Student Teacher Competencies as Viewed by Cooperating Teachers

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Introduction

A sophomore enters his advisor's office. He is in his second semester of teacher preparation and has set up a tentative schedule for completing his program.

> Advisor: "How did your first semester go?"
> Student: "The courses were O.K. I liked learning the computer—that was great!" Then his face lights up. "I loved visiting the schools—you know, seeing the kids. I can't wait until I student teach. I want my own class."
> Advisor: "Before you student teach, you need to finish your courses and field experiences. There is a lot left for you to learn before you will be ready to have your own class." The two of them begin to review the student's schedule.

For a great many education students, student

teaching is the highlight of their teacher preparation program. While we university-based education faculty may agree that course work, clinical experiences, and field experiences are necessary preparation for student teaching, our education students often seem to be biding their time until that day when they walk into their own classroom. The mandate to provide a program that adequately prepares education students for student teaching has been made clear in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) *Standards, Procedures, and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units* (NCATE, 1990) criterion 28:

> Field-based and clinical experiences are sequenced to enable education students to develop the skills that will enable them to assume full responsibility for classroom instruction or other professional roles in schools. (p. 49)

That student teaching should present an experience that is consistent with and the culmination of the preceding course work and clinical and field experiences is suggested in criterion 31:

> Sites are carefully selected for all field experiences, including cooperating schools and other professional internship locations, so that students are provided experiences consistent with the goals of the unit's programs. (p.50)

Indeed, the NCATE standards, particularly those relating to the design and delivery of teacher preparation programs, reiterate the importance of programs that are systematic and coherent. These standards clearly require programs that are designed and delivered collaboratively by faculty. The idea of a collaborative relationship between cooperating teachers who most directly oversee the student teacher and campus based faculty is implicit.

This leaves those who design and deliver teacher preparation programs with the responsibility of developing and delivering such programs in a coherent fashion. Not only must they determine what teacher education students must learn, but also when these students must learn it. Specifically, they need to articulate the relationship between the process and outcomes of student teaching and the program of courses, clinical experiences, and field experiences that precede it.

Surprisingly, the research literature offers little to guide response to such needs. In their review of the literature on student teaching, Guyton and McIntyre (1990) repeatedly comment on the paucity of literature. In particular, they say that little research has been done indicating what **should** be occurring in the student teaching curriculum. In their report on a project designed to train preservice teachers to work with mildly handicapped students, Lenz and Desher (1990) confirm this observation; they state that teachers leave their preparation programs with "'splinter'" teaching skills and no coherent philosophy or model for teaching. The authors echo the NCATE standards when they advocate the need for clearly-articulated program philosophies and outcome goals.

Perhaps this lack of the articulation of the "should" is one reason for another conclusion drawn by Guyton and McIntyre (1990) about the outcomes of student teaching. While student teachers may regard their student teaching experience as a positive personal experience, Guyton and McIntyre assert that student teaching often is a **negative** experience in terms of the overall goals of many teacher education programs. Instead of promoting program goals, it becomes a time when future teachers become socialized into the culture of the public schools. Indeed, some have termed student teaching as a rite of passage, a rite initiating the student teacher into the profession (Head, 1992). Yet often it is a time when teacher education students begin to discount the goals of their teacher preparation program (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). This potential for negative outcomes appears to be possible in all settings, from preschools (Doxey, 1983), to secondary classrooms (Herman & Schafer, 1984), to settings with handicapped students (Lenz & Desher, 1990).

Pigge and Marso (1989) report that student teaching is a time when student teachers become less anxious about teaching and more self-assured. However, if other studies (Lenz & Desher, 1990; Doxey, 1983; Herman & Schafer, 1984) are to be believed, this assurance and reduction in anxiety sometimes is bought with the cost of socialization into questionable practices and teaching values.

As with the need to articulate program goals among instructors of on-campus preservice courses in teacher education, there is a related need to extend such articulation to the student teaching experience. This can only be accomplished through the preparation of cooperating teachers to work with program goals. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) state that there is "some" evidence showing a need for such preparation and that such preparation may enable cooperating teachers to establish a more positive context for the preservice teachers in their charge. Herman and Schafer(1984) concur. They also offer an alternative to promote coherence between student teaching and the teacher education program. They suggest that student teachers be placed with cooperating teachers who graduated from the same teacher training institution. Without such preparation, student teaching becomes separated from the campus program (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990).

In sum, then, the research suggests that student teaching that is well conceived can result in a positive experience consistent with the goals of a teacher preparation program. Some provisions, however, appear to be necessary. First, there must be clearly-articulated program goals and communication of those goals to all parties responsible for teacher training: faculty, teacher education students, and cooperating teachers. Second, there must be coherence between the course work, early field experiences, and student teaching. In other words, there must be a program philosophy and goals, and all parties must know what they are and work together to achieve them.

One aspect of the relationship between student teaching and the program leading up to that experience has, interestingly, been largely ignored. That is, other

than general ideas like putting what has been learned previously into practice or applying what was learned in the college classroom to real world situations, there seems to be no articulation regarding what student teaching is supposed to build upon. Or, put another way, what do teacher education students need to know in order to be ready to student teach? The purpose of this study, then, is an initial effort to address that question by asking cooperating teachers their views regarding the importance of the beginning teacher competencies (BTCs) established by one college of educa-tion's faculty and by asking them when these BTCs should develop in the course of teacher preparation. To answer the larger question of this study, four specific questions are addressed. They are listed in order of analysis:

1. How competent are student teachers at the beginning of student teaching?
2. Do cooperating teachers perceive all BTCs to be important to teaching? What is the comparative importance of each?
3. When do cooperating teachers believe these BTCs should develop in the course of a new teacher's professional preparation?
4. Are cooperating teachers' views of when a BTC should develop related to prior experience, level of education, their views of their current student teachers' competence, or their views of the importance of a BTC?

Method

This study was conducted at a large midwestern university as part of a program of studies related to the introduction of a new teacher education program. One primary goal of the study was to determine what preparation might be necessary for cooperating teachers to be informed about the knowledge base of the new program.

Program Description

The four-phase program in question was designed to develop teachers as decision-makers. Reflecting the philosophy of the Holmes Report that "the best educator is one who is best educated" (Soltis, 1987), the program builds on a platform of general studies that are spread across the liberal arts. Admission to the college, which is an upper level college, requires successful completion of course work in the humanities, the social sciences, the sciences, and mathematics. Admitted students progress through a sequence of developmental phases, each of which is intended to promote the development of students' ability to make professional decisions in educational settings.

For example, during Phase I, prospective educators "learn about learners" as they address the program's phase question: **How can I use information about myself and others to understand decisions about students and learning?** During Phase IV, prospective educators learn to teach as they address the program's phase question: **How do I make the best decisions for students?** All phases are designed to include an integrated program of guidance, core courses, course work related to the teaching specialty, and field and clinical experiences. Student teaching, the

capstone field experience, takes place in Phase IV.

Threaded through the program is a core set of competencies that have been identified as essential for all beginning teachers. The establishment of these beginning teacher competencies (BTCs) was based on a process that included a review of the literature by the college's faculty (resulting in the identification of a beginning set of 105 competencies), a survey study of 136 area educators and university faculty regarding the importance of these competencies (Benz, 1988), and the eventual development of 17 basic program competencies which comprise a core feature of the program. Based on Hall and Jones' (1976) taxonomy, these competencies can be classified as cognitive, affective, and performance outcomes.

The program fits in the tradition of competency-based teacher education, in that learner outcomes (the BTCs) are specified for all students. It has an assessment model that allows for continual evaluation of students, and extensive clinical and field-based experiences are interlaced throughout the program (Hall & Jones, 1976). While the program is a competency-based program in that it is designed with an eye as to what its graduates will be able to know and do, its goal of developing reflective decision-makers capable of "reflection-in-action" reveals the program's debt to the ideas of Schon (1983).

Study Design

This study consists of two stages: a preliminary study followed by a large scale mail survey of cooperating teachers.

Preliminary Study. During the preliminary study, three interviewers, all faculty members teaching in the new teacher preparation program, interviewed a random sample of cooperating teachers (n=25) currently working with student teachers from the college.

Large Scale Survey. A survey was mailed to approximately 300 cooperating teachers working with student teachers in the 1993-94 academic year . Two forms of the survey were randomly assigned to respondents. (The distinctions between these two forms are delineated below.) The survey was mailed so that cooperating teachers would receive it during the first week a student teacher would take on full teaching responsibilities.

Measures

The interview in the preliminary study included open-ended and structured questions and contained three parts. Part one asked some background questions. Part two asked what student teachers ought to know and be able to do in order to be ready to student teach. It also asked what student teachers seemed to be able to do well and where improvement was needed. Questions were in an open-ended format. Part three asked cooperating teachers three questions about the BTCs: (1) to restate each competency in their own words; (2) to rate their most recent student teacher with respect to that competency; and (3) to rate the importance of each competency

to student teaching readiness.

We used teachers' restatements of each BTC to develop a standardized survey to be mailed to the larger sample. Since the BTCs are stated using technical education terminology, we employed teacher restatements of them to design a set of statements that are more generally understood. Based on teacher restatements, we developed up to three revisions of each competency statement and asked members of the college's curriculum committee responsible for the development of the competencies to review each statement and select the version that most closely agreed with the meaning of the original competency statement. We also asked them to make suggestions for improvement. Through continued consultation with the committee, we developed a final set of revisions. We considered a revision to be finalized when a majority of committee members deemed it to be adequate. The result was a set of BTC statements in lay language that captured the meaning of the original BTC statements. These statements were used in the mail survey forms.

We developed two mail survey forms. Both opened with a section asking background questions. In Form 1, a second section required respondents to rate the competence of the current student teacher at the beginning of student teaching with respect to each BTC using a four-point scale, where 1=extremely competent (one of the best I've seen) to 4=a little or not at all competent. The remaining points on the scale indicated positive degrees of competence to avoid positively skewed results. In Form 2, the second section required respondents to rate the importance of each BTC to teaching using a 4-point scale, where 1=extremely important (one of the most important) and 4=a little or not at all important. The second section of Form 1 and Form 2 also asked respondents to indicate when a beginning teacher should develop each competency. The choices reflected four stages in teacher preparation. For example, stage 1, A=**It should be fully developed in courses and field experiences before student teaching. Students need to know this before they begin their student teaching**. The final stage occurred after program completion: D=**This is a teacher competency that doesn't develop until a teacher is on the job**.

Sample

One hundred fifty-five cooperating teachers at the secondary level were surveyed in Fall 1992 and Spring 1993. One hundred fifty-three cooperating teachers at the elementary level were surveyed in Spring 1993. The response rate for each group of teachers was 82 per cent.

In general, these cooperating teachers were experienced in the classroom and in the role of cooperating teacher. The elementary teachers reported a median of 16 years experience teaching. The secondary teachers were slightly more experienced (median=19.4 years). For a few teachers in each group, this was their first experience having a student teacher; yet the majority had had more than two student teachers previously.

In terms of teaching responsibilities, the differences between elementary and secondary teachers are not surprising. In general, it appears that the elementary teachers are responsible for all subjects in a classroom (83%). Most teach children in the early grades (52%). Most secondary teachers, on the other hand, teach high school, rather than junior high school students (62%), and are responsible for a single subject; English is the most commonly taught subject (23%).

Although both groups seem to have attended the same undergraduate colleges in about the same proportions, their areas of study differed in ways that reflect their current teaching responsibilities. The great majority (84%) of elementary cooperating teachers reported a single major. Overwhelmingly, they majored in elementary education (85%). A large majority (81%) of secondary cooperating teachers also reported a single major, but the major tended to be in a content area, most frequently one of the humanities (38%). Of note, the great majority (94% of elementary teachers and 88% of secondary teachers) of this cohort of cooperating teachers attended colleges within the state. Close to half attended the same college as their student teachers were currently attending.

In terms of advanced education, a greater proportion of secondary teachers report having obtained an advanced degree. These teachers also have had more years of teaching experience on average and more frequently hold a permanent teaching certificate, a type of certificate not recently awarded. In other words, the secondary group has had more formal education and more professional teaching experience than the elementary cooperating teachers. Furthermore, secondary teachers on the whole report having participated in a workshop or course more recently compared to elementary cooperating teachers; this may be an indication of ongoing commitment to continuing education.

Analysis of the Data/Results

Preliminary Study

Open ended responses were transcribed for each question. We independently reviewed the transcribed responses, derived our own interpretations, and then met to discuss and compare our interpretations of responses relating to each question. We combined answers that seemed to cluster into common categories.

Teacher responses in terms of the "kinds of knowledge, skills, and competencies" teacher education students need to be prepared to student teach fell into four general categories:

1. Practical experience and knowledge of how schools function;
2. Teaching or instructional skills;
3. Knowledge of content; and
4. Personal qualities.

An overwhelming majority (86%) mentioned knowledge of content as important, followed by teaching/instructional skills (62%). The other two areas (practical experience and personal qualities) were cited by a large minority of respondents (40%).

Almost all respondents were able to cite at least one strength of the college's student teachers and at least one area where better preparation is needed, but no category of response or specific answer predominated the responses.

At least half of the cooperating teachers rated their student teachers as very or extremely **competent** with respect to five competencies:

1. Communication;
2. Value of life-long learning;
3. Working with parents;
4. Diversity; and
5. Equal access.

However, when rating the importance of each competency, a majority of respondents cited only three of these five: communication; value of life-long learning; and equal access. Other competencies rated as extremely **important** were: knowledge of characteristics of learners; learning and problem solving; and classroom management.

Large Scale Survey

Respondent background information was summarized separately for elementary and secondary teachers. Elementary and secondary teachers' ratings of competence, importance, and the timing of competency development were compared. Additionally, teachers' views related to timing were compared to background indicators of education and prior experience.

Four questions were addressed by the analysis of the data. Each will be reported separately.

1. How competent are student teachers at the beginning of student teaching? Table 1 reports the rated competence of student teachers at the beginning of student teaching with respect to each BTC. Since the frequency distributions of these ratings appear to be approximately normal, the means and standard deviations for each are reported. The lowest mean rating for elementary teachers is 1.6, for equal access; this is strikingly similar to the mean rating awarded by secondary cooperating teachers for the same BTC (M=1.5). In general, both groups of teachers perceive the strengths and weaknesses of their student teachers in similar ways. A Pearson correlation coefficient of the means for each competency is .94, significant at p<.01.

The greatest difference seems to be with competence in learning and problem solving; secondary cooperating teachers rate their student teachers more highly. However, when tested with a t-test for independent means, none of the means differs

Table 1

**Ranked Competence of Student Teachers
Based on Elementary and Secondary Teacher Ratings**

to a statistically significant degree.

In light of the high proportion of university alumni in this study, we conducted a supplementary analysis to determine if these ratings were related to their alumni status. None of the t-tests comparing alumni's ratings to non-alumni's ratings was significant at $p <= .01$. Indeed the means of the two groups for all BTCs were remarkably similar.

2. Do cooperating teachers perceive all BTCs to be important to teaching? What is the comparative importance of each? To compare the importance ascribed by cooperating teachers to each BTC, we examined the per cent of respondents rating the BTC as "extremely important" to teaching. This approach was taken because the distributions of the data were often highly skewed or bi-modal. Table 2 reports the percentage for each BTC and the ranking of the BTCs

Table 2

**Related Importance of Competencies
Based on Elementary and Secondary Teacher Ratings**

based on the percent of respondents selecting each BTC as extremely important. In general, a greater proportion of the elementary cooperating teachers tended to rate all BTCs as "extremely" important.

A Pearson correlation coefficient based on the BTC percentages for the two groups of teachers is statistically significant ($r=.64$, $p<.01$). However, its size is noticeably smaller when compared to the agreement regarding the competency of student teachers. Based on a Fisher exact test, this difference is sufficiently large to be statistically significant ($Z=2.55$, $p<.01$). In other words, while cooperating teachers at the elementary and secondary level seem to be in agreement regarding the strengths and weaknesses of student teachers, their perspective regarding the relative importance of the BTCs is less in accord.

Comparison of ranks corresponding to the BTCs reveals some significant differences between elementary and secondary cooperating teachers regarding the importance of specific BTCs to teaching. For elementary teachers, motivation ranks high—3.0; for secondary teachers, motivation appears to be less important—rank=11.5. Elementary teachers also tend to assign extreme importance to learning and problem solving, more so than do secondary teachers. On the other hand, the importance of subject matter knowledge and the ability to structure it for teaching is of greater importance to secondary teachers (rank=6 for both) compared to elementary teachers ($\text{rank}_{structure} = 12.5$; $\text{rank}_{knowledge} = 17$).

As with the competence ratings, we conducted a supplementary analysis to determine if these ratings were related to respondents' alumni status. None of the t-tests comparing non alumni importance ratings to alumni ratings was significant at $p<=.01$. The means of the two groups for all BTCs were remarkably similar.

3. When do cooperating teachers believe these BTCs should develop in the course of a new teacher's professional preparation? Elementary and secondary cooperating teachers selected one of four points in the teacher preparation sequence as the time when each BTC should be developed: (1) completely before student teaching; (2) mostly before student teaching; (3) mostly during student teaching; or (4) on the job. For each BTC, we identified the point in the sequence that was most commonly selected. Table 3 reports the results of this identification; BTCs are arranged in the table by the most frequently selected point. Each percentage in the table corresponds to the percentage of the elementary and secondary teachers who selected that particular phase of the learning sequence as the point in the teacher preparation process that the BTC should be attained. The magnitude of percentages can serve as an indicator of the degree of teacher agreement regarding when each BTC should be developed.

Elementary and secondary teachers appear to agree with each other regarding when most BTCs should be developed. Both groups seemed to agree that certain competencies should be fully attained prior to student teaching: communication, knowledge of the rights of equal access, and health and safety needs. They also

Table 3

**Comparison of Elementary and Secondary Teachers' Judgment
As to When Competency Should Be Attained, Based on Modal Response**

Note: Number of elementary teachers=124; number of secondary teachers=127.

agree that the majority of the BTCs should develop primarily before student teaching and reach full attainment during student teaching. However, there are differences relating to the timing of some of the BTCs, which may reflect differing views regarding the relationship of course work and field experiences to student teaching as means to developing competence.

Disagreement between elementary and secondary teachers is most noticeable regarding two BTCs: specialty knowledge and lifelong learning. Secondary teachers most often advocated the acquisition of specialty knowledge before student teaching, whereas elementary teachers seemed to think that some student teaching experience is necessary before full competence can occur. With respect to lifelong learning, elementary teachers most frequently selected before student teaching, whereas secondary teachers suggested that this should occur on the job. It should be noted, however, that this BTC yielded an unusual pattern of responses from both groups of teachers. Both frequency distributions for this BTC are bi-modal; both groups of teachers seemed to be in agreement that this competency is not attained during student teaching, but were divided as to whether it should develop in college or later.

The pattern of these teachers' responses suggests that these two groups view the relationship of course work and field experiences to student teaching somewhat differently. Elementary teachers' responses indicate a view that all 16 competencies should be primarily attained before student teaching. By contrast, secondary teachers' responses suggest a perspective that some competencies develop later. These teachers indicated that one competency, working with parents, would be mostly learned during student teaching and that lifelong learning could be learned on the job. Perhaps this reflects a longer view of the professional developmental process, one that is more spread out.

Finally, it should be noted that teachers from both groups seemed to lack consensus regarding when attainment of many of the BTCs should occur. For elementary and secondary teachers, there was no majority agreement regarding six competencies: lifelong learning, health and safety needs, knowledge of a specialty area, motivation, decision making, and working with parents. In addition, for secondary teachers, there was no majority agreement regarding three more of the competencies: instructional resources, learning/problem solving, and diversity.

4. Are cooperating teachers' views of when a BTC should develop related to prior experience, level of education, their views of their current student teachers' competence, or their views of the importance of a BTC? To determine whether responses were related to prior experience, we calculated a "total experience" indicator by summing two deviation scores based on total years of teaching experience and total number of student teachers. Using the Pearson product moment correlation, we correlated the total experience indicator with teachers' responses regarding when a competence should develop. We included the entire

Table 4

**Correlations of Timing of Competency Development
With Indicators of Education and Prior Experience**

sample with pairwise deletion. The results of this analysis appear in Table 4.

To determine the relationship between teachers' education and their views of when a BTC should develop, we correlated two indicators of education, level of education and time since last attending a workshop or course with teachers' responses regarding when a BTC should develop. We employed the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationship between level of education and views of BTC development and the Pearson product moment correlation to evaluate the relationship between workshop attendance and views of BTC development. For these education analyses, we employed the entire sample with pairwise deletion. Results appear in Table 4. T-tests comparing means for alumni with means for non-alumni were also conducted. None of the t-tests revealed a statistically significant difference; the means were strikingly similar.

Finally, we evaluated the relationship between teachers' competence and importance ratings with their views of when BTCs should develop. We included the combined elementary and secondary samples who responded to Form 1 (for competence) or Form 2 (for importance). Again we employed the Pearson product moment correlation and pairwise deletion. Results appear in Table 4.

Because the number of comparisons was so large, we employed a rigorous standard to deem results to be significant, $p < .001$. In general, prior experience and level of education appear to have no relationship with a teacher's view as to when specific competencies should be emphasized in teacher preparation.

Several statistically significant, moderately low coefficients appear suggesting that teachers' ratings of student competence with respect to some BTCs and ratings of BTC importance are related to views of when the same competencies should develop. All relationships are positive, which means that the more competent the current student teacher or more important the BTC, the earlier the teacher thinks it should develop.

BTCs for which both relationships are statistically significant are: assessment techniques, classroom management, specialty area knowledge, and health/safety needs. BTCs for which competence only appears to be related to timing include: planning and delivery of instruction, learning/problem solving, teaching models/ strategies and decision making. Importance appears to be related to timing for one BTC: knowledge of the right of equal access.

Discussion

Implications for Practice

The results of this study confirm previous research pointing to a variety of factors that may contribute to a negation of teacher education program goals during student teaching. First, there appear to be conflicting values between cooperating teachers and the teacher preparation program, a conflict that can result in the

undermining of program goals during student teaching(Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). The results of the preliminary study suggest that cooperating teachers do not regard all of the new program's beginning teacher competencies as critical for readiness to student teach or to teach. The mail survey confirmed these preliminary results. Forty per cent or more of the elementary cooperating teachers indicated that half of the BTCs were not extremely important to teaching. Only three BTCs were rated as extremely important to teaching by a large majority (>60%) of the secondary teachers. Of note, the program's theme—decision making—emerged as comparatively less important than most other BTCs.

Second, based on these results, we agree with Guyton and McIntyre's (1990) call for a continuation of collaboration between college of education faculty and cooperating teachers that occurred when the BTCs were first developed. Such collaboration may be necessary so that both groups can develop a shared understanding of the program's philosophy and goals. Closer collaboration may enhance cooperating teachers' understanding of and support for the program goals; it may also lead to college faculty reconsideration of some of the BTCs. The lack of difference in alumni and non-alumni responses points to the need for this type of collaboration, regardless of whether a cooperating teacher graduated from the college. This result calls into question Herman and Schafer's (1984) suggestion that graduates be employed to promote program goals; this suggestion may hold only when a program has remained unchanged.

Third, the lack of consensus among cooperating teachers regarding importance of particular BTCs and when many of the BTCs should develop in teacher preparation points to the need for greater specification of the relationship between student teaching and the preparation that precedes it. We agree with Cruikshank and Armline's (1987, cited in Guyton & McIntyre, 1990) suggestion that "each education unit should indicate specifically what parts of that curriculum can best be obtained via teacher experiences in the field and, in addition, what prerequisites on campus teaching experience are necessary." This specification needs to go beyond a general view of student teaching as a program phase (Alderman, Christie, Klingele, Thompson & Whittington, 1992) and define its role with respect to each BTC. Once developed, the specifics should be shared with teacher education students and cooperating teachers.

Fourth, we suggest that collaboration alone may not bring consensus. In addition to greater specification regarding the relationship between student teaching and preparation for it, we support the introduction of careful screening of cooperating teachers, particularly to identify those whom Zeichner and Liston (1987) would call "self-renewing" professionals capable of promoting the development of student teachers as reflexive decision-makers. Zeichner and Liston (1987) describe a screening process that includes screening of cooperating teachers by the program. Subsequently student teachers, program directors, and cooperating teachers, through a process involving observation and interview, establish a

"match" between the student and the placement. Such a process, in conjunction with collaboration, would likely contribute to a joint vision of what student teaching is supposed to accomplish and how.

Fifth, there appears to be agreement among cooperating teachers that some BTCs should be fully attained prior to student teaching. This agreement is strong with respect to communication and knowledge of equal access. In cases where BTC attainment should be complete prior to student teaching, assessment of such BTCs should be considered as a precondition to student teaching.

Finally, responses for some BTCs have caused us to reconsider their meaning and how they can be evaluated. Cooperating teachers seem to be ambivalent as to when lifelong learning should develop. Although student teachers received high average competence ratings for lifelong learning, many cooperating teachers omitted it, perhaps due to an inability to judge. We wonder whether a commitment to lifelong learning is a competency; is it instead a philosophical orientation? In any case, what is the basis for judgment of its attainment? We ask this second question with respect to working with parents as well.

Implications for Research

The results of this study also point to the need for continuing research. First, a similar survey of college faculty needs to be conducted to determine whether the lack of consensus we have observed is unique to cooperating teachers and to what degree college faculty views of BTC importance and the timing of BTC preparation resemble those of cooperating teachers.

A second focus of study pertains to elementary and secondary teachers' priorities and role identity and the consequent commitment to program goals. We were intrigued by the overall difference in importance ratings by elementary and secondary teachers. Elementary teachers tended to rate all competencies more highly than did secondary teachers. Furthermore, elementary teachers valued motivation, learning and problem solving more highly than did secondary teachers, whereas secondary teachers valued the importance of subject matter knowledge and the ability to structure it more highly.

We have hypothesized two explanations for these differences. First, elementary teachers and secondary teachers simply may have different response styles that result in one group giving generally higher ratings than the other. Second, the differences in competency importance may be related to real differences in priorities and identity with teacher preparation and subsequent professional experience. Most elementary teachers majored in elementary education. The preponderance of their training has involved teacher education course work. Consequently their professional identity is likely to be more intimately tied to the content and skills covered in teacher education courses. The content area focus of secondary teachers' preparation may have resulted in a greater identity with the subjects they teach and a lower priority placed on education skills. The cultures of elementary and

secondary schools where these teachers have taught may have further reinforced differences in values and orientations that began with teacher preparation.

Third, we need to find out more about how cooperating teachers view their own experience and how this is related to their view of their role as teacher educators. Although we found some relationships among when competencies should develop, their importance and the beginning competence of the current student teacher, these relationships were moderate and did not hold for all competencies. Furthermore, we were struck by the lack of relationship with the location, level, or recency of cooperating teachers' education or with their experience as teachers or as cooperating teachers. In general, their views of when a competency should develop were not related to how important it may be or to the level of competence they were observing in their current student teacher or professional training and experience.

More basic questions need to be explored. There is evidence supporting the contention that practicing teachers regard student teaching as important to their own professional development (Koerner, 1992). Yet we need to know **how** it was important. We need to elicit cooperating teachers' reflections about their own teacher preparation and the role student teaching played for them; we need to know their reasons for being cooperating teachers and what they hope to accomplish. We also need to discover cooperating teachers' views of their own competence, how competent they actually are and whether their own professional strengths and weaknesses are related to how they prioritize different competencies.

Finally, studies like this one need to be conducted with broader samples of cooperating teachers working with a variety of colleges of education. Only then can we determine how typical the results of this study are.

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