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ABSTRACT

Sixty self-selected in-service secondary teachers, working in conjunction with the West Virginia University teacher education program, formed the population from which the experimental and control group samples were drawn for this study. Experimental group subjects actively participated in 14 hours of intensive training in helping relationships as cooperating teachers, over a two day period during the second week of the student teaching experiments. Control group subjects received no special training. Prospective teachers were randomly assigned, with respect to subject matter areas, to cooperating teachers in each group. The results of this study suggested that prospective teachers who participated in student teaching with cooperating teachers who were humanistically trained in helping relationships desired more praise and perceived more suggestions given from their cooperating teachers than those who participated with the control group. (JA/JB)

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INTRODUCTION

Student Teaching constitutes a common and central phase of most teacher education programs, its viability being essential for program success. In spite of the fact that it is generally recognized as being the one place in the total teacher preparation program where an impact can be made, some writers (Andrews 1964, Silberman 1970, and Sinclair and Peters 1970) speak disparagingly about this most vital part of the prospective teachers' preparation for teaching. There seems to be a general feeling among many educators that the current student teaching experience is ~~only~~ a poor beginning for any prospective teacher. In a similar vein, it has even been suggested that student teaching affords many prospective teachers with little more than a continuously frustrating, emotionally disturbing experience during which they receive little positive direction or assistance.

In reaction to these criticisms, many colleges of teacher education have made various attempts to improve the student teaching phase of teacher preparation. Perhaps working on the assumption that the cooperating teacher is the most relevant variable in student teaching, an assumption on which at least one writer (Yee 1968) suggests there is concensus among educators, some of these attempts

have focused on the human interaction processes that transpire between cooperating and prospective teachers. Past research of a number of educators (Della Piana and Gage 1955, Flanders 1965, Hughes 1958, Halpin and Winer 1957, and Miller 1966) has indicated that human interaction processes influence teaching-learning outcomes. Ancillary to these findings, the investigations of other educators (Horwitz 1968, Lindsay 1966, Lipscomb 1968, Miller 1966, Engle 1963, Zegler 1972) have provided evidence which indicates that interaction with the cooperating teacher changes the prospective teacher's perceptions during the student teaching experience.

Social psychology has made a unique contribution to the student teaching facet of teacher education by pointing out the significance of the prospective teacher's perception of a given situation as a determinant of his behavior. For example, one theorist (Combs 1968) has reported that behavior is the direct result of the individual's field of perceptions at the moment of behaving. Of particular importance here is the individual's perceived personal needs, his behavior - according to Maslow (1959) - being determined primarily by his level of need gratification. One scholar (Aspy 1969) has suggested that this assertion by Maslow means, first, that asking people to perform at levels above the one at which their needs are being met leads only to the unhappiness and frustration, and second,

that those who wish to promote a person's growth from one level to another should concentrate on meeting the current needs of that person. Assuming that this argument has some validity, it seems that one particularly important aspect of the interaction between cooperating and prospective teachers lies in the area of perceived cooperating teacher verbal behavior. That prospective teacher need level gratification is in some measure determined by his perceptions of his cooperating teacher's verbal behavior seems apparent.

Since supervision has as its purpose the improvement of instruction, it is essential that the cooperating teacher provide for the prospective teacher a social-emotional atmosphere that permits the former to function in the role of a change agent. Theorists (Brown 1968, Combs and Syngg 1959, Gibb 1964, Rogers 1959, and Rokeach 1960) generally agree that one's ability to help another change in a positive direction is related to his human relations abilities. Therefore, it was the major objective of this study to determine the effects of intensive training in helping relationships for cooperating secondary school teachers. The study tested the hypotheses that the training experience would not affect the cooperating teachers' perceptions regarding (1) the degree of open mindedness, (2) interpersonal relationships with their prospective teachers, and (3) reactions to classroom

situations. The study also tested the hypotheses that the training experience would not affect the prospective teachers' perceptions regarding (1) personal needs and (2) cooperating teacher verbal behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Sixty self-selected in-service secondary teachers, working in conjunction with the West Virginia University teacher education program, formed the population from which the experimental and control group samples were drawn. Fourteen members from the population were randomly assigned to each group. Experimental group subjects actively participated in 14 hours of intensive training in helping relationships over a two day period during the second week of the student teaching experience. Control group subjects receive no special training. Prospective teachers from the entire population of 160 prospective teachers participating in student teaching during the second semester of the 1971-72 academic year at West Virginia University were randomly assigned, with respect to subject matter areas, to cooperating teachers in each group. Prospective teachers in neither group received special training in helping relationships aside from that which they normally receive in their pre-student teaching teacher education courses.

Cooperating teachers from both groups were pre and post tested on perceptions regarding interpersonal relations with their prospective teachers, their degree of open mindedness, and their reactions to subject matter neutral classroom situations. Prospective teachers from both groups were pre and post tested on perceptions regarding their personal needs and cooperating teacher verbal behavior. In addition, prospective teachers from both groups were tested on perceptions regarding interpersonal relationships with their cooperating teachers, their degree of open mindedness, and their reactions to subject matter neutral classroom situations. This was done to allow cooperating and prospective teacher perceptions regarding these variables to be associated through the use of the Fisher Z transformation test statistic.

Both groups of cooperating teachers and both groups of prospective teachers were compared with the analysis of variance test statistic. Comparisons were made at the .05 level of statistical significance both between and within the groups. The analysis of covariance was used for post test adjustment when significant pre-test difference occurred for between group comparisons.

FINDINGS

The results of this study indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between cooperating teachers trained and cooperating teachers not trained in helping relationships on perceptions regarding interpersonal relations with their prospective teachers, their degree of open mindedness, and their reactions to subject matter neutral classroom situations. The mean scores calculated from the data regarding the three aforementioned dependent variables, however, seemed to suggest that experimental group cooperating teachers possessed more positive perceptions than did control group cooperating teachers. In addition, the mean scores indicated a trend which seemed to suggest that experimental group cooperating teachers were able to form more favorable perceptions, regarding the three variables on which they were measured, over the duration of the student teaching experience. Conversely, the mean scores ^{of} ~~at~~ the control cooperating teachers indicated a trend which seemed to suggest a deterioration in the quality of their perceptions, on the three variables, over the duration of the student teaching experience.

This data seemed to afford some evidence as to the success of the training in helping relationships experience. A probably more useful set of indicators attesting to the success or failure of the training experience, however, was gleaned from the data comparing the two groups of prospective teachers included in this study on perceptions regarding personal needs and cooperating teacher verbal behavior.

In terms of perceptions regarding cooperating teacher verbal behavior, prospective teachers of experimental group cooperating teachers perceived (at the .05 level of statistical significance) more suggestion giving and desired more verbal praise from their cooperating teachers than did prospective teachers of control group cooperating teachers. These findings may be attributed to the possibility that experimental group cooperating teachers were, in fact, successful in establishing a more open, human interpersonal relationship with their prospective teachers than were control group cooperating teachers. Indeed, the interpersonal relationships developed between the experimental group cooperating and prospective teachers may have been such that it allowed the prospective teachers to become victims of a praise syndrome. This writer speculates that as experimental group prospective teachers perceived their cooperating teachers to continually praise them during student teaching, the cooperating teacher's ability to satiate their prospective teachers' desire for praise diminished to the point where prospective teachers began expecting more praise than they were receiving.

Another possible explanation for the significant differences between the two groups of prospective teachers on perceptions regarding the two aforementioned dependent variables on which they were measured may be attributed to the possible failure of experimental group cooperating teachers to sufficiently praise the achievement of their prospective

teachers. There is quite possibly a reciprocal relationship between cooperating teacher verbal behaviors of praising and suggestion giving and the development of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is conceivable that positive reinforcement for prospective teachers in the form of praise enhances their ability to relate positively and effectively with their cooperating teachers. Similarly, positive interpersonal relationships may enhance cooperating teachers' ability to help prospective teachers through the vehicle of suggestion giving. Prospective teachers participating in student teaching, because of the very nature of that experience, have a high anxiety level to do well (Churukian and Cryan 1972). They wish to know how to do things in the proper order to succeed. The evidence provided in this study indicates that this desire may manifest itself in the form of wished for cooperating teacher praise as a positive reinforcement for successful compliance with the suggestions given by cooperating teachers. Possibly, the training in helping relationships experience participated in by experimental group cooperating teachers facilitated within them an intense desire to help their prospective teachers through the technique of giving suggestions; however, it appears that, if this was the case, the training experience did not sufficiently emphasize the value and importance of positive reinforcement through praise for successful compliance with cooperating teacher suggestions.

The findings of this study provided some evidence which suggested that prospective teachers of experimental group cooperating teachers perceived fewer personal needs in the student teaching situation than did prospective teachers

of control group cooperating teachers. More specifically, the group mean scores seemed to indicate that experimental group prospective teachers perceived themselves as having greater autonomy, higher esteem, and a better social relationship with the cooperating teachers than did control group prospective teachers. Furthermore, the mean scores, regarding perceptions relating to the aforementioned variables, indicated a favorable gradual gain during the student teaching experience for experimental group prospective teachers and an unfavorable decline for control group prospective teachers. If Maslow's need theory has validity and is applied here, it seems logical to suggest that the training in helping relationships experience may have facilitated within experimental group cooperating teachers some ability to provide for the personal needs of their prospective teachers in the student teaching situation.

Finally, the results of this study were rather inconclusive. Statistically, a significant difference on only two variables could be attributed to the training in helping relationships experience. There did, however, seem to be some evidence, as indicated by mean scores, that the training program did facilitate the cooperating teachers' ability to establish and maintain a more favorable interpersonal relationship with their prospective teachers. Furthermore, the study results seemed to suggest that if student teaching has as its purpose the promotion of the

prospective teacher's growth from one point to another, care should be taken to train cooperating teachers to recognize and satisfy the prospective teacher's personal needs. Directly related to this is the importance of positive verbal behavior on the part of the cooperating teacher. Evidence gleaned from the data of this study seems to indicate that the way the prospective teacher perceives the cooperating teacher's verbal behavior is in part a determiner of the success of the student.

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