and added to their daily workload. Neumann (1994) found these to be commonly voiced concerns of EPTs. Similarly, Nakai and Turley, (2003) found that foregoing the opportunity of learning from a cooperating teacher and observing through participation are disadvantages of EPTs.

Some school districts provide new teacher support programs. For example, California designed the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) in 1992 to ensure that first year teachers with pre-service training and alternatively certified teachers receive adequate support through their first two years of teaching (Mitchell, Scott, Hendrick, & Boyns, 1998). The state of Connecticut also has a similar program called the Beginning Educator

Support and Training (BEST) program. This program is designed to “help beginning teachers strengthen their knowledge of subject matter and of instructional strategies, enhance their understanding of students as learners, and begin a career of lifelong learning and professional growth,” (Christie, 2001, p. 491).

Studies indicated that there seemed to be a difference between those teachers that work with a mentor and those that did not. Turley and Nakai (1999) reported that EPT participants in their study experienced a lack of close mentoring and feedback from a veteran teacher - drawbacks of working as EPTs; however, traditional student teachers reported close mentoring as one of the advantages of pursuing the traditional route. Respondents in Nakai and Turley’s (2003) study mentioned they would have liked the help of mentors on a daily basis when confronted with curricular decisions.

Previous studies related to beginning teachers and mentors reported positive feelings toward mentoring. In a phenomenological study conducted by Montgomery (2000), cooperating teachers described a professional relationship by providing support, direction, or guidance related to teaching. Garza (2001) reported that the feedback from mentors was more validated by university supervisors than by performance assessment instruments. Current and previous studies strongly recommend mentoring programs for newcomers into the field either by traditional or alternative programs (Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Fox & Duck, 2001).

Turley and Nakai (2003) found that despite the difficulties, frustrations, and endless complaints due to their own lack of preparation reported by EPTs, many still fail to see the value of professional preparation. In their 1999 study, Turley and Nakai quoted one EPT who viewed student teaching as a waste of time. Turley and Nakai’s (1999) comparison study on pre-service students who completed their preparation by way of traditional student teaching or emergency permit student teaching also found that EPT pre-service students would complete their field experience the same way if they had to do it all over again, despite the reported drawbacks of EPTs.

There has been little or no research on the effects that EPTs have on student learning. Researchers in the area of education have expressed concerns related to the lack of pedagogical skills and theoretical methods that are vital for the transference of knowledge (Berry, 2001; Chappelle & Eubanks, 2001; Neu & Hale, 2000; Turley & Nakai, 1999; Wayman, Foster, Mantle-Bromley & Wilson, 2003; Whiting & Klotz, 2000). Neumann (1994) proposed that it was not unreasonable to believe that students taught by EPTs may be harmed in some way. Neumann (1994) recommended that students and parents alike should be notified when instruction is carried out by an uncertified teacher, and also suggested that citizens, in light of the situation, may obligate legislators to find solutions.

Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teaching experiences of Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE) students who were hired as FCS teachers with emergency permits. By learning more about their teaching experiences, university teacher preparation programs and school districts can identify the problems and work together to improve the EPT experience, thereby decreasing the likelihood of teacher attrition. Research questions guiding this study focused on identifying the perceptions of the new FCS EPTs in order to gain a clearer picture of what teaching is like for new FCS teachers who have not completed all the program requirements for a preliminary teaching credential in California.

Specific research questions were:

1. What were the day-to-day experiences of the emergency permit teachers?
2. How were the experiences of the emergency permit teachers similar or different?
3. What were the emergency permit teachers' perceptions related to their own job performance?
4. How were their perceptions concerning job performance similar or different?

A phenomenological perspective was used to gain the data necessary for this study. After an extensive review of literature related to new teacher induction and emergency permit teaching, a questionnaire was developed to guide the in-depth interview process. The 27 open-ended questions focused on the teaching position; support received; problems, successes, and feelings experienced; recommendations made by EPTs; and demographic questions. Interview questions included:

1. How did you decide to take a teaching position before finishing the credential program?
2. What kind of support or resources did you have or use when you started your job?
3. What was your first day of teaching like?
4. What were the concerns or problems you experienced?
5. What were the successes you experienced during your teaching?
6. Do you believe the student learning was affected by the fact that you were not a credentialed teacher yet? Explain.
7. In reflection, if you could re-do your decision to take an emergency permit job, would you? Explain.
8. Would you recommend emergency permit teaching for other FCSE students? Why or why not?
9. What recommendations would you make so that emergency permit teaching could be a more satisfactory experience?

The participants of this study were nine FCSE students enrolled in the FCS teacher credential program in a California state university in the academic year of 2000-2001 who had been teaching with emergency permits for at least one semester. In order to qualify for employment with an emergency permit in California, individuals were required to hold a baccalaureate degree, pass the California Basic Education Skills Test, be enrolled in a teacher credential program, and take at least six units of class credits per calendar year until completion of the credential requirements.

Each of the participants was interviewed; eight of the interviews were conducted on the telephone by the researcher and one was conducted as a personal interview held at a location that was suitable to both the participant and the researcher. The interviews lasted approximately one hour in length. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed into Word document data for analysis. To ensure validity, an FCSE colleague checked the transcript printouts against the tapes for accuracy. The data were then read and analyzed by the researcher to determine themes.

Results

Demographics

Of the nine female emergency permit teachers EPTs in this study, three were married and six were single or divorced. Of the three who were married, one had children, and of the six who were not married, three had children. Three of the EPTs were in their 20s, three were in their 30s, and three were in their 50s. All of the EPTs in this study had prior work experience of some kind. Six of the EPTs had some form of paid teaching experience, which may have included day-to-day substitute teaching, long-term substitute teaching, teaching in a regional occupational program, or teaching at the community college level; however, three of the nine EPTs had no paid or unpaid teaching experience.

Themes

The following themes were discovered: the EPTs' positions, problems, feelings, support, successes, job performance, and recommendations for others.

The Position. The majority of the respondents indicated they made the decision to take an emergency permit job before completing the credential program because of financial considerations. Other reasons included having a teaching opportunity in the city where the husband had taken a new job, feeling ready to teach, and not being able to advance to student teaching due to an unmet subject matter requirement.

The new EPTs had varying lengths of time to plan for their classes when hired. Three teachers had two to three days to prepare, five had one to three weeks to prepare, while one had two months to prepare. The majority of the EPTs used materials from their credential classes and textbooks from their new departments as resources for planning lessons. Other resources included lesson plans from colleagues in their departments; materials collected from cooperating teachers during early field experiences; support from classmates, university professors, teacher friends; and past experience. One EPT spent many hours throughout the school year sorting through and examining stacks of extremely outdated and unusable materials, equipment and supplies stored in her department, only to find few items that could be relevant and useful. Four of the EPTs did not have an FCS colleague in their department, four had one other FCS colleague in their departments, and one EPT had two FCS colleagues.

Except for one EPT who was hired on a part-time basis including a coaching duty, all other EPTs taught either five or six classes per day. They each had two or three different class preparations (e.g., Foods I and Foods II) and one planning period, with the exception of one full-time EPT who sacrificed her planning period for one semester of her first year in order to take on a coaching responsibility in her school.

The contexts surrounding their hiring and initial weeks of employment were quite varied. One EPT was required to begin the school year teaching her classes in the teacher's lounge until remodeling of her classroom could be completed. Because keys could not be obtained, another EPT was not able to acquire access to her classroom or planning resources during the entire summer before she began her job. In addition, she was not informed by the principal as to what her teaching load would be until two days before the semester began. An EPT who replaced another EPT (who was released from her position mid-year) had only two days to access the room, textbooks, and other resources before the second semester began. Another EPT began her position mid-semester, taking over after a long-term substitute had been released from the position.

Reflections on their first days of teaching elicited a variety of responses—from a day that went “very well” to “the kids were out of control” to a day filled with nervousness, cracking voices, and tears. Several of the EPTs remembered the first day as a series of “getting-to-know-you” activities; yet others recalled an exciting day, but a continuous struggle to figure out routines and procedures. One EPT described her first day the following way:

I was higher than a kite! [I was] nervous, hyper, excited! [I was] trying to understand the bell schedule and how to take attendance, remember names of students, faculty, administrators, how to do copies. I didn’t sleep for three days before or after.

For the EPT who began her position after a long-term substitute had been released, the first day of teaching was quite different, as she described:

It was hell. It was awful because I had taken over from a substitute...a substitute had been running my class until I could take and pass the CBEST. There was no orderliness in the classroom—none. Gum [was] everywhere...candy wrappers. Kids were running wild.

About half of the EPTs felt they were well informed about what to expect before accepting their teaching positions. One teacher said, “I wasn’t surprised or disappointed or let down. I think I went in with my eyes open.” Another EPT described her mixed feelings in the following way:

I guess I was informed, but kind of not really, because the things that were overwhelming were the everyday mechanics of the particular school, what is unrelated to teaching, like the administrative things, the paperwork and bureaucracy of everything. I think another home economics teacher at the school you are teaching at would be more beneficial because you would actually have a partner. A lot of people were very helpful, but it wasn’t like I was teaching next door to someone in the same department, where it would have been a whole lot easier.

Another EPT explained her mixed feelings, stating,

I was naïve about the amount of work involved in being an emergency permit teacher. I didn’t know about the educational system in general, as opposed to the health care system; knowing the classroom responsibilities was okay, but I had to deal with drawing a line between students’ thinking I was a friend or a teacher. And coaching...all that made it more difficult.

One EPT believed she was not given enough information about what it would be like. She stated, “[The university faculty] did not tell us—they lied. They didn’t tell us how hard...how hard it would be.”

Problems. The majority of new EPTs cited individual student behaviors and issues related to discipline as the two most common problems they encountered. One EPT who had

completed a long term substitution position at another school prior to her current employment described the discipline concern she had at her new job:

Discipline in the classroom was a big issue...establishing my authority. What I was used to [was] a little talking. It does not bother me. Raising my voice and yelling and getting angry are not in my personality and I found myself having to do this and that was the biggest thing. The worst part about it was that [yelling and getting mad] was what the kids responded to.

Another EPT had similar concerns with student behaviors and discipline, as she described,

I didn't feel prepared to handle a student that just didn't seem to respond to [my talking with him]. Sometimes I would hold a student after class to talk and say, 'This is what is going on,' and 'What can we do to work it out?' I just didn't know what to do next—when to write a referral, what to write a referral for. How terrible an offense does it have to be? Is disrupting my class enough to send them out? Those kinds of things took a long time—probably through the second semester to really figure out what to do [and when to do it].

Other problems encountered were inability to plan lessons, difficulty in planning effective lessons, no knowledge of grading, difficult relationships with mentors, lack of subject matter knowledge, and figuring out how to work with a variety of students who had special needs. The overwhelming amount of time required outside of the school day resulted in problems with lesson planning for one EPT, as she reflected,

I never wrote up a lesson plan this year, except for my school evaluation. That was it. I knew teaching was going to be difficult, I knew that. I was dreading it because I knew it was going to be a lot of work, but I didn't quite realize that it would be a job that I would do at school from early in the morning and spend hours after work and then come home and sit at the computer for four more hours.

Another EPT had difficulty making decisions related to planning and managing her curriculum. She recalled,

No boundaries were established. I would answer anything [students asked] so I didn't know if I was teaching the content correctly or if I wasn't. Students complained about the work amount, so I adjusted. All the students wanted to do was cook. I felt I had to give up a lot of my control in the class in order to have the students comply. I felt I could be getting them to do more. There was always 15-20 minutes of down time. I knew I could be doing more...better.

Another problem area for several of the EPTs was grading and how to weight various components of assigned student work. One stated, "I had no understanding, completely no understanding of grades and how to do projects on point scale values. How do you even give something 30 points? How do you weight them? [I had learned] absolutely nothing anywhere along those lines that helped with any of those things." Another EPT voiced a similar reaction,

stating, “I did not know how to grade or what to grade them on, and I think that is still [a problem for me]. How much emphasis should I put on something?”

Working with so many students who had special needs caused a great deal of frustration for one EPT, as she reflected,

I didn’t know the kids were going to be like that. I guess I expected them to be a little more attentive. I expected some attentiveness. I didn’t know I would have as many special needs [students] and so many different levels of special education and English language learners. I didn’t know there would be that many [students like that] in home economics classes. I didn’t know they would just dump everybody there. I didn’t know there would be so many social behavior issues.

Several EPTs talked about the difficulty they had in working closely with FCS colleagues, who also served as their mentors. One EPT described her situation in the following way:

Working with someone as close as I worked with....there was a lot of strain mid year. Then it kind of let out toward the end. I think it was because I kind of just started going off on my own, where she kind of wanted to keep me under her wing and then you know, just working side by side with some organization and ...sharing a desk with her...that’s where the frustration came in.

In order to complete credential requirements, it was necessary for all but one of the EPTs to teach during the day and attend university classes at night. Most of them viewed taking credential classes while teaching as a problem, some using the words “horrible,” “frustrating,” and “too much pressure” to describe the situation. One EPT described it as “one more obligation adding to an already big load.” Two other EPTs, however, found the classes to be quite beneficial. One said, “I think it impacted my life in a very positive way because I could take what I learned and actually go and apply it the next day. I think that it was the best thing ever.”

Most EPTs spoke about an experience that was described as their lowest moment, one that usually symbolized a “breaking point” of some kind. Four EPTs told about specific incidents involving student behaviors that led to extremely emotional reactions and self-doubt concerning their career choice. One described a situation involving student behavior and parent reaction in the following way,

I got so frustrated with kids talking in my class that I basically kicked four kids out of my class. Another kid thought it was okay to start laughing out loud so I kicked him out as well. That afternoon I called his house and his mom told me that because I was having a bad day I did not need to have her child kicked out of class...That was the one point where I actually was in tears at school. It just kind of shot me down. It was not only disrespect from the kids but from the parent as well, and that was really hard to take.

Another EPT described her lowest moment in the following way:

I had to teach the first couple of weeks in the teacher's lounge...it was awful. I must say it was echo-y and loud and it was temporary and the students did not take it [well]. I felt very out of control one day. Someone put a newspaper in the microwave and turned it on. Luckily I smelled smoke before it burst into flames. It was pretty obvious they felt they could do things like that. I was really depressed and questioned if I was doing the right thing. I pretty much cried all the way home. I didn't know if this was right for me.

Three EPTs indicated that being so drained from the amount of time and work they put in to their jobs had caused them to eventually become physically ill and miss work. Eight of the nine EPTs indicated the concerns experienced in the first half of the year seemed to lessen as the year progressed.

Feelings. A wide range of feelings were described by the EPTs in the initial stages of their teaching. In the beginning, negative feelings such as frustration, nervousness, fear, isolation, exhaustion, a lack of confidence, and feeling overwhelmed dominated their psychological well-being. Only six of the nearly 50 feelings described in the initial stages of their teaching were positive emotions: excitement, happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment, pride, and determination. Four of the EPTs described no positive feelings whatsoever when asked how they felt in the beginning. As the year ended, the negative feelings had lessened for the majority of the EPTs, giving way to increased confidence and a higher comfort level with their jobs. One, however, remained continually overwhelmed, and another who mentioned numerous positive emotions in the beginning described only negative feelings as time went on. Another EPT was just glad the experience was over because she had already decided not to return to teach at that school. One EPT in a single teacher department described her feelings as she began teaching in the following way,

It was very overwhelming. I felt out of place. I very much felt like an outsider. A lot of it was feeling like an outsider and feeling very alone. [I was] the only home economics teacher and being a first time teacher like that...and being on my own. It was a little overwhelming with planning on my own and not having any input from anyone else.

Another EPT echoed the same feeling of isolation,

There was one time when I almost started crying at the end of the day just because I was frustrated with [the students]. The assistant principal came in and it was hard because I did not have any other teachers to talk to. No one else taught home economics there and I was the only teacher and the kids were misbehaving completely.

The psychological effects of teaching on an emergency permit took their toll on these new FCS teachers. One EPT recalled that she was fearful of what parents might say to her if she called home about the students' behaviors. She reflected, "I think that because I was so young and I don't have a full credential that I did not want parents to

put me on the spot.” One of the EPTs who was in her 50s was also concerned about how people perceived her. She said, “I wanted people to think that I was not new. I did not want the students to think that I was new at this. I wanted them to get excited about it, to want to be there.” Several EPTs mentioned they found themselves defending themselves and their profession when confronted by their co-workers.

Successes. The vast majority of the EPTs’ successful events or experiences were related to positive changes in student behavior, an increase in student learning, and positive feedback received in a variety of ways from parents, students, and administrators. Many of the EPTs told about the sense of accomplishment they felt as they watched their students’ learning increase and their behavior improve, including content skills and social skills. One EPT recalled the fulfillment she felt because she was able to help a 19-year old autistic student to make progress in her class. Another EPT told about an English language learner in her class who finally became confident enough to ask a question aloud, speaking in English. Her entire class applauded, which caused the teacher to feel a moment of success and gratification. Another EPT told about a student teenage mother who wanted to drop her child development class because she “did not see the point.” With the EPT’s encouragement, the student stayed in the class and ended up earning the Home Economics Medal of Merit that year because she became an exemplary student who volunteered her time outside of class to help other students.

When another EPT was asked about success in her teaching, she found it difficult to even associate the word “success” with her teaching. She struggled with the idea of how “success” as a teacher would be identified as she responded, “I have no idea. I don’t even know. What kinds of success? They made their aprons...they actually finished a sewing project...they were able to cook. I don’t know. I don’t know...”

Support. Departmental colleagues, principals, and other teachers in the school were mentioned by a majority of the EPTs as sources of support, as well as parents and university personnel. One EPT recalled the support of her colleague and mentor, “She was always there with kind words and she never made me feel stupid. She would tell me things that I did not know.” Another EPT described the support she received from her mentor teacher in the following way:

My support teacher was across the hall from me and part of what I liked so much about her was that she was really friendly and that was a really big deal—that I could have someone right across the hall, that I could go to [her] and ask basic questions about school policy and scheduling and that kind of thing. That was a big deal.

Another EPT, however, recalled the lack of support she received from the FCS colleagues in her department, saying,

I think I would have appreciated or could have really used somebody to talk with me everyday to just kind of go over what’s going to happen at school every day, this is how to do grades, anything, lesson plans.

Principals offered support in different ways. One EPT recalled that her principal would stop by her room to see how she was doing and if the students were treating her well. Many of the EPTs stated that other teachers in their schools would share with them positive comments

they heard about their teaching and their classes. Parents would also share positive comments with the EPTs about changes they had observed or experienced with their own children as a result of their teaching.

Job Performance. The EPTs were asked to rate their own job performance on a scale of one to ten, with 1 being “Not Effective” and 10 being “Very Effective.” Scores ranged between 4.5 and 8.0, and the median score was 6.5. All the EPTs in this study believed that their students were not negatively affected or harmed as a result of being taught by non-credentialed teachers, and all stated different reasons for their beliefs. In spite of the fact that she saw her youth as a negative factor when she began teaching, one EPT came to view her young age as an asset that helped her to relate to her students, perhaps better than an older new teacher may have been able to do. Another EPT admitted her lack of subject matter expertise in one particular area, but justified it with the belief that she knew more than her students knew about that subject. Another EPT rationalized that her students’ learning ability was very low and that they would not have learned any more if she had been fully credentialed. Several EPTs, however, indicated they believed traditional student teaching would have made them better teachers. One of these teachers went on to describe her feelings about being credentialed, stating,

I think the credential is over rated. [When I began teaching] I had all my credential classes, except for student teaching, so I don’t think their learning would have changed. If I had student taught before I began, that probably would have been a plus. But...in my opinion, you could forego 90 percent of [the credential classes]. I would rather spend the money and put my time into shadowing a teacher in my field. I think there is a huge waste of time and money in credential classes. The methods classes for home economics were great and maybe the one on discipline. The multicultural and reading classes...I would put them at the bottom. I just think that it would be so much more valuable to shadow a teacher that teaches in your field. I feel that so strongly.

Generally, the EPTs attributed their success of surviving emergency permit teaching to their determination and personal abilities. One EPT indicated that the only thing that got her through the experience was the knowledge that it would end, because she was not planning to return to that job. All of the EPTs indicated they would make the same decision to take an emergency permit job before completing their credential program requirements if they were given the opportunity again.

EPTs’ Recommendations for Others. In spite of the fact that almost all the EPTs would have made the same decision to teach on an emergency permit if given the opportunity to do it over, all of them advised that taking an emergency permit job is not for everyone. They recommended individuals should only consider it if they are confident and determined, and have some prior teaching experience, a broad subject matter expertise, and an FCS colleague in the department, as well as no coaching responsibilities. Other recommendations included having the ability to be flexible, realistic, multi-tasking, and self-controlled.

The themes that resulted from the student teacher interviews reflect a broad array of experiences which will in essence, provide the foundation upon which these new EPTs will base their teaching careers. It is important for educators to try to understand these experiences and to use the information to inform and improve the teacher education program.

Discussion

Results of the study indicate that the FCS EPTs were not fully prepared when they took their jobs. This can be attributed, of course, to the fact that they had not yet completed their credential coursework, including student teaching; however, administrative situations in some schools also affected new EPT success. The results also suggest that when emergency permit teachers are hired late in the season, receive their teaching schedule at the last minute, and are asked to teach in unsuitable environments, their success will be affected.

Other contextual factors created challenging environments for teaching and learning, but perhaps could not be avoided. Several of the teachers in this study began their new jobs teaching classes that had, up to the day before, been taught by several long-term or day-to-day substitute teachers. In addition, some EPTs began their positions in mid-year or even worse, mid-semester; and some began their teaching in departments where the former teachers had taught for 30 plus years. Each of these situations sets up very difficult challenges for the non-credentialed newcomers to teaching, and perhaps more so in FCS because of the heavy lab component of many programs.

Accessing teaching resources did not seem to be a problem for these EPTs; however, organizing them into usable resources posed problems for many of them. In some cases, teachers had difficulty in deciding what to teach and how to teach it. Several teachers stated they did not know how to set up grading policies, how to grade and weight assignments and projects, or how to maintain records. Curriculum planning and student assessment are integral elements of the professional education classes required for the credential; therefore, new EPTs should have this knowledge before taking a teaching job. Although teachers who are prepared through alternative certification or emergency permit programs may be proficient in the subject area they teach, the literature reveals that they lack basic skills related to pedagogical skills.

The overwhelming nature of a full-time teaching job was evident by the problems discussed by the respondents in this study. The new EPTs who did not have a planning period or who taught classes outside of their subject matter expertise experienced additional difficulty and frustration. The issue of subject matter competency seems to be a critical factor in predicting the new EPTs' levels of frustration and feelings of being constantly overwhelmed.

Student behaviors and discipline issues were the most commonly reported concern of the EPTs. These issues are often reported in studies on new teacher induction, and previous studies on alternatively certified teachers report student behavior and classroom management as the primary concerns and frustrations of EPTs.

In addition to the lack of a credential and pedagogical knowledge, the EPTs in this study seemed to also be at a disadvantage over traditionally prepared new teachers psychologically. This study revealed that when the EPTs began teaching, they lacked confidence in their abilities and did not want students, teachers, or parents to know they were inexperienced, non-credentialed teachers. This may be due to their insecurities of being young or just new to the profession. Not surprisingly, some teachers in other content areas are not knowledgeable about the FCS profession, and therefore cause additional stress and frustration for new EPTs who feel they need to continually defend their profession and their purpose.

Communicating with parents, and working with students who had special needs caused concern and frustration for several teachers, and added to their daily workload. These experiences are usually modeled in the student teaching semester by cooperating teachers; therefore, emergency permit teachers have no experience with these situations, except for what they may have encountered in their early fieldwork hours.

Beginning teachers often felt overwhelmed due to the challenging and rigorous nature of the job; however, these feelings seem to be intensified for EPTs who teach all day and take credential classes at night. In order to facilitate this transition many teacher education programs, as well as alternative and emergency certificate programs have incorporated mentoring into the program. Some school districts also provide new teacher support programs. However, it should also be noted that some of these programs place on the new EPTs an additional load of having to do assignments and attend workshops and others seminars.

Almost half of the new teachers worked in single teacher departments. This study reveals that this can be both a problem and a supporting factor for new EPTs. Many of the teachers spoke of isolation and a lack of collegial input and feedback. They desired a colleague for these reasons.

The new EPTs in this study who had colleagues referred to them as valuable sources of support; however, several of the same teachers described the conflict with their mentors that resulted from sharing space and having differences in teaching philosophy and teaching style. This may suggest that those who serve as mentors to EPTs may not be trained to serve in that role. Another reason for mentor problems may stem from an absence of compensation for those who mentor EPTs. This may cause mentors to resent having the extra responsibility, which may in turn, result in conflicts with the new EPTs or no mentoring at all.

The FCS EPTs in this study identified both general and specific examples of student successes, which they believed were major indicators of their own successful teaching. The EPTs in this study believed they were fairly effective teachers, attributing their success to their own determination and abilities. Although some believed student teaching would have made them better teachers, all believed that not having the credential did no harm to their students. Perhaps the introduction of emergency permit teaching inadvertently communicates a message that willingness and determination make a good teacher, thereby discounting professional preparation. In spite of the overwhelmingly negative descriptions of their experiences, most EPTs believed they would do it the same way if given the chance to re-do their decision to teach with an emergency permit; however, they cautioned others to be completely informed about it before doing so. This may indicate that they not only struggled throughout the process, but more importantly, that they perhaps had learned many valuable lessons and were willing to persevere in order to be good teachers.

Recommendations for Practice

Program coordinators in university teacher preparation programs should inform all FCSE students and prospective EPTs about the reality of the demands, the potential classroom diversity, the possible isolation, and the overwhelming amount of work they will have as they complete credential classes while teaching full time. Program coordinators cannot control who the mentor teachers of EPTs will be, as they are assigned by the school administrators, but they can advise the EPTs that there may indeed be incompatibility issues related to personality or teaching style; therefore, the importance of developing and using skills for honest, open communication should be emphasized.

Even though prospective EPTs are not required to possess subject matter competency, the findings of this study suggest some problems could be eliminated for new EPTs if they were required to be subject matter competent in their discipline before taking the job. The 2002 No Child Left Behind Act addresses this issue by requiring all new teachers hired on or after July 1, 2002 in the core academic subject areas as EPTs (now hired as “interns”) or with a credential

have to prove subject matter competency upon being hired. However, it should be noted that some states are applying the legislation across all content areas, which would include FCS. Program coordinators should offer the program's library of secondary textbooks as a resource for individuals who are preparing to take the subject matter test and should encourage individuals to take courses at the community college to gain knowledge and skills in the content areas they need to strengthen.

Program coordinators can ensure high quality early field placements for the students as they proceed through their program so that they can observe excellent classroom management and instruction and learn by working only with exceptional master teachers. Program coordinators should advise less experienced, less confident, less capable FCSE students not to take emergency permit teaching jobs, but encourage them instead to complete the credential program first.

School administrators should inform new EPTs of their teaching load and should provide access to their classrooms as soon as possible. They should continue to ensure that EPTs have at least one planning period per semester. Taking extra-pay duties, such as coaching, is not recommended for EPTs, especially if it eliminates a planning period.

Knowledge of curriculum planning and student assessment is also essential for quality instruction; therefore, administrators should ensure that EPTs meet with their mentors prior to the beginning of school to learn basic strategies for lesson planning and assessment. Mentors should be trained, paid, and required to check in with their EPTs on a weekly basis to answer questions and to provide encouragement.

School administrators should have an orientation session to inform new EPTs of the school's daily routines and student disciplinary policies. New teacher support groups should be established in the schools so that EPTs and master teachers can role play teacher/student, teacher/parent, and teacher/teacher scenarios in order to practice and develop good decision making skills related to classroom management and communication techniques.

There has been little or no research on the effects that EPTs have on student learning. As the emphasis on meeting standards and increasing student achievement continues, the effects of non-credentialed teachers on student learning should be investigated.

Although findings from this study cannot be generalized to the general population, this study has provided insights on the teaching experiences of new FCS EPTs. The findings are supported by previous studies that suggest non-credentialed individuals will continue to take teaching positions as EPTs, even when they are aware of the overwhelming nature of the job. In order for the teacher shortage to be efficiently addressed and new teacher burnout to be minimized, steps should be taken at the university and secondary school levels to ensure that EPTs are properly informed and advised, appropriately hired, and effectively supported.

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