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ABSTRACT

A preliminary study was conducted to examine indicators which tend to reflect relationships between personality traits and professional choice among elementary education students enrolled in the teacher education program in Eastern Kentucky University. Education students in elementary education (N=122) completed the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. From this population, a random sample of 34 subjects was drawn. Correlations were made with respect to personality traits, gender, grade point average, and year in college and significant correlations were sought among the variables. Results of the study indicate that more extroverts were found in the elementary education students entering student teaching and that students with the highest grade point averages were introverts. Follow-up studies will compare success by personality type, gender, and grade point average. (LL)

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PERSONALITY TRAIT AND PROFESSIONAL CHOICE AMONG
PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

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Growing concerns about an anticipated shortage of quality teachers and the academic qualifications of those enrolled in teacher education programs have contributed to renewed interest in the attributes of college students who aspire to and actually enter the teaching profession (Atkin, 1981; Musemeche & Adams, 1979; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Findings suggest students who aspire to enter the teaching profession differ from their peers who seek other careers in terms of their higher family, religious and community orientations, desire to work with congenial colleagues and their lower levels of academic ability and achievement and self-concept. (Andrew, 1983; Bethune, 1981; Roberson, Keith & Page, 1983; Savage, 1983; Vance & Schlechty, 1982).

Conflicting findings by Ethington, Smart and Pascarella (1987) indicate, however, that of students initially aspiring to be teachers. those subsequently entering the teaching profession possess stronger high school and academic performances than those who opted for other careers.

It has become increasingly evident in recent years that the teacher's personality is a significant variable in the classroom. Field reports from administrators and supervisors indicate an increasing awareness of this problem together with an expressed need to add some meaningful basis for evaluating personality factors in teacher recruitment, selection, and training programs. It seems

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logical that educational institutions should play an active role in determining which teacher traits are important for teachers. Ryans (1960) demonstrated that the personality characteristics of elementary and secondary teachers are not identical and discovered significant differences with respect to age, experience, avocation, religion and marital status.

While there are many systems and theoretical approaches to the study of personality traits, it seems that measures of introversion, extraversion, sensing, feeling, and intuiting traits are applicable to the teacher in a classroom situation.

An analysis, using the MBTI, by Pigge and Marso (1990) involving the personal and affective attributes of prospective teachers indicated that a personal preference for perceiving rather than judging one's environment is negatively related to success in student teaching. These findings suggest that aspiring teachers' levels of performance are likely to be impeded by a personal preference for sensing or intuiting rather than using a judging process. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator has also been used for prediction of grades for certain personality types. According to Morse (1958) and others there appears to be a mounting consensus that the personality, values, and character traits of the teachers in this area are the touchstones of successful programming.

This study provides self-report information regarding personality traits of students making elementary education a career choice. Sex, level of education and grade point average are examined in relation to personality types.

Background

Eastern Kentucky is a regional, coeducational, public institution of higher education, population approximately 16,000, offering general and liberal arts programs, preprofessional and professional training in education and various other fields at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Eastern has a distinguished record of more than nine decades of educational service to the Commonwealth. The university is situated near the heart of the bluegrass area and draws students from all areas of Kentucky, surrounding states as well as international students. Kentucky, itself, has much diversity in its regions and ranges from the Blue Grass area to the coal-mining area in eastern Kentucky.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher education programs are paying increased attention to upgrading academic, entry, and graduation requirements of students. Knowledge base and requisite skills are emphasized, but equal treatment has not been given to student development in the areas of personality development and psychological balance. There is a need for research on relationships between personality trait and professional choice among members of the teaching profession; because knowledge of subject matter is not as relevant as student-teacher interaction.

Purpose of the Study

This is a preliminary study. The purpose is to look at indicators which tend to reflect relationships between personality trait and professional choice among elementary school graduates of the teacher education program in a regional Kentucky university. The proposed study

is significant because of the philosophical stance that "all children can learn" implied in the Kentucky Education Reform Act. There are implications in this for the "type" of teachers who are recruited and graduated from our higher educational institutions. According to this philosophy, we need people who are adaptable and flexible. The proposed study will be relevant to the recruitment and retention efforts of the institution in question.

Procedures

One hundred and twenty-two perservice elementary school teachers completed the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. From this population, a random sample of 34 subjects was drawn. Correlations were made using the SAS statistical package with respect to personality traits, gender, grade point average and year in college. This preliminary study looked for significant correlations among the above mentioned variables. The hypothesis was that the teacher of the future is one who is extraverted, sensing, feeling and perceptive or ESFP type.

Results and Discussion

Results of this study indicate the frequencies with which trait types occurred (Table 1). Of the 34 subjects 10 were ESFJ or extraverted, sensing, feeling and perceptive. According to the Myers Briggs Manual (1986, p. 20) these individuals can be described as:

outgoing, easygoing, accepting, friendly, fond of a good time. Like sports and making things. Know what's going on and join in eagerly. Find remembering facts easier than mastering theories. Are best in situations that need sound common sense and practical ability with people as well as things.

Live their outer life more with sensing, inner life more with feeling.

The next most frequently occurring type is ESFP. From the MBTI Manual these individuals can be described as:

Matter-of-fact, do not worry or hurry, enjoy whatever comes along. Tend to like mechanical things and sports, with friends on the side. May be a bit blunt or insensitive. Can do math or science when they see the need. Dislike long explanations. Are best with real things that can be worked, handled, taken apart or put back together.

Live their outer life more with sensing, inner more with thinking.

Extraverted personality types occurred with greater frequency (N=29) than introverted types (N=5) in both males and females.

Frequency totals of personality traits by gender is indicated on Table 2. There were 31 female and 3 male subjects. The most frequently occurring traits for females is ESFJ, N=9. Males differed in that there was one male in each category of ESFJ, ESFP, and ESTJ.

Frequencies for personality types by grade are indicated on Table 3. There were 31 seniors and 3 juniors. Seniors were more frequently ESFJ types, (N=10). None of the three juniors were ESFJ types however.

G.P.A.'s ranged from 2.61 to 3.92. The mean for G.P.A. is 3.18. Correlations among G.P.A. and personality traits (Table 4) indicate that Introverts seem more likely to have higher grades. The correlation coefficient is .400 which is significant at the .01 level. The profile with the highest G.P.A., 3.92, N=1 is the ENFP. The profile with the lowest G.P.A. is ESTJ with a mean of 2.88, N=5.

The results of this preliminary study suggest that the hypothesis was partially supported. More extraverts were found in the elementary education students entering student teaching. However, those students with highest G.P.A.'s were introverts.

This is a preliminary study which is part of an ongoing larger scale study. At this point trends are suggested that merit further investigation. Final results will contribute to an understanding of personality types entering elementary education by gender, grade, and G.P.A. Follow-up studies will compare success by personality, type, gender and G.P.A. Further research is suggested.

TABLE 1

PROFILE	Frequency
ENFJ	3
ENFP	1
ENTJ	2
ESFJ	10
ESFP	7
ESTJ	5
ESTP	1
INFJ	1
ISFJ	1
ISFP	1
ISTJ	1
ISTP	1

TABLE 2

TABLE OF SEX BY PROFILE

SEX	PROFILE							Total
Frequency								
Percent								
Row Pct								
Col Pct	ENFJ	ENFP	ENTJ	ESFJ	ESFP	ESTJ		
Female	1	3	1	2	9	6	4	31
Male	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Frequency								
Percent								
Row Pct								
Col Pct	ESTP	INFJ	ISFJ	ISFP	ISTJ	ISTP		
Female	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	31
Male	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

TABLE 3

TABLE OF GRADE BY PROFILE

GRADE	PROFILE							
Frequency								
Percent								
Row Pct								
Col Pct	ENFJ	ENFP	ENTJ	ESFJ	ESFP	ESTJ		Total
3	0	0	0	0	2	1		3
4	3	1	2	10	5	4		31
Col Pct	ESTP	INFJ	ISFJ	ISFP	ISTJ	ISTP		Total
3	0	0	0	0	0	0		3
4	1	1	1	1	1	1		31

TABLE 4

Pearson Correlation Coefficients / Prob > |R| under Ho: Rho=0 / N = 34

	FACTOR1	FACTOR2	FACTOR3	FACTOR4
GPA	0.40066 0.0189	-0.09012 0.6123	0.09469 0.5942	0.21246 0.2277

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