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ABSTRACT

Professional Sequence at Illinois State University (ISU) is a self-paced, competency-based eight semester-hour program with an enrollment of approximately 1,400 students per semester. It is designed to provide preservice secondary school teachers with an integrated set of teaching skills as well as a systematic set of analytic skills. The competencies involve instructional methods, general educational knowledge, and reading methods. Professional Sequence instruction is organized in a series of self-instructional packages which have been constructed by the ISU faculty. Students are given credit for each package when they have demonstrated the required level of competence by either performance, written work, or tests. Daily computer printouts list results of evaluations submitted during the previous 24 hours. Each student's cumulative progress is reported weekly by computer printout. Following a series of orientation sessions, the student works individually with faculty members of his/her choice in the Sequence advisement room. Approximately 70 percent of the program is required. The remaining 30 percent is earned by completing optional packages, independent study, or by taking mini-courses. Thus, students are able to work at a pace suited to their needs. The teaching skills component of the program is climaxed by a series of five microteaching experiences, all clinically analyzed. In addition, students may choose to participate in a public school experience or a clinical experience in the laboratory school prior to student teaching. (Author)

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College of Education
Illinois State University
December 9, 1975

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PROFESSIONAL SEQUENCE
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY

Professional Sequence at Illinois State University (I.S.U.) is a self-paced, competency-based eight semester-hour program with an enrollment of approximately 1400 students per semester. It is designed to provide pre-service secondary school teachers with an integrated set of teaching skills as well as a systematic set of analytic skills. The competencies involve instructional methods, general educational knowledge and reading methods.

Professional Sequence instruction is organized in a series of self-instructional packages which have been constructed by the faculty at I.S.U. Students are given credit for each package when they have demonstrated the required level of competence either by demonstrated performance, written work, or tests. Daily computer printouts list results of evaluations submitted during the previous 24 hours. Each student's cumulative progress is reported weekly by computer print-out.

Following a series of orientation sessions, the student works individually with faculty members of his choice in the Sequence advisement room. Approximately 70% of the program is required. The remaining 30% is earned by completing optional packages, independent study, or taking mini-courses. Thus students are able to work at a pace suited to their needs. The teaching skills component of the program is climaxed by a series of five micro-teaching experiences, all clinically analyzed. In addition, students may choose to participate in a public school experience or a clinical experience in the laboratory school prior to student teaching.

PROFESSIONAL SEQUENCE
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Description and Development of the Program

The Professional Sequence, now in its fifth year, is a self-paced, competency-based, teacher-preparation program that replaced three previously required courses-- Secondary School Methods, Secondary School Reading, and American Public Education. Each of the approximately 1400 undergraduates who enroll in the program each semester registers for between 1-8 semester hours. As students progress at their own rates, their progress is monitored by a computerized record keeping system that provides daily results on each of the competencies attempted, individual weekly cumulative status reports, and a final progress report. The competencies included in the program are those deemed important by faculty, students, and practicing teachers and administrators; and the format of the program assures that every prospective secondary school teacher at ISU does, in fact, demonstrate each required competence. The format fosters individual student-teacher interaction and provides for meaningful and unbiased evaluations. The self-instructional packages lend themselves readily to continual updating and revision, thus enabling the staff to eliminate unintentional duplication or omission of content.

The Sequence began as a pilot program written by the Secondary Education and Reading faculty without external or special internal funding. After the one-year pilot, the program was implemented. The original objectives have been continually revised and refined as input is acquired from faculty, students and educators in the field. Instructional modes such as computer assisted instruction programs, direct-access information-retrieval system programs, mini-courses, and seminars are continually being added to help students learn more readily. Ongoing research serves as a basis for possible revisions concerning reinforcement schedules and additional delivery systems. Development is continuing with respect to greater articulation with academic departments across campus and expansion of field experiences for students prior to student teaching. Finally, the program will receive

continuing input from the Department Advisory Group, which is composed of representatives from the Illinois Office of Education, the Illinois Association of School Boards, the Illinois Congress of Parent and Teachers, and several junior and senior high schools in the state.

Objectives

Following is an overview of the competencies developed from the content of the Sequence.

Competencies -- Each student will:

1. devise instructional strategies which include precise instructional objectives at specified cognitive levels, provisions for appropriate practice, empirical evaluation, and feedback to students.
2. demonstrate specified teaching skills in video-taped micro-lessons, taught at specified cognitive levels, to peers and clinical analysts.
3. analyze his or her video-taped lessons and specify strengths, weaknesses, and possible self-improvement measures on the basis of personal perceptions of the video-taped replay and reports from peers and clinical analysts.
4. given hypothetical situations, correctly apply: (1) specified theories of classroom management, (2) precedents of school law, and (3) ethical standards.
5. analyze written subject content in terms of readability and required reading skills; incorporate the teaching of reading skills in content instruction; identify students' reading levels and problems; and devise realistic strategies for solving those problems.

In addition to the above competencies, the following attitudes are fostered by the format of the program.

Attitudes -- Each student will show initiative and responsibility by:

1. following a self-imposed schedule which provides for the completion of all Sequence requirements for student teaching, prior to the first student teaching date selected.



2. initiating discussion with Sequence faculty to clear up misunderstandings and explore differences in points of view.
3. identifying areas of personal pedagogical weaknesses and selecting or creating optional learning experiences to strengthen those areas.

Personnel Involved

Professional Sequence is staffed by twelve faculty along with two graduate assistants and one full-time secretary. Other services are provided through department-wide or university-wide staff and facilities. Professional Sequence students use the departmental testing facilities, as well as such university-wide facilities as the micro-teaching stations, the random access retrieval system and various audio-visual and library facilities. The program also makes use of the services provided by the university measurement and evaluation office and computer services.

Budget

Both during the development and the implementation of the program the budget has remained essentially as it would have been in the traditional program. The faculty has remained the same in terms of numbers, and additional services needed have been supplied by already existing facilities in the university.

Contribution to the Improvement of Teaching Education

The Professional Sequence at ISU provides a model for competency-based teacher education which has been shown to work for large numbers of students over an extended period of time. It possesses distinct advantages for students and faculty. Both share a common pedagogical language with which to talk about teaching. The sequential nature of the program permits students to perceive the relationships among the various facets of teaching and to acquire teaching skills in a logical order. Another strength is the emphasis on self-analytical skills as well as on planning and teaching skills, thus providing a model for helping students to become students of teaching. The program eliminates the traditional semester time

lines, permitting students to progress at their own rates. It also allows flexibility in staff assignments, permits optimum utilization of special abilities of the faculty, and encourages close cooperation among faculty.

The Professional Sequence demonstrates the effective use of recent technological advances articulated with a self-instructional program. A multi-media approach is employed in a user-controlled random access retrieval system. The program also provides a model of effective record-keeping and information distribution systems capable of dealing with large numbers of students in a self-paced system. Even though Professional Sequence at ISU incorporates extensive use of hardware, it is highly transportable and can be adapted readily to other delivery systems in other institutions, large or small.

The enduring quality of Professional Sequence demonstrates that faculty and large numbers of students are able to deal successfully with a competency-based approach to teacher education. Most of all, the development and successful implementation of this program clearly indicate that the quest for innovative teacher education programs need not be hampered by lack of outside funding.

Evaluation Methods and Results

Two kinds of evaluation procedures have been used to assess the program. The first concerns updating and upgrading of the instructional packages. On the basis of informal input from students, former students, and faculty, the staff annually revise, add, and delete packages. Packages and evaluation instruments are modified as needed at any time between annual revisions.

The second form of evaluation is carried out by the Professional Sequence Evaluation Committee which is an active standing committee. The purpose of this committee is to initiate and review research concerning Professional Sequence. Since the inception of the program, studies concerning Professional Sequence have been conducted by members of the Sequence faculty, by students, and by other

faculty on the campus. Recently the Evaluation Committee reviewed eleven of these studies. Two studies compared ISU student teachers who had been in the Professional Sequence with students from two other major teacher preparation institutions. The data from these studies indicated that the Professional Sequence students were more effective on some skills and as effective on others, as students at the other two institutions.

Nine of the studies dealt with the quality of the program with regard to development of skills, transfer of skills, and attitudes of the participants. The studies concerned with skill development indicated that self-instructional packages are effective in the development of self-analytical skills as well as of teaching skills. Studies on transfer of skills to practice in the field showed that ten of the thirteen skills under study were used on a daily basis by more than half of the respondents. The attitudinal studies showed that the content of the Professional Sequence is viewed by students as useful in preparing them as teachers and that the content is consonant with objectives and evaluation. However, some students found the program demanding in terms of time and effort and indicated discomfort because of lack of prior experience with competency-based education. Studies indicated that students vary in their ability to pace their own learning, and desire more interactive group experiences with other students and with faculty. On the basis of these data, modifications of the program have been made and are continuing to be made.