A Look at Course Level Achievement as a Result of Collaborative Experiences

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Background

Course Level Objectives

- Within the BSE Elementary Education K-6 program, individual course level objectives derive from program level objectives which are aligned with the Arkansas Teaching Standards as well as the Competencies for Elementary Teachers Grades K-6.
- *Program level objectives* are assessed via Praxis content area assessments and the Educative Teacher Preparation Assessment (edTPA). These assessment are summative and provide an evaluation of mastery at the completion stage of the elementary education program.
- *Course level objectives* are assessed via instructor created assessments. These assessments are formative and provide evaluation of mastery throughout Junior and Senior level courses within the elementary education program.

DESE Mandate for EPPs

- The idea of developing professional learning communities (PLCs) within programs that prepare teacher candidates is now a requirement by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- All Education Preparation Providers (EPPs) in the state of Arkansas must produce a plan for implementation into the teacher education curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

Course level objectives that require teacher candidates to demonstrate understanding of how to examine student work generated from common formative assessment, apply instructional strategies, and monitor student learning are present. However, there is confusion about the definition of PLC and how it fits into the organizational structure within higher education. The assumption is that a school becomes a PLC by simply enrolling in a program or renaming existing practices (DuFour, 2007). DuFour (2004) contends that the creation of a true professional learning community (PLC) requires the application of the core principles of the PLC model. This means an actual shift in the organizational structure, expectations for members, as well as the environment must be present (DuFour, 2007).

Research Support for the Problem

Professional Learning Community

- To create a professional learning community, focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results. (DuFour, 2004).
- "Big Ideas" that support the Core Principles of PLCs (DuFour, 2004)
  - Ensuring that students learn
  - A culture of collaboration
  - A focus on results
- A school becomes a professional learning community only when the educators within it align their practices with PLC concepts (DuFour, 2007).
- Any valid assessment of the impact of PLC concepts or the compatibility of those concepts would first need to determine if those concepts were actually in place(DuFour, 2007).

Purpose Statement

- The purpose of this study is to examine student mastery of course level learning objectives before and after collaborative experiences with in-service teachers participating in a professional learning communities (PLCs).

Participants

For the purpose of this study, participants will include K-6 Elementary Education teacher candidates who have been accepted to the Teacher Education program at Arkansas State University and are currently enrolled in junior level courses. Teacher candidates enrolled in the following courses will participate: RDNG 3223 and ELED 3143.

Data Collection

- A pre- and post-assessment design will be used to collect data. During data collection, participants will be given the exact same assessment measure both before and after exposure to modules within junior and senior level courses that will include professional collaboration with in-service teachers. To test the research hypothesis, a paired-sample *t* test will be used to evaluate the difference in the mean scores for each participant on the pretest and posttest. The results of this analysis will determine if a significant difference exists as a result of exposure to professional collaboration.
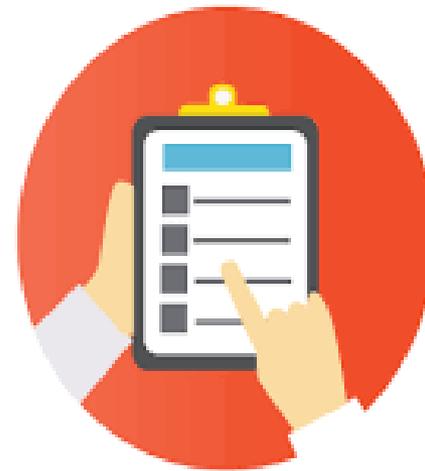
Pretest

Instrument

Researchers will develop a rubric (common formative assessment) that measures student mastery of course level objectives using a 4-point scale.

- 4-Highly effective
- 3-Effective
- 2-Progressing
- 1-Ineffective

References

DuFour, R. (2007). Professional learning communities: A bandwagon, an idea worth considering, or our best hope for high levels of learning?. *Middle school journal*, *39*(1), 4-8.

DuFour, R. (2004). What is a" professional learning community"?. *Educational leadership*, *61*(8), 6-11.