FACULTY RESEARCH EDITION

of

The Savannah State College Bulletin

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Structured Placements To Attain Favorable Ends For Student Teachers Are Possible

By Allen P. Hayes

Probably eighty-five percent of beginning elementary teachers have completed a student teaching or internship experience based on the standard model. This model—one student teacher, one cooperating teacher, one college supervisor—is challenged severely in an essay which is mainly verbal logic (11). Neither is empirical evidence reassuring to advocates of the model. Considering the massive ubiquity of the standard model for student teaching, research evidence regarding it is meager, fragmentary, and discontinuous. And a summary of that relatively small amount of empirical evidence available is discouraging. In general it seems indicated that student teaching results in a decline in favorable attitudes (22), logical consistency (15), "openness" (1), and cohesiveness within "the student-teaching triad"[1] (24). The cooperating teacher seems clearly to be more influential upon student teachers than the college supervisor. (1, 12, 13, 19)

But the remarkable ubiquity of the standard model in teacher education is probably the major factor in the existence of a professional organization, The Association for Student Teaching, having a full time executive secretary. And the apparent simplicity of student teaching rivals that of marriage. Both student teaching and marriage might appear at first glance to be exquisitely simple institutions; yet in practice and upon analysis both prove to be exceedingly complex. Students of both are seriously concerned with what makes a good "match." Now, matching of dating couples by computer has in recent years become prominent with regard to courtship, the preliminary to marriage. But at this point the analogy between marriage and student teaching breaks down, for there has been as yet little use of the tremendous potential of modern data processing and computing capabilities to match or structure student teacher-cooperating teacher-college supervisor trios (the "student-teaching triad").

More full use of data processing and computing capabilities is basic to the thesis[2] of this article: It is possible to selectively place particular student teachers with particular college supervisors, and cooperating teachers, so that predictable favorable outcomes result. (Let it be noted here that it is the *presently existing* population of cooperating teachers and college supervisors to which we refer.)

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[1]The term, "student teaching triad," is explicated in a report of research by Albert H. Yee (24). This investigator stated, "The triad can be viewed as being comprised of two dyads between the student teacher and each of his leaders, and a dyadic relationship between the two leaders." (p. 98)

[2]The research underlying the thesis of this article was done at the University of Florida under the direction of Bob Burton Brown. A report of this research (9) was made at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association on February 8, 1969, at Los Angeles, and the research is reported in greater detail in reference (10), the author's doctoral dissertation.

Such utilization of the computer is past due in the field of teacher education; other fields, for example business, and space research, have utilized these capabilities far beyond anything attempted in teacher education. So potential values in high speed information processing vastly outstrip present exploitations in the field of teacher education. But much more is needed than efficiency in complex statistical operations, and in data processing; the computer has been aptly termed a high speed idiot. Teacher educators must use the computer as a powerful tool, as the best in measurement, scholarship, and human relations are marshalled first to develop and then to put to constructive use a theory for student teaching.

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory." A good theory, an action theory of student teaching which could guide Directors of Student Teaching in the structuring of student-teaching triads seems possible to the writer as will be explained.

But there is an intervening problem, the solution of which probably depends greatly upon the skill of democratic group problem-solving (19). This is the problem of attaining adequate agreement between school systems and preparing institutions as to the proper outcomes of the student teaching experience. Ultimately and logically, this problem resolves into something like, What are the proper objectives of education? And *this* is a philosophical-educational question which has troubled both theoreticians and practitioners since Plato, and is still very much alive. Must such a difficult problem be considered impossible of solution? The answer is a qualified "No." That it can be solved, at least for limited periods and for limited populations, is demonstrated by the viable and relatively permanent existence of specific institutions which are accepted as educational. (This last sentence might be considered to offer pragmatic evidence; differing philosophical systems would offer somewhat different answers to the problem on a verbal logic basis.) Thus the problem is one difficult, but not impossible for "educational institutions."

But if the question of proper objectives is to be solved, or at least put in a reasonable perspective, in regard to *student teaching programs*, what is required? Principally it is suggested (a) familiarity with and competence to surmount the barriers to the necessary agreement between college and public school personnel as to acceptable objectives,[3] which probably means (b) open and fair discussions within an assumption or acceptance that *some* agreed-upon structure of objectives is better than unexamined or even covert objectives. When public schools' and higher education's objectives for the outcomes of student teaching are unexamined or covert, then inefficiency and even direct contradiction are probably inevitable. Thus the welfare of student teachers, which should be of foremost mutual concern to both school systems and preparing institutions, is indeed poorly served. Leadership to

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[3]The writings of Bob Burton Brown and his associates suggest some of the difficulties involved. See (6), (5), and (4). For complete treatment of Brown's philosophic position, and the instrumentation involved, see (7) and (3). For material pointedly relevant to the difficulties suggested in this article's text, see (10) pp. 80-83, and pp. 33-37.

achieve the essential agreement (or at least a mutual understanding, where total agreement proves impossible) may come from either school systems or higher education. But as Lindley Styles has suggested, "Very little progress toward the intelligent preparation of personnel for education is likely without close cooperation between school systems and preparing institutions." (21)

It may be that agreement as to the proper objectives for education means that, for the purposes of developing a useful theory of student teaching, an explicit philosophic framework must be (at least provisionally) accepted. That is, measurement instruments explicitly related to a specific educational theory may have to be employed in order to attain some reliability in prediction of outcomes of student teaching. Such reliability is viewed as an essential characteristic of the "action theory of student teaching" which this article is suggesting can be developed.

The "may be" of the above paragraph is inferred from comparing the one piece of research—reported by (9) and (10)—regarding student-teaching triads which claims—see pp. 80 and 73-74 of reference (10)—to enable predictable outcomes from deliberately structuring the student-teaching triad, to other related studies (1, 8, 12, 13, 16, 22, 24). None of the latter make such a claim, except with an added implication that certain relatively scarce characteristics among cooperating teachers and college supervisors must be increased. In effect this last means that a population of college supervisors and cooperating teachers different from the present is required. Whatever may be the ideal characteristics of persons filling these roles, if present staffing can be utilized with greater efficiency it must be counted a clear gain.

One feature of the study which indicates the possibility of specificity in structuring for predictable outcomes *now*, is the utilization of measuring instruments explicitly related to particular bodies of educational and personality theory, namely, Experimentalism (see 3 and 7), and the work of Rokeach (see 17 and 18). Two of the measuring instruments used—the "D Scale," and the "PBI" (see 18 and 3, respectively)—may measure basic personality characteristics. If they do, they are likely more "powerful" than certain other instruments[4] used in comparable pre- and posttest studies of student-teaching triads. But whether comparable or better stochastic prediction of an equal of higher level might be possible with other measuring instruments used with the same (or other appropriate) powerful statistical technique (the development and analysis of multiple regression models[5]) has not yet been demonstrated. If other instruments are used, probably the theory to be developed will come out differently. For the most general theory, probably a variety of instruments should be used. In

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[4]The most widely used scale is the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory; eleven studies using this instrument are abstracted for presentation in (23). Other instruments include the GNC Scale of Logical Consistency of Ideas about Education (see 15), the Lipscomb Scale of Teacher Attitudes (see 12 and 8), and three Q-sorts measuring "openness" developed by Bills et al (see 1).

[5]For two treatments of these statistical procedures see Mandenhalls' *Linear Models* (14), and Bottenbert and Ward's *Applied Multiple Linear Regression* (2).

any case, it does seem possible that if the encouraging results reported in (9) and (10) stand, and are elaborated, that an action theory of student teaching can be developed.

To summarize, we may say that the best in measurement, data processing, and computing technology must be orchestrated with sound scholarship and with skill in democratic group problem-solving if the goal of an action theory (or theories) of student teaching—and its implication of ability to deliberately structure student-teaching triads to attain specific outcomes—is to be attained. Thus, the task is difficult and is complex, but the end result, a more or less elegant theory, would be of great utility to guide Directors of Student Teaching in placing student teachers with some assurance that certain desired ends would result.

The thesis of this article has been that the difficulties and complexities involved in developing and subsequently using the desired theory(s) *can be resolved,* with a reasonable expenditure of resources so as to fully exploit available technological capabilities. The writer submits that such resources *should* be allocated and a full scale effort made. It is posited that the standard model for student teaching is still relevant, and can be made increasingly valuable in modern teacher education programs. Student teaching may be likened to a massive gold mine with elusive and seemingly erratic concentrations of lode. The mine has been productive for years, but by fits and starts, and with great imprecission. Now with the possibilities eminent in theoretical and technological advance, the gold mine—or student teaching— can become more predictably and more steadily productive, its contributions to the human enterprise much more perfectly realized.

Considering the massive inertia of the status quo, surely it is wise to explore thoroughly the possibilities of the standard model, prior to preemptive commitment of research funds to newer programs which must bear the same onus as to effectiveness, but have the disadvantages inherent in newly-hatched ideas.

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