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Abstract

Introduction: As shared in our article published in the spring 2013 issue of *The Advocate Journal*, schools of education are concerned about the best way to provide teacher candidates with clinical-based (also referred to as “field” in the literature) experiences that meet accreditation outcomes. In the Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Learning (NCATE, 2010), ten research-based principles created a framework for clinical-based practices.

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Introduction

As shared in our article published in the spring 2013 issue of *The Advocate Journal*, schools of education are concerned about the best way to provide teacher candidates with clinical-based (also referred to as “field” in the literature) experiences that meet accreditation outcomes. In the *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Learning* (NCATE, 2010), ten research-based principles created a framework for clinical-based practices. In this follow-up study, two of the ten principles are addressed in this companion paper – opportunities for candidates to interact in professional learning communities and application of technology to promote collaboration. To investigate these two principles, this follow-up study ascertained if the addition of a service-learning component significantly increased or decreased candidates' acceptance of diversity. The service-learning component was offered to candidates through an Internet clinical-based practice. More specifically, this companion paper discusses post-test results for the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale – Short Form (M-GUDS-S) regarding data collected prior to the inclusion of the service-learning component to data collected after the inclusion of the service-learning component.

Clinical-based Practice

Teacher education candidates need diverse experiences much like clinicians in the medical field receive before practicing on their own. Unfortunately, diverse clinical experiences and preparations are poorly defined and inadequately supported. According to Franklin Torrez and Krebs (2012), the literature reveals a gap between university teacher preparation and the realities of the K-12 classroom. McIntyre et al. (as cited in Hill, Friedland, & Phelps, 2012) found research on field experiences lacking, while Keengwe (2010) found that diversity classes in higher education are not as effective as they could be due to the disparity between a college's individual program and the aptitude of teachers providing practical and appropriate learning experiences that help develop an appreciation of different cultures and cultural

experiences. Also, in the review of the literature, Hill, et al. (2012) assessed the influence of clinical or field experiences on teacher candidate perceptions of students, especially perception of students in an urban setting. Their review examined 24 qualitative, 5 quantitative, and 7 mixed studies. Results indicated that teacher candidates viewed their clinical experiences as those which brought about little change or as experiences that reinforced the negative stereotypes previously held by the teacher candidates. “The classroom environment in which the teacher candidate spends her or his field experience is an important element in that teacher’s success” (Franklin Torrez & Krebs, 2010, p. 496). The review of literature underscores the need for clinical based experiences which allow teacher candidates to learn about diversity concepts as well as reflect on these experiences. Due to this, the authors determined that adding an Internet service-learning clinical-based practice might increase candidate’s acceptance of diversity.

Definition and Benefits of Service-Learning

Bountiful definitions of service-learning exist in the literature. The selected definition for the study was “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (<http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning>).

Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000) found service-learning imparts a greater tolerance for diversity. Service-learning that emphasizes multiculturalism and social justice has the potential to empower candidates to begin deconstructing lifelong attitudes (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). Crabtree (2008) focused on a historical examination in an attempt to link service-learning, civic engagement, and international education. His review of the literature found that community service within the framework of a discipline offered citizenship and social responsibility. An example of positive institutional change was discovered by Bringle, Hatcher, and Muthiah (2010). They examined the benefits of service-learning on the retention of first-year college students. Findings from their study revealed that “...first-year students completing a service-learning course had higher intention to re-enroll at their campus, and that they were more likely to re-enroll the following academic year...” (p. 47). Another benefit of service-learning is student production of research for communities and organizations (Crabtree, 2008). Parker and Altman-Dautoff (2007) stated that “an important learning outcome for service-learning classes is cognitive learning...” (p. 40).

Purpose

The purpose of this follow-up study was to compare and contrast post-test data on teacher candidates' awareness and acceptance of diversity prior to and after implementation of an Internet service-learning clinical-based practice.

Method

Design

The participants included teacher candidates enrolled in sections of a required course called Diverse Learners. Taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, the participants electronically filled out the M-GUDS-S in the first week of the course and, again, in the final week of the course. To ensure confidentiality, participants self-created a unique code following a prescribed formula.

The M-GUDS-S was the instrument used to administer a pre- and post-survey. According to Fuentes, Miville, Mohr, Sedlacek, and Gretchen (2000), scores on the M-GUDS have been found to predict students' attitudes toward diversity of people and programs in a college setting. The survey consists of three subscales and 15 questions in which the respondents answered the questions using a five-point Likert scale. The first subscale is called Diversity of Contact. It examines students' interest in participating in social and cultural activities. Relativistic Appreciation, the second subscale, refers to the extent to which students value the impact of diversity on self-understanding and personal growth. The third subscale, Comfort with Differences, assesses students' degree of comfort with diverse individuals. Items on this subscale are reverse scored. The original study was conducted between May of 2011 and May of 2012 from six sections of the required course. The companion data was collected between August 2012 and December 2013. Data were analyzed using a paired two sample t-test to determine if there was a significant increase or decrease in scores from the M-GUDS-S pre-survey to the post-survey for each subcategory. In addition, an independent sample t-test (equal variances not assumed) was also conducted, in the follow-up study, to determine if there was a significant increase or decrease in scores from the M-GUD-S post-test for data collected prior to the inclusion of the service component to data collected after the inclusion of the service component. Tests were conducted for each question and for each subcategory.

Analysis

The total number of useable surveys was 98 in the original study. A paired two sample t-test was conducted to determine if there was a significant increase or decrease in scores from the M-GUD-S pre-survey to the post-survey for each survey question. Significant increases were found for four questions. There was a significant increase for question 1 from the pre-survey (mean = 4.64, st. dev. = 0.92) to the post-survey (mean = 4.96, st. dev. = 0.67) at the 1% level of significance (p-value = .001,

n=98); for question 4 from the pre-survey (mean = 4.19, st. dev. = 1.11) to the post-study survey (mean = 4.51, st. dev. = 1.08) at the 1% level of significance (p-value < .001, n=98); for question 5 from the pre-survey (mean = 4.74, st. dev. = 0.92) to the post-study survey (mean = 5.02, st. dev. = 0.92) at the 1% level of significance (p-value = .005, n=98); and for question 13 from the pre-survey (mean = 3.96, st. dev. = 1.19) to the post-study survey (mean = 4.24, st. dev. = 1.09) at the 1% level of significance (p-value = .003, n=98).

A paired two sample t-test was also conducted to determine if there was a significant increase or decrease in scores from the M-GUD-S pre-survey to the post-survey for each subscale. There was a significant increase for Diversity of Contact from the pre-survey (mean = 4.36, st. dev. = 1.25) to the post-survey (mean = 4.58, st. dev. = 1.14) at the 1% level of significance (p-value < .001, n=490). There was also a significant increase for Relativistic Appreciation from the pre-survey (mean = 4.76, st. dev. = 1.02) to the post-survey (mean = 4.93, st. dev. = 0.99) at the 1% level of significance (p-value < .001, n=490).

In the follow-up study, data collected on the M-GUDS-S post-test prior to the inclusion of the service-learning component (n=98) were then compared to data collected after the inclusion of the service-learning component (n=105). Tests were conducted for each question and for each subcategory. Significant increases were found for three questions, and a significant decrease was found for one question. There was a significant increase for question 1 (mean difference=.407, p-value=.003), question 4 (mean difference= .605, p-value=.000), and question 7 (mean difference=.663, p-value=.001) at the 1% level of significance. There was a significant decrease for question 12 (mean difference=-.484, p-value=.008) at the 1% level of significance. No significant differences were found for the subcategories; however, questions 1, 4, and 7 belong to the Diversity of Contact subgroup

After inclusion of the Internet service-learning clinical-based practice, except for one instance, there were similar results in the Diversity of Contact subscale which examines interest in participating in social and cultural activities. However, there was a significant decrease for one question in the Comfort with Differences subscale. This subscale assesses the degree of comfort with diverse individuals. This finding suggests that, although candidates became less comfortable with diverse individuals, the inclusion of an Internet service-learning clinical-based practice may have helped candidates become more aware of the impact of diversity on teaching practices. For example, the Internet partner school for the service-learning clinical-based practice has a high number of poverty children of whom all speak English as their second language. This is in stark contrast to the candidates where the majority of the participants are native English speakers who originate from middle-income households.

Limitations

A limitation of this study includes the number of useable surveys ($n = 98$, $n = 105$). Another limitation includes the selection of the participants. All participants were either early childhood unified or elementary education majors. Students choosing these majors may have common attributes which influenced the results. Additionally, due to the participants' voluntary participation in the study, there may be self-reporting bias.

Future Implications

The researchers investigated whether or not the addition of an Internet service-learning clinical-based practice resulted in the same or higher significant increases regarding teacher candidates' attitudes toward diversity. The follow-up study revealed that inclusion of an Internet service-learning clinical-based practice in a college level diversity course increased teacher candidates' awareness and acceptance of diversity similar to when there was no inclusion of the service component. However, the study revealed one major difference. As measured by the Comfort with Differences subscale, candidates became less comfortable with diverse individuals. This may have been due to the candidates' increased awareness of the types of diversity that would impact their teaching. For schools of education, diverse clinical-based practices must be multiple and scaffolded throughout the entire program to help candidates develop awareness of the types of diversity, such as the participants experienced in our study, but provide additional experiences to allow candidates opportunities to practice differentiating instruction for a diverse population.

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