DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 822 SP 028 854

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TITLE Case Studies of Elementary Teacher Preparation Programs in Six Schools and Colleges of Education. Preliminary Study Findings.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Program Effectiveness; *Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Six midwest institutions, consisting of two major universities, three large state-supported colleges, and one smaller liberal arts college, were studied in an effort to provide an indepth description of how elementary school teachers are prepared in preservice teacher education programs. Objectives were to provide a clearer picture of: (1) the nature of teacher education curricula; (2) the instructional practices modeled for prospective teachers; (3) the scope, nature, and quality of opportunities teacher candidates have for learning how to teach; and (4) the extent of teacher preparation programs. Findings are discussed in terms of common positive attributes, common concerns, distinctive features of institutions, and attributes of specific programs. Fourteen characteristics are identified that appear to contribute to coherent programs that draw upon practices and policies endorsed by faculty and students across the six institutions. (MT)

CASE STUDIES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN SIX SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

Preliminary Study Findings

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Paper presented at the
Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association

April, 1987

Major Purposes of the Project

The major purpose of the case studies reported herein was to provide a more indepth picture than exists at present of how teachers are prepared in preservice programs, namely programs which prepare elementary teachers. As such, the results of this project are intended to advance our understanding of current regional (midwest) professional development curricula and program designs. It should be underscored that our purposes were largely descriptive, not evaluative. The sites which were identified and studied were selected on the basis of their distinctive, if not exemplary nature. While our primary intent was to describe aspects of best practice, we did report concerns associated with the programs studied.

More specifically, data collection was organized around the following objectives:

1. to provide a clearer picture of the nature of teacher education curricula reported as distinctive or examples of good practice;
2. to provide a clearer picture of the instructional or pedagogical practices which are modeled for prospective teachers in their professsional preparation;
3. to provide a clearer picture of the scope, nature and quality of the opportunities which prospective teachers have for learning how to teach; and
4. to provide a clearer picture of the extent to which programs of teacher preparation exist.

These objectives evolved from our intent to examine theoretical and empirical, as well as the practical and evidential bases, which contribute to the design of elementary teacher education programs. Our hope has been to describe percisely the demands placed upon students in different curricular models. We also attempted to describe the assumptions which are held regarding the nature of teacher roles; competing views of the science and craft of teaching; the mission and function of schools as perceived by those in institutions which prepare teachers; and how consonant these perceptions were with the perceptions and reality of those who work in K-12 schools and cooperate with the teacher education institutions studied.

Finally, recent studies have pointed to the attributes of effective K-12 schools by identifying important variables at the all-school level which positively effect learning and instructional practice at the classroom level. Examples of these include: clarity in mission and shared goals, discernable articulation across courses in the curriculum, a sense of collegiality and community, identifiable instructional leadership, and norms stressing high standards and expectations. The question has not been seriously raised as to whether similar characteristics exist in the culture and context of teacher preparation programs and what effect such factors might have on the quality of teacher education programs--to the extent that they do exist. Attempting to identify such factors was a major concern of this study.

These objectives were further specified into a set of research questions specified with regard to the overall nature of the curriculum of preservice preparation, and the conception of teaching embedded in these curricula as follows:

Curriculum

1. What does the curriculum look like across different programs preparing elementary teachers?
2. To what extent does the curriculum reflect current research (where appropriate)?
3. To what extent does the curriculum represent rigor and intellectual challenge?
4. To what extent does the curriculm reflect the demands/expectations/needs of local classrooms?
5. What view of the nature of knowledge and schooling is communicated to students?
6. To what extent do opportunities to learn to teach exist within courses and how can these be described or characterized?

Program

1. What determines the scope and character, content of and experience within a program?
2. What contributes to or constrains against continuity/relatedness across courses/experiences in the program; what over-arching goals/themes/concepts can be identified?

3. What contributes to or constrains against faculty/student collegiality?

4. What contributes to or constrains against a planned developmental sequence in the program?

5. What type of planning/articulation exists between the arts and sciences and the professional program?

6. What type of planning/articulation exists between the major goals espoused for preservice students and the activities which occur in various field experience?

7. To what extent does a laboratory component exist in which simulated, micro-teaching and/or peer teaching opportunities are afforded?

8. What is (and what is viewed) as distinctive/innovative about the program?

9. What type/level of research and evaluation has been conducted into the program?

10. What has been the extent of change in the program over time? What served as the catalyst for this program?

11. What are the sources of the leadership for the development of this program?

Teaching

1. What are conceptions of effective teaching? What conceptions of the mission of schooling and the role and function of the teacher exist?

2. How important is teaching viewed?

3. What does teaching by faculty in colleges, schools and departments of education look like?

Design of the Study

The institutions which were selected for intensive study on-site represent three major types of institutions preparing teachers including: schools and colleges in universities with a major knowledge production mission, large comprehensive colleges (which prepare the great majority of teachers) and are typically funded at the state level, and smaller institutions with a liberal arts orientation. As a result of this three-tiered selection procedure, the regional sites selected for study included two "Big Ten" institutions (Indiana University and Michigan State University); three large comprehensive state-supported colleges (Ball State University, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Toledo); and a liberal arts institution in Iowa (Luther College).

A multi-dimensional selection procedure was developed to identify the above programs. Accordingly a review of teacher education programs that have received awards for exemplary practice, or appeared in the literature of professional practice, and/or were identified by respected educators in the region facilitated selection of the case study sites identified above.

The rationale for this project and the objectives which have defined the dimensions of this study were based on the premise that better understanding

about teacher education requires (qualitative as well as quantitative) methods of inquiry. The intention of the case studies reported here has been to probe distinguishing features of teacher education through a process of qualitative inquiry best known as the observational case study. As such our attempt has been to generate rich descriptions of the "lived experience of teacher education" through intensive site visitations. Such portrayals required inquiry into not only the faculty and students, but also teachers and other school personnel who support these preservice programs by providing a context for field experiences.

These case studies were guided by a set of principles typically employed in qualitative study. As case study researchers, we entered into the natural setting of teacher education using as tools for inquiry our own insights at each institution. We studied the history of the selected institutions and also the human behaviors which influence and are influenced by the context of these settings. In order to discover where, how and in what circumstances the work of teacher education occured in these institutions, data collection procedures depended largely on interviews, observations, document review and anecdotal records. As accounts or events were collected and abstractions were translated into words and actions, interpretations were made that enabled the researchers to define or explain the events observed.

A standard approach to these case studies was to make preliminary contact with site personnel to request needed background materials and coordinate eventual observations and interviews; an initial site visit; a

second site visit where we attempted to make extensions of data collection and verify with participants previously collected data and observations; and finally a series of follow-up contacts to confirm and extend initial institutional portraits. The results of these site visitations have been compiled in individual case study descriptions, which we refer to as "scenarios." While these are a major product of our study they will not be shared here. Rather, as one summary of these scenarios, we have undertaken here a cross-institutional analysis of our observations from these case studies, and especially examined implications for programs of teacher preparation.

Perspective for Cross Institutional Analysis

As was stated earlier our selection of institutions nominated as good or distinctive or both set an obvious parameter for these case studies. So does the fact that they were all programs preparing elementary teachers. Also, while we were looking for manifestations of "best practice". Our expectation was that best practice would exist differentially and through cross-institutional analysis, we have been able to evolve a set of positive and negative aspects of preservice teacher education in the six institutions studied.

Obviously given the selective nature of our study and the limited number of cases involved in our analysis we cannot make generalizations with regard to the general nature and quality of preservice education. This comparative analysis has however led us to sharpen research questions which could lead to hypothesis-testing across institutions more broadly.

We have categorized our observations as follows:

1. positive attributes common to all institutions studied;
2. areas of concern common to all institutions studied;
3. distinctive features of institutions studied; and
4. attributes of programs.

Positive Attributes Common to All Institutions Studied

Across the institutions studied we were able to derive a set of common conditions, policies and characteristics as follows:

* These programs are characterized by visible curriculum articulation, including linkages with the arts and sciences or general studies program; integration of the program with the field and articulation across the professional education courses.

* Elementary programs are characterized by an integrated structure wherein concepts are dealt with across disciplines, sometimes in interdisciplinary courses or modules but always with a reference to the necessity of the elementary teacher being a generalist who draws from multiple subject areas.

* Faculty instruction reflects knowledge drawn from an empirical as well as an experiential base.

* Curricula are characterized by a developmental sequence across a number of dimensions, including early and continuous field experience that culminates in more prolonged and sophisticated practicum experience and skill orientations that move students from planning single lessons to ultimately planning a major instructional unit.

* These elementary programs are characterized by a sense of shared ordeal or rite of passage.

* There was considerable diversity of teaching style from lecture to discussion, to the use of simulations and other laboratory experiences, to the integration of field experiences with more didactic courses. In some instances institutions as well sustained a team teaching approach to the delivery of instruction.

* These programs are characterized by early and continuous field experiences. Field experiences are typically included as a part of a blocked course experience wherein the students spend a sizeable portion of several days a week in field settings.

* In all instances faculty in one way or another sustain some engagement with schools as supervisors, as researchers, or in inservice education.

* There is a considerable sense of pride from both the faculty and students' perspective and in many cases from the perspective of the cooperating teachers as well.

* These programs are typically characterized by high expectations of the faculty for students. Students frequently were characterized as possessing a midwestern ethic characterized by respect for the nature of hard work.

* Students frequently were characterized as possessing a midwest ethic and respect for the nature of hard work.

* Programs were labor-intensive and faculty devoted considerable time to students and a variety of other program-related tasks.

* Faculty and students alike could be characterized as possessing considerable altruism about their career decisions to be teachers.

* There existed in all institutions a sense of caring on the part of the faculty for students, manifested in social and interpersonal relationships, sponsored and impromptu events which recognize and attend to the personal needs of students, and in the general availability and knowledge of the faculty to the students.

* Programs were characterized by both faculty and students as presenting a challenge. Although rigor in teacher education

programs may be characterized somewhat differently from traditional academic expectations, respect for the curriculum was nonetheless apparent. Students worked hard on course projects and reported long hours of homework in contrast to their roommates' more academic homework.

* There was evident collegiality among faculty. There was affection within academic units on the campuses we visited for having worked shoulder-to-shoulder over time, as a group investment in innovative or experimental programs and for their commitment to sustaining these program innovations.

* Students typically moved through programs in cohort groups; that is, students were often clustered and moved more or less collectively through the professional education program. Where groups could not move sequentially intact through the whole program, cohort groups were formed by whole morning 'block' courses conducted for one or more semesters.

* There was acknowledged leadership on the part of the dean and/or chairperson of the educational unit and within the faculty. While leadership styles varied considerably; the six institutions we visited were characterized by a clear agenda espoused by the resident academic leader.

Areas of Concern Common to All Institutions

There were also areas of concern reflected in all of the institutions we visited, although these concerns were being countered in some institutions more aggressively than in others. We have clustered these concerns into the following four broad areas:

* Prospective elementary teachers can be characterized as typically white, middle-class, female. A great many of them appear to be parochial and conservative in outlook or persuasion, and essentially unexposed to culturally diverse experiences.

* The link between the process of becoming a teacher and the scholarly inquiry necessary to develop and sustain professional knowledge about teaching is only evolving on most of the campuses we visited.

* The ability to deliver well-articulated on campus laboratory and clinical components of the curriculum with necessary resources and facilities is noticeably lacking on most campuses.

* University commitment to professional teacher education is uneven across the institutions studied, making it difficult to sustain innovations in teacher education especially those that are very labor-intensive for the faculty who frequently provide service in these programs as well as a variety of other faculty responsibilities.

Distinctive Program Characteristics

In this section we outline characteristics which we found to be distinctive, if not unique in the six institutions we visited.

* Alternative programs. One institution of the six we visited is currently engaged in planned variation as an approach to teacher education--Michigan State University.

* Mirroring the schools in the teacher education program. We cite for particular uniqueness in this regard the University of Toledo's competency-based teacher education program, which by intention of its designers, focused on the notion of the multi-unit school as a concept around which it not only built its field experiences but also the basic dimensions of the on-campus program.

* R & D Linkage. Notable here is the research and development or inquiry focus of the Michigan State program and is explicated in multiple approaches to teacher education.

* Consortium. Indiana University with its coordinate campuses serves to link institutions together in an effort to improve professional development across a large state.

Attributes of Program

We conclude this paper with discussion of those conditions, characteristics, and practices across the six sites which appear to contribute in a cumulative and coherent programmatic sense to the education of beginning teachers. What is a "program" of teacher preparation? Certainly it can be conceived of as more than a series of courses and attendant field activities which a student must satisfactorily pass through in order to obtain certification. If one had asked 'what is an effective school?' a decade ago, we doubt very much that one would get the kind of response that most informed educators would provide today. Recent research suggests that there are a set of conditions and characteristics that differentiate schools along a number of desired goals including academic outcomes, school attendance and interpersonal attitudes. Our hypothesis going into the cases was that when we examined programs which had been identified as exemplary or at least distinctive in some way, we might well find characteristics and attributes parallel to those identified in the "school effectiveness" literature. Attempts to synthesize research studies of effective schools have identified the following organizational, structural, and climate variables as distinguishing more effective from less effective schools:

(1) instructional leadership

(2) curriculum articulation

(3) faculty collegiality

(4) clear goals

(5) high expectations

(6) maximized time for learning

(7) recognition of academic success

To some extent we were able to identify similar attributes. Understandably these were manifested to various degrees across the programs we observed. Also, when some sense of programatic coherence was achieved it called for leadership and this leadership was apparent in a variety of positions. We clearly observed the pervasive influence of deans in each of the institutions which we visited. Beyond this, in most instances leadership was exerted by a one or more individuals at the departmental level. Whether in a faculty or administrative role, they coordinated and sustained the efforts of faculty who organized themselves around some shared values about teaching or about how one learns how to teach. Perhaps this is most clearly illustrated at Michigan State, where program coordinators are formally identified for each of the alternative program strands.

Our purpose, in summary here is to describe characteristics which appear to contribute to coherent programs of teacher preparation drawing upon practices and policies endorsed by faculty and students across these institutions. Thus, we have identified below fourteen factors we suggest be considered in designing programs of teacher preparation and which should serve as foci for further research at the very least. This list of fourteen factors understandably demonstrates some overlap with the positive attributes found across all institutions and reported earlier.

1. Effective programs of teacher preparation are driven by a clear conception of schooling/teaching. This is perhaps best exemplified at Michigan State University; but conceptions of teaching, while more implicit, also were the driving force for coherent and interrelated curriculum in other programs we observed, as well. There are, understandably, multiple perspectives which come to bear here, including the more traditional behavioristic approach exemplified at Toledo, to the branch of cognitive development manifested in the Academic Learning program at Michigan State, to a major emphasis on the traditional academic disciplines as personified at Luther and, to some extent, Eau Claire. What appears important is that we have some planned program variation based on different conceptions, which are studied in terms of their multiple effects. It appears as well that the disposition for faculty to come together and work together in programatic efforts is to a large degree abetted by a shared value as evidenced in a particular conception of schooling and/or teaching.

2. There are high expectations for teacher education students. Similar to the literature on effective schooling, we invariably heard faculty, students, and supervising teachers who work with these students speak to their perception of considerable demands being placed upon these students. While often these expectations were articulated in terms of the amount of time it took to be adequately prepared to teach effectively, there were

also numerous instances, as well, to the intellectual challenge which students believed to be held out for them in their curriculum. It was not uncommon at each institution we visited for students to compare and contrast their studies in education with either their general studies, or with previous majors they had engaged in and testify that there was at least as much rigor in the professional education curriculum. Thus, the emphasis at present in many institutions to upgrade standards for admission should be accompanied as well by upgraded standards in curriculum and instruction which clearly communicate high quality. It appears that, at least in the select institutions which we visited that expectations for a considerable commitment of effort are in place if not always great intellectual challenge.

3. There are <u>themes</u> which run throughout the curriculum like threads in which key concepts are tied together throughout a variety of courses, practica and field experiences. These themes can take on the nature of a primary conception of teaching, as in the Academic Learning program at Michigan State, or they can be articulated more in terms of a basic respect for individual diversity or in the primacy of the pupil as a source of the curriculum as we saw exemplified in more than one program. Whatever their nature, these themes provide continuity not only across courses and related course experiences on and off campus but across months and even years

in a program for students. They also appear to reinforce faculty collegiality.

4. The major objectives of the program are clear to the students. At every institution, students were clearly able to articulate major goals of the program. Invariably, teachers in the schools indicated to us that students who came out to work with them knew what was expected of them, and on what basis they were going to be assessed. One former student at Ball State suggested that the major strength of that program was that from the beginning he clearly understood what it was that was expected from him and how he could achieve those understandings and skills, how this became clearer and clearer to him over time while he was in the program and how this has served him in good stead throughout his early years of teaching.

5. There is a respect for content as well as experience in learning how to teach. Again, this appeared to be expressed most explicitly at MSU when Henrietta Barnes talked about the students' high regard for a professional knowledge base. However, in each of the institutions, students spoke of their respect for the content of their courses as well as the experiences of their professors and those teachers with whom they worked in the schools. While there was considerable variation in the extent to which students could acknowledge the theoretical and empirical undergirdings of that content, there

did appear to be a healthy regard for the curriculum in the formal, written sense of that concept.

6. Invariably, in these programs, there were student cohort groups. Multiple benefits were attached to this concept. A collective sense of pride and public accountability was obvious. The pride of a group in their accomplishments over time appears to contribute to a higher level of expectation for one another generally. Certainly, the cohort group served in supportive functions not only in terms of academic success but in the more personal and psychological sense as well. Finally, faculty appear to have benefited, as well, from this concept of cohort groups. Several professors indicated that they were in some ways more accountable in terms of their teaching when they were dealing with a group that they knew relatively well and over a period of time. This was quite a different situation than meeting with a group of diverse students who only came together at a particular point in time in a program. Obviously, the transient nature of student populations at a number of institutions makes a cohort design problematic; but where it can be evolved, it would appear to have some advantages for faculty as well as students.

7. Faculty coalesce efforts around programs that have distinctive qualities. Faculty did not identify themselves as the elementary faculty but rather, for example, as the faculty for

the experimental elementary education program. Faculty committed to programs with distinctive qualities witnessed in the multiple strands at MSU appear to meet together more regularly on both a formal and informal basis than faculty attached to program certification areas as such. As in the school effectiveness literature, a sense of collegiality appears to develop over time and these clusters of faculty appear to achieve more of the psychic rewards which one gains in working with a class of students over a year's time or more as in the situation in K-12 schools.

8. There is invariably a point in time in the program in which the cohort, or cluster of students, encounters a particularly challenging element of the program, which sociologists have identified as "shared ordeal." In each of the programs for preparing elementary teachers the students were able to identify milestone or signal hurdles to which they attached particular significance in terms of 'making the grade.' Students prior to entering this series of courses or activities invariably expressed considerable apprehension. But upon their completion, there seemed to be an even greater sense of pride than they had earlier. And, as we have indicated, we were considerably impressed by the extent and degree of pride we saw manifested across students and faculty. The actual curricular and instructional activities and events which resulted in a 'shared ordeal' varied widely. Also it is clear that they were

not typically designed with that intent. Yet, there is little doubt that they served a major function in the socialization of these students in their programs of teacher preparation and in reinforcing their commitment to teaching as a career.

9. There are structural features of the programs which enable an interdisciplinary or integrative approach to curriculum as seen in the curriculum in many elementary schools. Curriculum organized this way was invariably referred to as a "block." The primary effect of these arrangements was to allow students of teaching to address core teaching skills and concepts across the different subject areas in a repeated fashion in order that they might eventually be more efficient as well as effective in their instruction with young children. Since the nature of the elementary school curriculum is multi-dimensional in nature, the premise appears to be that an elementary teacher must often integrate concepts across subject matter in order to accomodate this broad curriculum and still attend to the personal and emotional needs of elementary-aged youngsters.

10. There is adequate life space within the curriculum. Certainly, one of the primary issues that will be debated in the Holmes Consortium is the notion of life space at the post-baccalaureate level. We found repeated instances of both faculty and students acknowledging not only the need for time to engage in what were perceived as significant learnings, but

a need to be reflective in a developmental way over time; for example to acquire increasing sophistication over time with certain teaching technologies. We heard repeated references to a spiral curriculum and in the best of these designs it appears that key content is revisited again and again. Certain programs appeared to have an explicit design in terms of course sequence and desired student development. These dimensions of development are several. One is the obvious move from more simple to complex aspects of teaching. A corollary is assuming increasing responsibility for teaching over time. There were numerous examples provided for us where students began with observation and demonstration, then eventually moved to individual or small-group tutoring before they engaged in a similar activity for an entire group of pupils. At time, such development was expressed for us in rather eloquent terms. At Toledo, one of the professors talked about moving in the teaching role from technician to specialist to artist. While the notion of a well-conceived laboratory and clinical component preceding 'student teaching' has not yet been achieved, there is logical sense of development over time in these programs.

11. There were adequate material and physical resources, if not a robust laboratory component, in these programs. As indicated earlier, one of our primary concerns is the lack of what other professions hold forth as laboratory training. There were

repeated references by student and faculty to the availability of curricular materials and instructional aids of a variety of types and we observed this as well. This appears related to the hands-on, practical nature of teaching elementary-aged children.

12. In these programs, we found multiple evidences of curriculum articulation between the activities which the prospective teachers engaged in on campus and those which occurred in schools. Frequently, those supervising teachers whom we interviewed had an understanding of what student teachers who were placed with them were expected to do.

Also, there were multiple examples of faculty themselves providing some continuity and articulation in the curriculum not only through supervising students which they had in class themselves but also through teaching on occasions in the schools. Two examples here are particularly noteworthy. In the innovative mentoring program at Michigan State planned by Perry Lanier, learning how to teach is viewed as a time for being more reflective about student thinking and especially student thinking in terms of how basic concepts and subject matter are acquired. Thus, major conceptual shifts are needed in how cooperating teachers view teaching as well. Faculty work first hand with these teachers. In visiting with experienced teachers in that mentor program we found evidence

that an altered orientation to teaching was indeed occurring. We also recall the eloquent testimony of experienced faculty members at Toledo in terms of all they have learned from spending time in schools over the years. In the final analysis, there can only be so much time that faculty in higher education can spend in K-12 schools; yet on the other hand, there can be no denying that it makes little sense for people who see themselves as expert in teaching not to be intimately involved from time to time in the "real world" of schools.

13. Those faculty, if not those programs, which were perceived as most effective in our case studies had to some extent a direct linkage with research and development. Again, this is most obvious in the research-oriented university context at Michigan State. However, we found instances of such linkage at both the program and individual level in each of the cases. For example, Luther is planning a major initiative with sister institutions and the University of Iowa. At Eau Claire, individual faculty talked at length about how they regularly met with colleagues in the same discipline from research institutions to ensure that they were knowledgeable about recent research and development.

14. There is a plan for systematic program evaluation. Generally, we found little evidence that systematic program evaluation occurred. However, in each of these programs, with their

highly personal nature, feedback of various types was provided to faculty on a continuing basis both in terms of the effects of the program as a whole and of individual professors. We will not easily forget the large number of students, for example, who said office hours weren't necessary; if they had a problem they could always locate faculty to share their concerns with. We were impressed, even at an institution the size of Michigan State, in terms of the personal regard for students and the multiple opportunities for formative feedback regarding the nature of the teacher preparation effort. Notwithstanding, there remains a major need, just as there is for designs for research and development, to institute much more comprehensive and formalized schemes of evaluation in programs of teacher preparation generally.

In summary, surely just as there is no simple recipe for designing schools which are more effective than others, there is no simple recipe for designing programs of teacher preparation which would differentiate themselves as more effective than others. However, we have identified conditions and characteristics which have been enunciated by faculty and students as contributing in powerful ways to the education of teachers at these six sites. We have attempted to describe some of these. We realize much work remains to be done to validate their efficacy both individually and collectively. Certainly more studies, such as the

modest one which we pursued, are needed. Hopefully, however, this paper can serve as a starting point in helping us to think more fully about what contributes to effective programs of teacher preparation.