


**PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION FOR STUDENT TEACHING
AT AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY**

STEPHEN B. BAIRD

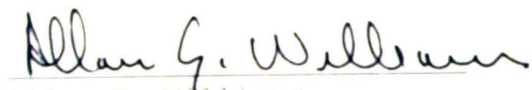
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I am submitting herewith a field study written by Stephen B. Baird entitled "Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching at Austin Peay State University." I have examined the final copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Education.

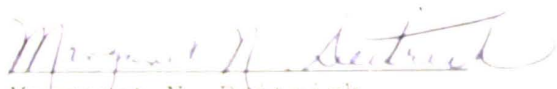


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July 12, 2004

PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION FOR STUDENT TEACHING
AT AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

A Field Study
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Education Specialist

Stephen B. Baird
Summer 2001

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ABSTRACT

Student teaching is the traditional culmination of a university's preservice teacher preparation program. Although a university supervisor evaluates student teachers, the perceptions of the cooperating classroom teacher and the student teacher are important. The Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching at Austin Peay State University is a locally produced survey. This survey solicited demographic information and utilized 22 items using a Lickert scale for response and four open response questions. The instrument allowed the student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers to share their perceptions of the student teaching program during the period studied. Analysis reveals a positive correlation in nearly all responses. Adaptability, enthusiasm, and overall success ranked highest; while classroom management issues, support for the cooperating teacher and preparation for parent-teacher conferences were perceived as negatives.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As our republic enters the third millennium, the United States continues to grow and change, as those seeking the "American Dream" expect an educational system which will meet their needs. Statistical analysis conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and published in the *Projections of Education Statistics to 2010* (U.S. DoE, August, 2000), points to a continued need for teachers in all schools, public and private, grades kindergarten through twelfth. By the year 2010, the total public and private school enrollment is projected to increase one percent, while the number of new classroom teachers is projected to increase by four percent. Probable demographic shifts will result in decreases in enrollment in the Northeast and Midwest, with increases in the South and West. In 2010, Tennessee is projected to have a student enrollment in elementary school one percent higher than in 1998, while public high school enrollment is expected to increase by ten percent, for a net increase of seven percent in elementary and high school. This does not take into account initiatives to reduce student teacher ratios.

These additional teachers will come from many sources and with various experience levels. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2000) entitled *Teacher Supply in the United States: Sources of Newly Hired Teachers in Public and Private Schools, 1987-88 to 1993-94*, describes four groups entering the teaching profession: (a) newly prepared teachers, (b) delayed entrants, (c) transfers, or (d) reentrants. In school year 1993-94, 202,679 teachers were hired. Almost half, 45.8% were first time teachers. The percentage of newly prepared teachers was 29.2% while 16.6% were delayed entrants (U.S. DoE, Sep. 2000). Given that nearly half of those entering classrooms in 1993 were "new teachers," the projected need for additional teachers has not diminished and requires comprehensive preparation programs which produce effective teachers. In addition, the population entering teacher preparation programs from other careers places demands on institutions which necessitate diverse and inclusive programs. One such program is The Troops to Teachers Program, which provides benefits to personnel leaving the armed forces and the school systems which hire them. Such highly trained and dedicated personnel are naturals for the classroom (Taylor, 1994), while skilled professionals are "leaving civilian careers and professions for the

fulfillment which teaching brings" (Lord, 2000).

Compensation is a variable in that nationally, current school expenditures are projected to increase 38% in constant dollars between school years 1997-98 and 2009-10, while annual teacher salaries show an increase of approximately eight percent. (U.S. DoE, August, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

The perceptions of the training which student teachers receive are critical to the success of any university's teacher preparation program. The opinions of student teachers and the cooperating classroom teachers are important and should have a direct influence on the program; therefore a need existed to gather and analyze data concerning the perception of preparation for student teaching.

In 1995, the Director of Student Teaching at Austin Peay State University administered two sets of questionnaires completed by student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers. They were not formally reviewed or analyzed. cursory review of the markings and the written responses presented a positive perception of preservice preparation in most areas. Other aspects, specifically the time student teachers spent in the

classroom, appropriate responses to children's behavior, and interaction with parents, were less positive.

Importance of the Study

The Tennessee State Legislature, through the State Department of Education, requires all prospective teachers to develop teaching competencies through professional education. "Professional education is a lifelong undertaking that is initiated in college course work, refined in the field experiences, and enhanced during professional practice." (Tennessee Licensure Standards and Guidelines, Sec. 3., p. 1.). The successful teacher must achieve knowledge and skills in the following areas -- Communication; Instruction; Professional; Computers and Technology; and Application of Subject Area Knowledge. Austin Peay State University endeavors to carry out that mandate through resident courses, field experiences, and the student teaching program. Founded in 1927 as a normal school in Clarksville, Tennessee, Austin Peay State University provides a comprehensive teacher education program at the graduate and undergraduate levels. The program, characterized by a strong liberal arts experience, emphasizes orderly, sequential development through coursework and complementing field experiences. The standards and requirements for preservice teachers have

been continuously updated and modified. The most current requirements are listed in the Undergraduate Bulletin (APSU, 2000-2001), and the Student Teaching Handbook (APSU, 1999). Each provides clear directions and serves to guide those interested in becoming teachers. This study attempted to validate the perceptions of the program. It was designed to analyze questionnaire data and isolate specific perceptions using the Lickert Scale. Responses to the items on each questionnaire were scored and ranked. Rankings from the student teachers' questionnaires were then compared to the corresponding item on the cooperating classroom teacher questionnaires to identify "positive" and "negative" perceptions of the preparation of student teachers. Recommendations were derived from the perceived needs and are based on current research in preservice teacher education programs.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers, through responses to the questionnaire "Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching" will identify the strengths, and areas to strengthen of the student teacher preparation program at Austin Peay State University.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are noted for this study.

1. The study was conducted using a locally designed instrument.
2. The only data available were collected from participants in the spring semester of 1995.
3. Student teachers majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies had two separate student teaching experiences, neither of which was specifically identified on the instrument.
4. No comparison could be made between student teacher responses and those of his/her cooperating classroom teacher.
5. There was no control over the participation of the cooperating classroom teachers.
6. There was no way to determine the percentage of cooperating classroom teachers who responded as there was no record of the number mailed.
7. The questionnaires were not dated.
8. The Felix G. Woodward Library at Austin Peay State University was the only research facility used for this study. The Internet served to complement the information found in the library.

CHAPTER 2

Review Of Literature

Better teacher preparation results in higher kindergarten-twelfth grade student achievement.

"Quantitative analyses indicate that measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status" (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The most consistent highly significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics in each year tested is the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state, those with full certification and a major in the subject matter they teach. The strongest, consistently negative predictors of student achievement, significant in almost all cases, are the proportions of new teachers who are uncertified and the proportions of teachers who hold less than a minor in the subject they teach (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Teacher Training

Teachers hold a special place in our society. No other professional is called upon to respond to such a variety of personal needs. Therefore, "teaching, unlike

most other professions, has varied perceptions and assumptions regarding its purpose and nature" (Goodlad, 1998).

No single instructional strategy has been found to be unvaryingly successful; instead, teachers who are able to use a broad repertoire of approaches skillfully (e.g., direct and indirect instruction, experience-based and skill-based approaches, lecture, and small group work) are typically most successful. The use of different strategies occurs in the context of "active teaching" that is purposeful and diagnostic rather than random or laissez-faire and that responds to students' needs as well as curriculum goals (Good, 1983 in Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Those who wish to become the best teachers possible should choose a college which does the best job of preparing teachers. The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) website recommends prospective teachers find an institution which meets the following standards:

"Strong offerings in subject areas, pedagogy, and field experience. . . Linkage between the school of education and the liberal arts departments. . . Learning to work with culturally diverse students and their parents. . . Strong collaborative relationships between the university and area schools. . .like those

found in professional development schools. Exploring new models for teaching, as in site-based school management or comprehensive services with other professionals. . . It is useful to find out what kind of field experiences are offered and if there is a mentorship or cooperating teacher program." (ERIC, 2000)

In a 1992 work on restructuring teacher preparation, Darling-Hammond states:

". . . that the initial induction period, in which teachers learn to translate knowledge into practice, provides an important kind of learning that cannot take place solely in the school of education. So we need to learn how to restructure teacher education to explicitly address the problem of translating knowledge into skill." (p 21)

Teacher education programs produce effective practitioners by creating an environment which enhances the translation of knowledge into a set of skills. These effective practitioners possess or demonstrate "student-centeredness, enthusiasm for teaching, ethicalness, classroom and behavior management, teaching methodology, and knowledge of subject" (Witcher & Onwuegbuzie, 1999). This summary of characteristics reflected the perceptions

of 219 preservice teachers who responded to questions describing "excellent teachers."

In a 1996 study by Hale, 79 junior and senior elementary education majors at a southern university, viewed the movie "Mr. Holland's Opus" and wrote a reflective paper on their perceptions as they pertained to their chosen career as teachers. The study concluded that the perceptions of the teaching profession fell into five main categories: "(1) the influence of teachers; (2) the importance of professional and personal time management; (3) the dispelling of erroneous myths about why individuals enter the teaching field; (4) the affirmation of teaching as a career; and (5) aspirations for the future. This study found that these students had positive perceptions of teaching (and) a strong desire to make an impact on children" (Hale, 1996).

Irvin wrote in 1990 that "We need to see it (teacher training) as one continuous process and to identify individuals responsible for that process who are simultaneously associated with the schools and the universities." To elaborate, Smylie & Conyers (1991) stated that "rather than seeing each stage of a teacher's professional life as distinct and separate, a more holistic view of the development of a teacher from novice to

advanced practitioner is needed." Teacher training programs must move from "deficit-based to competency-based approaches" (1991 in ERIC Digest, 1995). They continue with a formula for improved teacher development, from replication to reflection, from learning separately to learning together, and from centralization to decentralization.

Portfolios and Case Studies

Some institutions use a personal portfolio as a requirement for certification. As student teaching has been the traditional culmination of teacher education training programs, portfolios have been a logical addition to student teaching requirements. Portfolios should complement the work of preservice teachers, not be an additional requirement. "Preservice teacher education programs. . . use portfolios to increase reflection and provide an ongoing record of a teacher's growth" (Doolittle, 1994). He continues, "The portfolio provides a vehicle for assessing the relationship between teacher choices or actions and their outcomes." In addition, teachers are encouraged to share their portfolios, during construction, with both beginning and experienced teachers which develops a continuous dialogue, "designed to provide

a rich context in which to experience the multifaceted nature of teaching" (Doolittle, 1994).

Doolittle adds that a portfolio should contain carefully selected items that reflect and substantiate a teacher's expertise and achievements. Ideally, a teacher portfolio would be a document created by the teacher that reveals, relates and describes the teacher's duties, expertise and growth in teaching, not everything they have done. Each assertion in the portfolio would then be documented in an appendix or a reference to outside material, such as videotapes or lengthy interviews. A portfolio also provides a means for reflection; it offers the opportunity for critiquing one's work and evaluating the effectiveness of lessons or interpersonal interactions with students or peers. The size of a portfolio may vary, but it should typically be two to ten pages, plus appendixes (Doolittle, 1994).

Teacher education programs are enhanced by the study of reality-based cases and case methods. They "enable students of teaching to explore, analyze, and examine representations of actual classrooms" (Merseth, 1994).

Professional Development Schools and Mentoring

Teacher training institutions reach beyond the walls to develop partnerships between universities and the

schools to whom student teachers are assigned (Groseclose, 1981). These partnerships tend to be most successful in professional development schools. The Holmes Group called "for teacher candidates to work closely with experienced teachers in internship sites and restructured school settings" (Holmes Group, 1990 in Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Mentoring has also proven to assist beginning teachers if it is "linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning, and supported by a professional culture that favors collaboration and inquiry. By promoting observation and conversation about teaching, mentoring can help teachers develop tools for continuous improvement" (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Professional Organizations

In an effort for teacher training institutions to produce effective certified teachers who meet the expectations described above, national, state, business, and educational practitioners have chartered several organizations and professional consortia. Various programs and initiatives have been implemented between and among institutions, private business, local schools, and government to determine what is needed to "fix" schools in America.

The Report on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, (1996) was direct and specific when explaining what must be done to "fix" teaching and learning in America. It itemized specific recommendations, organized around five broad areas: (a) establish high standards for both students and teachers; (b) reinvent teacher preparation and professional development; (c) revamp recruitment of qualified teachers; (d) encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skill; and (e) create schools that are organized for student and teacher success (NCTAF, 1996).

State Initiatives

Many states have taken steps to improve teaching and the preparation of teachers. In 1994 and 1996, two states which require the most stringent teacher certification requirements, Minnesota and Wisconsin, had student achievement scores in reading and mathematics among the top six in the nation (Darling-Hammond, 2000). A recent survey of Kentucky teachers found that more than 80% of beginning teachers who graduated from Kentucky colleges of education felt well-prepared for virtually all aspects of their jobs (Kentucky Institute for Educational Research, 1997 in Darling-Hammond, 1999).

North Carolina's 1997 Educational Excellence Act created a professional standards board for teaching and required that all colleges of education to create professional development school partnerships to provide the sites for year-long student teaching. The Educational Excellence Act also funded a more intensive beginning teacher mentoring program, further upgraded licensing standards, created pay incentives for teachers who pursue master's degrees and National Board certification, and authorized funds to raise teacher salaries to the national average (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Tennessee offers extended contracts for career ladder teachers in specific after-school and summer work programs. Florida has begun performance-based teacher evaluation, and Ohio is beginning an alternative certification proposal requiring all teachers to pass the same content-based test. Arizona is developing strategies to encourage the best teachers to stay in the classroom, not just by longevity pay (Ranbom, S. & Garcia, J., 2000).

States which show teacher and student improvement, have the following conditions in common: (a) concern for certification and licensing standards; (b) a desire to improve the learning of its students; (c) establishment of professional development partnerships between universities

and local schools; (d) assignment of teachers based on their certification; and (e) modeling programs on national standards and successful organization (Ranbom, S. & Garcia, J., 2000).

College and University Initiatives

Teacher preparation programs at several colleges and universities have programs that model the recommendations cited. Admission to the most prestigious teacher education programs is very selective. Peabody College of Vanderbilt University has two screenings, one for admission to the Undergraduate Teacher Education Program, and another for admission to student teaching (Vanderbilt University, 2000, p. 550).

Michigan State University requires a passing score on the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification Basic Skills as a requirement for admission to the teacher training program, plus field experiences totaling at least 42 hours. Students in the program are responsible for scheduling and completing observations, field experiences, and internships. The university also offers an Internship Year Studies Program for those with certification that desire to earn a master's degree during their fifth year. There are two points in each teacher education program when undergraduates must complete application for screenings by

departmental faculty. The successful candidate must demonstrate dependability, professional and ethical behavior, attitude and interpersonal skills, academic competence (must be approved by each department), teaching competence (as evidenced by successful completion of practica requirements) (Michigan State University, 2000, p. 528).

Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, requires a considerable amount of time in the classroom, working with children. This includes a senior seminar and student teaching for one semester and field-based student teaching five mornings a week for one semester. Participants have a weekly seminar and may take two other courses concurrently. The Master of Arts program described in their catalog is flexible with an emphasis on time in the classroom. A Master of Arts preservice program for applicants with little or no teaching experience or preparation who are seeking certification at the elementary level, grades kindergarten through sixth. Extensions for early childhood and middle school levels are available. The program includes a professional student teaching sequence from September through May. Students may complete the program on a full-time or part-time basis; students have the option to complete an accelerated program (an

academic year plus preceding and following summer sessions) or to extend their program over two to five years (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1999). For permanent New York certification, one must complete a masters with two years experience on a provisional certificate; however, student teachers are allowed to take other courses while student teaching, and those working in child care facilities are allowed to intern in the department of education (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1999 p. 55-56).

The Teaching Early Adolescents in Middle Schools (TEAMS) approach collaborative program involved middle level practitioners, teacher educators at the Ohio State University, and preservice teachers. Preservice teachers form four-person cohorts as the basis of the "TEAM." Members observe each other and engage in group process and small group reflection discussions. By using and valuing feedback in the larger "TEAM," which includes practitioners and teacher educators, the preservice teachers learn the importance of mentoring and collegiality. An Early Adolescent Block Program at St. Cloud State University requires students to spend four days a week in schools, followed with the fifth day on campus for a seminar. North Carolina State University, Raleigh, teaching in the middle

years focuses on values, encourages critical thinking, personal involvement, and dialogue (Harnett, 1991).

The University of Akron evaluated the impact of a Professional Development School on internship and student teaching. The study compared student teachers traditionally prepared with those who experienced the professional development school. Fifteen preservice teachers were assigned for two full days a week for 16 weeks to two different professional development schools during the semester before student teaching, working with two different teachers who would become their cooperating classroom teacher. In addition, they took four classes, Professional Issues in Education, Integrated Curriculum, Field Experience, and Technology in the classroom. The program sought to provide a context wherein students of teaching could reflect upon and make sense of their site-based experiences. Through reflection and discussion participants identified several challenges they had not anticipated. These included time management; additional responsibilities; classroom control; and dealing with parents. This study helped preservice teachers to focus as reflective practitioners, "who were clearly aware of the links between theory and practice" (Zeichner, 1980 in Newman et al, 1998). Through extensive field experiences,

mentoring, reflection, and analyzing journal entries they were "more efficacious and had developed a level of comfort that allowed them to focus on concerns beyond their own personal survival" (Newman et al, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

To determine the effectiveness of the training which student teachers received at Austin Peay State University, a questionnaire of the "Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching" was developed by the Director of Student Teaching and administered to all students upon their completion of the student teaching program. (Appendix A). A questionnaire with the same title, was provided to cooperating classroom teachers for each student teacher they had supervised. (Appendix B). The data collected were analyzed to form the basis for the descriptive research format of this study.

Student teachers were given the instrument at the last session of the Seminar on Teaching and told to complete the questionnaire in order to receive final credit for student teaching. Student teachers completed only one questionnaire, even though they may have had experiences in two school settings, elementary and middle; or middle and high school. Cooperating classroom teachers received the instrument in the mail with their honoraria and were asked to complete and return it by mail.

Respondents were instructed not to include their names. There was no coding of the questionnaires,

therefore no correlation was made between a particular student teacher and his/her cooperating classroom teacher. There was no evidence of disclosure statements being provided the participants concerning the use of these completed questionnaires. (APSU Policies and Procedures Manual, 1986).

Student teachers in the spring semester of 1995 formed the student teacher sub-group, while cooperating classroom teachers from the same period formed the other sub-group. Student teachers were required to complete the questionnaire during a seminar, therefore control over the student teachers was greater than control of the cooperating classroom teachers. The questionnaires were not separated by semester.

Participants

Seventy-seven student teachers from the spring semester 1995 were included in the survey. Fifty-four had a majority of their experience in the College of Education, while 23 entered the student teaching program from various colleges or departments. Student teachers were enrolled at Austin Peay State University in Student Teaching, a twelve semester-hour course at the 4000 level. Those with an Interdisciplinary Studies Major were required to student teach in two different schools; one middle school, and

either an elementary or secondary school. In addition, student teachers were concurrently enrolled in Education 4910, Seminar on Teaching (APSU Undergraduate Bulletin, 1995-97).

Eighty-nine cooperating classroom teachers responded. The number of questionnaires mailed was unavailable. They represented several schools and districts in the geographic region. School systems included Clarksville-Montgomery County, Houston, Stewart, and Dickson Counties in Tennessee; Ft. Campbell Schools, Christian, Todd, and Logan Counties in Kentucky. Cooperating teachers were experienced classroom teachers who had completed a required course at Austin Peay State University on Supervising Student Teachers. The Director of Student Teaching made student teacher assignments to schools based on requests by the student teacher and the availability of cooperating classroom teachers as determined by building principals and school district coordinators.

Design of the Study

This descriptive research study was designed as an analysis of questionnaire responses to determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the teacher preparation program at Austin Peay State University. A comparison of the 2000-2001 Undergraduate Bulletin with the

1995-1997 edition identified modifications to the teacher preparation program which have occurred since the questionnaire was administered. A review of preservice education programs at institutions which are considered most successful formed the basis for recommendations. Included are statistics on general demographic information and specific responses to Lickert Scale items. Open-ended responses were not analyzed. A correlation between the responses provided by student teachers and their cooperating classroom teachers was not possible because of the instrument design.

Microsoft Excel was used to analyze and prepare this field study. *Excel* spreadsheets were used to record and tabulate data.

The questionnaires were labeled to correspond with column letters on an *Excel* spreadsheet. Each demographic response was given a letter or number designation; 1, 2, or 3 for each of the age groups; M or F for gender; S for single, M for married; and a numeric value of 1 to 8 for the primary areas of specialization. The Lickert responses were recorded and scored from 5 to 1, "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The "Undecided" response was scored as a 3 with no special consideration. Blank or no responses were entered as zero. The number of participants

(n) was determined; the total "score" for each of the Lickert scale items (sum); arithmetic mean (M); and standard deviation (SD). The mean was used to rank the results of the questionnaires from highest (Strongly Agree) to lowest (Strongly Disagree).

Instrument

The basis for this study is a one sheet, two-sided questionnaire administered to student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers. (Appendixes A and B). The instrument had three sections: (a) demographic information; (b) twenty-two items with Lickert Scale responses; and (c) open-end response questions.

The instrument was designed by the Director of Student Teaching and administered at the completion of the 1995 spring semester. The questionnaire is relevant for this study as the administration of the instrument was consistent for each of the sub-groups of respondents.

Responses were made on the form and no additional sheets were attached. Orange paper was used for the student teacher questionnaire while yellow paper was used for the cooperating classroom teacher questionnaires. The instrument was blind. No correlation was possible between individual student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers.

Part I. Demographics

The demographic section provided three age group categories (under 23; 23-30; or 30 and older); two marital statuses (single or married); and seven "Primary Area of Specialization" choices (Interdisciplinary Studies K-4, K-8; Health/Physical Education; Secondary Education; Special Education; Music Education; or Art Education). The information gathered is reflected in Table 1, with no attempt made to correlate demographics with other variables.

Part II. Lickert Attitude Scale

Twenty-two items on each questionnaire were positive statements with a Lickert Attitude Scale response. The respondents were asked to, "circle the appropriate letter(s) to indicate how you feel" about the statement: SA-strongly agree; A-agree; U- undecided; D-disagree; SD-strongly disagree.

Part III. Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended responses allowed the respondents to detail the traits, skills, and the expected amount of mentoring needed by the student teacher in the first year of teaching. The questionnaire for cooperating classroom teachers also asked for recommended changes to the student teaching program. These responses were recorded and could

be considered for further review. No attempt was made to analyze these responses.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Data

This chapter presents the data as tables, interprets the data using mean and standard deviation, and discusses the ranking which show the results of each analysis. The data reflect the responses provided on the questionnaire "Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching." The demographic information on questionnaires completed by student teachers (n=77) is presented in Table 1. Analysis of the responses submitted by student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers is provided in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. They are ranked from the highest to lowest mean (\bar{X}). The mean provides the statistical significance used to rank responses within each sub-group and correlate responses between each group. These totals were used to determine the items which would support the hypothesis.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Student Teachers (N = 77)

Characteristic	<u>N</u>	%
Age at time of survey (years)		
Under 23	22	29

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Characteristic	N	%
Age at time of survey (years)		
23 - 30	29	38
30 or older	26	34
Sex		
Male	13	17
Female	64	83
Marital Status		
Single	28	36
Married	49	64
Primary Area of Specialization		
Inter. Studies K-4	3	4
Inter. Studies K-8	51	66
Health/Physical Ed.	2	3
Secondary Education	13	17
Special Education	7	9
Music Education	1	1
Art Education	0	0
All coursework taken at Austin Peay State University		
Yes	46	60
No	31	40
Standing		
Graduate	42	55
Undergraduate	35	45

Interpretation

Several questionnaires had ambiguous responses--two choices circled; responses indicated for ten-week assignments and five-week assignments. Some items were selected with large, misshapen circles; written responses were scrawled; and several forms were marked with "strongly agree" or "agree" for all responses on the Lickert scale. Several of those with written comments were terse, or incomplete thoughts. Those respondents who appeared to take time in completing the questionnaire did so with neatness, thought, and concern.

Table 2

Student Teacher Responses Ranked by Mean with Standard Deviation

Questionnaire Items Summarized	M	SD
Enthusiastic about teaching	4.82	0.42
Established a good rapport with the students	4.71	0.75
Established rapport with the principal and faculty	4.57	0.65
Student teaching experience was a successful one	4.53	0.69
Teaching style was appropriate for classes taught	4.52	0.50
Able to meet the challenges of student teaching	4.49	0.59
Able to adapt to the school environment	4.44	0.80

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Questionnaire Items Summarized			M	SD
Developed well-thought-out lesson plans in a timely manner			4.32	0.69
Lessons were stimulating			4.25	0.61
Very knowledgeable about the subject(s) taught			4.23	0.80
Efficient organizer in the classroom			4.21	0.65
Able to accurately evaluate student progress			4.21	0.69
Previous field experiences were very positive			4.13	1.05
Teacher education courses prepared student teacher			4.06	0.78
College prepared me for student teaching			4.04	0.81
Able to adapt instruction to meet individual needs			3.96	0.78
Classroom management skills were strong			3.92	0.82
Cooperating teacher received support from the university			3.88	1.07
Confident in ability to discipline the students			3.86	0.88
Past field experiences prepared student teacher			3.83	1.17
Pre-student teaching field experience was valuable			3.81	1.24
Prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences			3.75	0.98

Note. $N = 77$.

Student Teacher Responses

Student teachers presented themselves as enthusiastic; able to establish a good rapport with the students, principal, and faculty; able to meet the challenges

presented; demonstrate an appropriate teaching style; and adaptable to the school environment. This is reflected by the summary of their responses ranked first through seventh.

Student teachers ranked themselves lowest in confidence in their ability to discipline the students; a negative value of past field experiences specifically the pre-student teaching course and the inability to conduct parent-teacher conferences. This is reflected in a summary of their responses ranked from nineteenth through twenty-second.

Table 3

Cooperating Classroom Teacher Responses Ranked by Mean with Standard Deviation

Questionnaire Items Summarized	M	SD
Able to adapt to the school environment	4.53	0.72
Established rapport with the principal and faculty	4.49	0.71
Established a good rapport with the students	4.47	0.77
Student teaching experience was a successful one	4.46	0.81
Enthusiastic about teaching	4.37	0.89
Able to meet the challenges of student teaching	4.30	0.87
Teaching style was appropriate for classes taught	4.27	0.79
Student teacher received support from the university	4.25	0.75

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Questionnaire Items Summarized	M	SD
Pre-student teaching field experience was positive	4.22	0.93
Professional education courses were valuable	4.19	0.60
Received adequate support from the university	4.18	0.88
Able to accurately evaluate student progress	4.17	0.82
Teacher education courses prepared student teacher	4.15	0.80
Very knowledgeable about the subject(s) taught	4.13	0.99
Lessons were stimulating	4.11	0.81
Developed well-thought-out lesson plans in a timely manner	4.09	1.12
Efficient organizer in the classroom	3.94	1.00
Able to adapt instruction to meet individual needs	3.88	1.01
Past field experiences prepared student teacher	3.84	1.16
Confident in ability to discipline the students	3.79	1.06
Classroom management skills were strong	3.63	1.13
Prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences	3.55	1.08

Note. N = 89.

Cooperating Classroom Teachers Responses

Cooperating classroom teachers presented student teachers as adaptable to the school environment; able to establish a good rapport with the students, principal, and faculty; successful as student teachers; enthusiastic about teaching; and able to meet the challenges of student

teaching, while using appropriate teaching styles. This is reflected by a summary of their responses of the perceptions ranked first through seventh.

Cooperating classroom teachers ranked student teachers lowest in the value of past field experiences; confidence in the student teacher's ability to discipline the students; management of the classroom; and, the ability to conduct parent-teacher conferences. This is reflected by a summary of their responses of the perceptions ranked nineteenth through twenty-second.

Table 4

Items Ranked by Student Teachers and Cooperating Classroom Teachers

Questionnaire Items Summarized	ST/R	CT/R
Teacher education courses prepared student teacher	15	13
Professional education courses were valuable	14	10
Very knowledgeable about the subject(s) taught	10	14
Classroom management skills were strong	17	21
Efficient organizer in the classroom	11	17
Pre-student teaching field experience was positive	13	9
Past field experiences prepared student teacher	20	19
Confident in ability to discipline the students	19	20
Established a good rapport with the students	2	3

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Questionnaire Items Summarized		ST/R	CT/R
Enthusiastic about teaching		1	5
Lessons were stimulating		9	15
Able to meet the challenges of student teaching		6	6
Developed well-thought-out lesson plans in a timely manner		8	16
Able to adapt to the school environment		7	1
Able to accurately evaluate student progress		12	12
Prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences		22	22
Able to adapt instruction to meet individual needs		16	18
Student teaching experience was a successful one		4	4
Teaching style was appropriate for the classes taught		5	7
Pre-student teaching field experience was valuable		21	NQ
Student teacher received support from the university		NQ	8
Established rapport with the principal and faculty		3	2
Received adequate support from the university		18	11

Note. R = Rank, ST = Student Teacher, N = 77; CT = Cooperating Classroom Teacher, N = 89; NQ = Not on Questionnaire.

Comparison of Responses

Student teachers' and cooperating classroom teachers' responses were consistent in that each sub-group gave the highest rankings to the same seven items. Each sub-group shared three of the four items ranked lowest.

The responses of both student teachers and the cooperating classroom teachers supported the hypothesis -- some items were perceived as strong, while others were perceived as weak. Table 5, represents the comparison of responses, and the respective ranks of each for the 21 common items.

Analyses of the responses given by both groups indicate strengths of student teacher preparation at Austin Peay State University. The perception of the preservice teacher program is one that produced student teachers who were successful, enthusiastic about teaching, and able to establish good rapport with students, the faculty, and the principal.

There were perceived weaknesses expressed by both student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers. These included a perception that student teachers were provided field experiences which were neither appropriate nor beneficial; they were not confident in the ability to discipline students; and were not prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences.

Discussion

The perceived strengths and weaknesses of the preservice preparation program for student teachers were

identified through a questionnaire. Interpretation of the data provides evidence that student teachers and their cooperating classroom teachers have similar perceptions of the preparation for student teaching at Austin Peay State University. A one-to-one correspondence was established in the ranking for items 4., 6., 12., and 22.

The first seven items ranked were identical for each sub-group, although not ranked in the same order. These questionnaire items could be categorized as attributes and attitudes which pertain primarily to the personality and style of the student teachers.

The next ten items ranked comparatively in the middle range for each sub-group and could be categorized as instructional and management techniques.

The last five items for each sub-group could be categorized as personal interaction skills and organization of resources. A perceived need would be better preparation of student teachers for parent-teacher conferences, as each sub-group ranked that item lowest of 22.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

In order to prepare college students for careers as teachers, these students must successfully complete student teaching. Since opening its doors in 1927, Austin Peay State University has been training students to be teachers; while continuously modifying the preservice training program to meet new needs. One of the most critical aspects of this process is the perception of the program by the participants. The student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers who work together for many weeks have certain insights, opinions, and recommendations which could improve the program. In an effort to qualify and quantify these perceptions, the Director of Student Teaching designed a survey which was administered to student teachers and cooperating classroom teachers for two semesters. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the participants and identify the elements of the program which were perceived as strengths and weaknesses by analysis of the completed questionnaires. This study has determined that there are elements of the preservice education program at Austin Peay State

University that are very strong, while others need some review and analysis.

A body of current literature was reviewed to investigate preservice education programs across the country. It indicated that there are many initiatives underway throughout the United States that are searching for better ways to help students learn. These initiatives span our society, from efforts by individual teachers in isolated classrooms to professional, non-profit consortia at the national level. Local school districts, states, the Federal government, and business have identified many "problems" and proposed various means to "fix" our education system. This study includes examples of several of those proposals and was conducted to add to the literature investigating the "best" way to teach one to teach.

The empirical portion of this study involved the analysis of the surveys administered by the Director of Student Teaching. Responses were tabulated, ranked, and interpreted using mean scores to determine the perception of the participants.

Conclusions

The basis for this study was derived by a search of previous work to determine if the perceptions of

participants in the student teaching process had been qualified and quantified. Many such references were found and used as a basis for this study. The instruments available from other sources were of varying quality and substance; in comparison however, the instrument used as the basis for this study was substantially lacking in several design features. The reliability of the survey could not be determined because of these design flaws and the manner in which it was administered. The responses provided did develop a picture of the perception of the two most important participants in the student teaching process, student teachers and their cooperating classroom teachers, and therefore was worthy of evaluation.

The overall perception of the preservice teacher training program at Austin Peay State University is positive. These perceptions address the appropriateness of coursework that prepared the student teacher to plan and deliver instruction; and assess and evaluate student work. The ability to adapt instruction to meet student needs is a management skill that requires experience beyond the standard period of student teaching. Controlling the behavior of students also comes with experience as does dealing with parents.

These results support the hypothesis in that the preservice teacher preparation program has some strengths (personal attributes and attitudes), marginal areas (instructional and management techniques), and weaknesses (personal interaction and skill development). Thus, the hypothesis was accepted.

Growth and change in the Department of Education at Austin Peay State University is apparent. A review of the 2000-2001 Undergraduate Bulletin demonstrates that steps have been taken to enhance the positive and improve the negative aspects of the preservice education and student teaching programs. The number of hours of classroom observations has increased substantially; and portfolios are required for student teachers. The Student Teaching Handbook (1999) is an excellent guide, addressing many of the items identified by respondents in this study as marginal or weak. The Handbook provides specific guidance for successful accomplishment of student teaching. All indicators point to the continued improvement of the training program for preservice teachers at Austin Peay State University.

The need for a questionnaire seeking perceptions of the student teaching program should lead to program modification to enhance the importance of the entire

process, beginning with Education 1000, Orientation to Education (APSU, 2000 p. 210). Future teachers should begin their portfolios when they take Education 1000, and practice written reflection in all course work at Austin Peay State University. This practice would allow preservice teachers to develop their personal goals; while mapping their course for skill acquisition and professional development. Once in the student teaching program guided classroom observations and mentored practice in a professional development school would help them acquire the skills needed to begin mastery of the art of teaching. The result would be graduates with the self-confidence necessary to deal with all stakeholders they will encounter as teachers.

Recommendations

An analysis of the data suggested that the overall perception of the teacher preparation program at Austin Peay State University is positive; however, there are aspects of the program which could be perceived as more positive if modified. The following recommendations are made as a result of this study.

1. That a professional development school relationship be established in order to provide a model of best practices. Student teachers could then have greater opportunities for

guided classroom experiences and for reflection and analysis with skilled practitioners.

2. That the preservice teacher education program include specific experiences with parents and the community.
3. That student teachers be involved to the greatest extent possible, to plan their career as professional educators.
4. That a formal mentoring or internship program be established.
5. That participants in the program develop future surveys based on needs and accomplishments.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Student Teacher Questionnaire

PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION FOR STUDENT TEACHING

The following statements refer to your perceptions of your preparation for student teaching. Do not sign the questionnaire. Please respond to all statements. Circle the appropriate letter(s) to indicate how you feel (SA-strongly agree, A-agree, U-undecided, D-disagree, SD-strongly disagree).

1. Age: Under 23 23-30 30 or older
2. Sex: Male Female
3. Marital Status: Single Married
4. Primary Area of Specialization:

Inter. Studies K-4
 Inter. Studies K-8
 Health/Physical Education
 secondary Education (Major)

Special Education
 Music Education
 Art Education
5. All coursework taken at Austin Peay State University yes no
6. Graduate Undergraduate
7. My college preparation prepared me for my student teaching assignment. SA A U D SD
8. The information acquired in professional education courses was valuable during my student teaching. SA A U D SD
9. I was very knowledgeable about the subject(s) in which I taught SA A U D SD
10. My classroom management skills are strong. SA A U D SD
11. I was an efficient organizer in the classroom. SA A U D SD
12. Previous field experiences were very positive. SA A U D SD
13. My past field experiences prepared me for my role as a student teacher SA A U D SD
14. I was confident in my ability to discipline the students. SA A U D SD
15. I established a good rapport with the students I taught. SA A U D SD
16. I am enthusiastic about teaching. SA A U D SD
17. My lessons were stimulating. SA A U D SD
18. I was able to meet the challenges of student teaching. SA A U D SD
19. I developed well-thought-out lesson plans in a timely manner. SA A U D SD
20. I had no difficulty adapting to the school environment. SA A U D SD
21. I was able to accurately evaluate student progress. SA A U D SD

22. I was prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences. SA A U D SD
23. I was able to adapt instruction to meet individual needs. SA A U D SD
24. Overall, my student teaching experience was a successful one. SA A U D SD
25. My teaching style was appropriate for the class I taught. SA A U D SD
26. I had an appropriate rapport with the principal and faculty. SA A U D SD
27. The 30-hour pre-student teaching field experience (EDUC 4080/5080) was valuable in my preparation for student teaching. SA A U D SD
28. My cooperating teacher received adequate support from the university during my student teaching. SA A U D SD
29. My strongest traits as a student teacher were:
30. Weakest traits? (What were you unable to do that you needed to be able to do?)
31. Specifically, what skills (competencies) do you believe need to be added to the professional education preparation?
32. In what areas do you anticipate that you will need the most help (mentoring) during your first year of teaching?

Appendix B
Cooperating Classroom Teacher Questionnaire

39. The Student Teacher was able to adapt to the school environment. SA A U D SD
40. The Student Teacher was able to accurately evaluate student progress. SA A U D SD
41. The Student Teacher was prepared to conduct parent-teacher conferences. SA A U D SD
42. The Student Teacher was able to adapt instruction to meet individual needs. SA A U D SD
43. Overall, the student teaching experience was a successful one. SA A U D SD
44. The Student Teacher's teaching style was appropriate for the class(es) taught. SA A U D SD
45. The Student Teacher had an appropriate rapport with the principal and faculty. SA A U D SD
46. Student Teacher received adequate support from the university during student teaching. SA A U D SD
33. I received adequate support from the university during student teaching. SA A U D SD
34. What were the strongest traits of your Student Teacher?
35. Weakest traits? (What was your Student Teacher unable to do that he/she needed to be able to do?)
36. Specifically, what skills (competencies) do you believe need to be added to the professional education preparation?
37. What change(s) in the student teaching program would you recommend? (State mandated requirements cannot be changed.)
38. In what areas do you anticipate that your Student Teacher will need the most help (mentoring) during the first year of teaching?

VITA

Stephen Bruce Baird was born in Caracas, Venezuela on July 7, 1952. He attended schools in Tennessee; St. Mary's Catholic School, grades 1 - 8; Father Ryan High School, grade 9; and graduated from Clarksville High School in May 1970. The following September he entered Austin Peay State University where he majored in Elementary Education. Receiving his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education in August 1974, he began teaching fifth grade at St. Bethlehem Elementary School and started work on his Master of Arts degree at Austin Peay. In October 1977 he joined the Marine Corps and was honorably discharged as a Captain in December 1990. In June 1991 he reentered graduate school at Austin Peay, and began teaching for Ft. Campbell Schools. Earning his Master's in Elementary Education in 1993 he started work on the Education Specialist in Administration and Supervision. In May 2000 he completed requirements for an endorsement in Talented and Gifted Education through Murray State University.

He is presently employed as the Teacher of Talented and Gifted/Computer Lab Teacher at Barkley Elementary School, Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, and is a Major in the Tennessee Air National Guard.