Incorporating Comprehensive Organization and Management Program (COMP) in Teacher Residency

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Abstract

This study examined teachers' perceptions of classroom management necessary for an effective classroom teacher and investigated the levels of perceived difficulty with developing these skills. A needs assessment revealed weaknesses regarding classroom management in novice teachers, which prompted the university involved to seek out a program that would enhance classroom management skills. Teacher Quality Partnership Grant (TQP) enabled the university to reform their existing program by determine the needs of the teachers licensed by the university. The university chose Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP) to address the need. Results showed that teachers exhibited significantly higher perceptions of self-efficacy regarding classroom management on the post-assessment compared to the survey given prior to the COMP training. Statistics from this study provide Educator Preparation Programs with further data, which will allow them to create an approach of program curricula to better prepare teachers to become effective classroom teachers.

1. Introduction

Effective classroom management is an essential skill necessary to meet the needs of today's student and classroom. During the first years of teaching novice teachers are challenged not only by curriculum, but classroom management. Effective classroom management skills have a direct effect on teachers' job satisfaction and teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Klassen & Chiu; 2010, Landers, Alter, & Servilio, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Regulating the classroom in the first few years of teaching creates a lasting impact on the career of the teacher. This specific skill of classroom management leads to teacher stress and burnout, and overall low teacher self-efficacy. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy describes this as the belief that someone has in their ability to perform an action (Bandura, 1977; 1987). Low self-efficacy about classroom management leads many novice teachers to leave their profession by their fifth year (Lambert, 2006).

Teacher attrition accounts for more than $2 billion dollars of school system budgets for replacing and retraining of novice teachers who are not prepared for the classroom management challenges of today's youth (Harfitt, 2015). In a recent review of educator preparation programs, universities were encouraged to prepare their future teachers through educator preparation programs (EPP) in which pre-service teachers received essential skills such as classroom management in order to create higher quality future teachers (Greenberg, McKee,& Walsh, 2013). A renewed interest in educator preparation reform as postulated by not only The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) but also the new assessment portfolio through edTPA demands more rigorous goals and standards from universities who are preparing today's teachers (Heafner, McIntyre, & Spooner, 2014; Stanford Center for Assessment, n.d.).

This study examined the pre-service and practicing teachers' perceptions of the importance of classroom management necessary for an effective classroom teacher and investigated the levels of perceived difficulty associated with developing these skills. Studies show that without adequate preparation teachers leave the profession within three to five years (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Quality teachers and pre-service teachers exhibit an ability to manage a classroom (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). If teacher efficacy is high, that is, if teachers believe that they can be successful in teaching and that they have the skills to positively impact students in the classroom, then they are more successful educators and less likely to leave the profession (Black, 2015; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001).

This study involved a grant from the State Department of Education titled the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant. TQP specifies that grantees create effective model teacher preparation programs to enhance the quality of new teachers. Educator preparation programs play a critical role in teacher effectiveness and teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy has been correlated to many student outcomes including student achievement and classroom management (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992).

2. Review of Literature

Historically, classroom management has been an area of grave concern among educators, and unfortunately, today is no different. Not surprising, classroom management is a challenge for novice teachers entering the field (Baker, Gentry, & Larmer, 2016; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, Garrett, 2014). But more alarming is the fact that classroom management is named as the primary cause for teacher burn out among veteran teachers (Baker, Gentry, & Larmer, 2016; Friedman, 2006, Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Teacher preparation programs are often targeted as the source of the problem. It is believed that while teacher preparation programs heavily embrace teaching content knowledge and pedagogy, they do not train teacher candidates in classroom management and behavior management techniques. In fact, Jones (2006) postulated that most novice teachers disclose a lack of adequate preparation in their teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, it is believed that teacher preparation programs fail to provide any depth of instruction in the content of courses including classroom management and certainly lack instruction of research-based management strategies (Evertson and Weinstein, 2006). In fact, it is suggested that classroom management is often taught as snippets in educational psychology courses and somewhat revisited in methods courses, but there is often a lack of deliberate, research-based instruction, which inadequately prepares teacher candidates for today's classroom (Greenberg, Putnam and Walsh, 2014).

Job satisfaction, including stress level and teacher attrition, which is often attributed to burn out are not only costly to school systems nationwide, but can also attribute to hindering student achievement. A recent study determined that teachers' classroom management practices directly impact students' probability of success (Gage, Scott, Hirn and MacSiga-Gage, 2018). That being said, providing in-depth instruction using research-based principles is critical to teacher preparation programs. It is critical that education preparation programs adequately prepare teacher candidates in effective classroom management instruction. As previously noted, this study was conducted at a university that houses an educator preparation program, whereby students are prepared for an initial teaching license. From a needs assessment survey of partnering school districts, which hire the majority of graduating teacher candidates, it was noted that classroom management was not only an area of need, but also of concern. With the funding from a national grant, this EPP chose to implement the Classroom Management Program (COMP) into its preparation program, so that all teacher candidates would graduate with a certification in classroom management. COMP is defined as research-based research-proven professional developments that can help you learn to create and manage an effective learning environment in the classroom (Evertson, 2012). It is a proactive program for managing classroom that has provided increases in student engagement and academic achievement. There are four premises on which the COMP framework is built:

- effective classroom management is proactive, not reactive,
- in effective classrooms, management and instruction are interwoven,
- students are active participant in the learning environment,
- teachers working together synergistically help one another.

The goal for teachers is to improve the overall instruction and behavioral management skills; whereas students' goals are an increase in task management, self-responsibility, and academic achievement, while reducing inappropriate behavior.

3. Overview of the Study

Results of a Needs Assessment, conducted as a part of the TQP Grant, identified classroom management as an area for improvement in beginning teachers. Project directors researched available programs to address this need and chose to use Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP), a systematic research-based classroom management program.   This federally validated program focuses on all aspects of classroom management and provides opportunities for reflective practice. This research study was designed to determine self-efficacy of pre-service teacher candidates before and after participation in COMP. Researchers sought to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: "Do pre-service teachers' perceptions of the essential elements of classroom management change after completing the COMP program?"

Research Question 2: "Do pre-service teachers' perceptions of the difficulty of incorporating elements of classroom management change after completing the COMP program?"

4. Methodology

This quantitative survey was intended to determine if pre-service teachers' perceptions concerning the elements of classroom management, as well as the incorporation of those elements, changed after completing the COMP program. The null hypotheses for this study are as follows:

H_01: There will be no significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment data for the essential elements of classroom management.

H_02: There will be no significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment data for the difficulty of incorporating elements of classroom management

Research was conducted at a four-year university in a rural setting. Participants were selected because of their enrollment in the COMP program. Fifty-one participants were included in the sample population. Pre-test results were collected from 51 pre-service teachers, which represented a 100 percent response rate. Twenty post-tests were completed, resulting in a 39 percent response rate.

Table 1: Sample Population

Male	n=13
Female	n=38
Total	n=51

Prior to conducting the COMP training, students anonymously responded to a pre-assessment to determine their perceptions on classroom management. The Survey Instrument was developed by Stephen Jessup and titled "Teacher Perceptions of the Essential Skills in Classroom Management and Discipline". The survey covers eight competences, which are indicators and skills in the areas of classroom management and discipline. Participants specify how essential classroom management and discipline they perceive the skill to be ranging from 1 (is not essential) to 5 (essential). Participants also specify how difficult they perceive it is for teachers to develop the specific skill indicated ranging from 1 (low level of difficulty) to 5 (high level of difficulty). Following are the eight competencies:

1. Using a repertoire of behavior management strategies to initiate, experiment with and maintain effective classroom management.

2.To function effectively as a team member in designing, implementing and evaluating school wide discipline policies.

3. To develop and exhibit a personal philosophy and behaviors which recognize the dignity and needs of children and adults in the school community.

4. To demonstrate a growing understanding and knowledge of designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum, teaching and learning styles.

5. To demonstrate an ongoing understanding of human growth and development, learning theories and processes

6. To develop and exhibit effective communication skills in the full range of educational settings.

7. To respond effectively to inappropriate behavior through developing and utilizing strategies in negotiation and collaboration

8. To demonstrate an ability to develop a repertoire of appropriate skills & strategies to resolve behavioral conflicts in a just and constructive manner.

Qualtrics was used as the data collection agency for the participants to respond.

Certified trainers using a hands-on, reflective approach to classroom management strategies conducted COMP training. Upon completion of the program, participants were asked to anonymously respond to the post-assessment instrument. Data was analyzed is SPSS using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test because of the inconsistency in the number of respondents to the pre-assessment compared to the post assessment. Table 2 shows the results for the pre and post-assessments.

Table 2: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Essential	Difficulty
W-value: 591	W-value: 162
Mean Difference: 0.01	Mean Difference: -0.23
Sum of positive ranks: 591	Sum of positive ranks: 162
Sum of negative ranks: 894	Sum of negative ranks: 1434
P-value: 0.1936	*P-value: 0*
Z-value: -1.3044	Z-value: -5.1879
Mean (W): 742.5	Mean (W): 798
Standard Deviation (W): 116.14	Standard Deviation (W): 122.59
Sample Size (N): 51	Sample Size (N): 51

The first null hypothesis for this study was there will be no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test data for the essential elements of classroom management. *P*-values less than 0.05 indicate significant differences between pre- and post-assessment results; therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. (*p*=0.1936). The second null hypothesis for this study was there will be no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test data for the difficulty of incorporating elements of classroom management. Results indicate significant differences between pre- and post-assessment results (*p*=0); therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

5. Discussion and Continuing Research

Research will continue to determine both pre-service and in-service perceptions of classroom management and results of participating in the COMP program. The low response rate of the post-assessments could alter the data significantly. Since the inception of this program as a tool to strengthen classroom management skills, course re-structuring has allowed pre-service teachers to experience the initial modules in their introductory teacher preparation course with follow-up modules throughout their course of study. Data will be compared to the initial implementation plan to the modified plan to determine if significant differences exist.

6. Conclusion

As research continues to focus on how EPPs can enhance the quality of their teacher candidates and offerings, EPPs will continue to seek viable methods to strengthen their programs. Classroom management remains one of the most challenging skills for not only pre-service and novice teachers to develop, but also seasoned teachers. According to Evertson (2012), the development of The Classroom Organization and Management Program addresses the need for augmented classroom management skills that exists for all teachers. This study highlighted the strength of the research-based and research-proven COMP program. This study demonstrated the need for an active training in which pre-service teachers develop proactive classroom management skills necessary for their future classrooms.

This study involved a grant from the State Department of Education titled the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant. Educator preparation programs seek to create teacher effectiveness and teacher efficacy through robust course offerings and trainings meant to develop master level teachers. Since the timing and methodof the delivery of COMP will be changed due to program curricular changes in the EPP, further research is warranted in an effort to measure not only the preparedness of teacher candidates and their self-efficacy, but also the impact of programmatic changes.

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