New Directions for Teacher Education Research: How the VLDS Could Support Longitudinal Research on Teacher Preparation

Peter Youngs, University of Virginia

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Overview of Presentation

- Prior research on teacher education
- Longitudinal studies of teacher education
- A conception/vision for the future of teacher education research/how research programs can/should evolve
- Connections
- Role of the VLDS in this research program

Prior Research

- Many studies have examined the design, practices, and short-term outcomes of teacher education
- Very few studies have helped us understand the long-term outcomes of various teacher preparation approaches, structures, or designs for practicing K-12 teachers or their K-12 students.

Longitudinal Studies of Teacher Preparation

- Researchers in Germany and the Netherlands were among the first to employ longitudinal designs in studying teacher preparation (Dann, Muller-Fohrbrodt, & Cloetta, 1918; Hinsch, 1979; Brouwer, 1989)

  -They found that beginning teachers' instructional practices were more strongly shaped by their school contexts and their teaching experiences than by pre-service teacher preparation

- These findings were consistent with findings from U.S. studies of teacher socializaton (Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998)

- More recently, we have begun to see evidence that pre-service preparation can affect beginning teachers' instructional practices and their effectiveness

Longitudinal Qualitative Studies

Borko, Peressini, and colleagues (2000)

- 6 secondary math candidates in two undergraduate preparation programs
- The authors used a situated learning perspective
- Case of Mr. Hanson

  -Student teaching placement reinforced content of methods course

  -In 1st year, teaching for conceptual understanding was not valued at his school; factors that led to different demands being placed on him

  -In 2nd year, he was able to address challenges posed by school norms and accountability demands while teaching for conceptual understanding

Longitudinal Qualitative Studies

Grossman and colleagues (2000)

- 10 elementary and secondary E-LA candidates in MA program
- The authors focused on conceptual tools (broad theories, subject-specific concepts) and practical tools (teaching practices, strategies, resources)
- Case of Stephanie

  -Few opportunities in student teaching to try out ideas from E-LA methods course (which focused a lot on writing instruction)

  -In first 2 years, she taught in a school with highly prescriptive E-LA curriculum that featured little writing instruction

  -By 2nd year, she had enacted several tools from her MA program

  -In 2nd year, principal asked her and two colleagues to revise the school's E-LA curriculum to include more explicit writing instruction

New York City Pathways Study

Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2009)

- Large-scale study: how NYC elementary candidates' preparation experiences were related to their effectiveness in their first 2 years
  - -Factors that contributed to student gains in 1st year: being supervised during student teaching, congruence between school context for student teaching and current school context, being required to complete capstone project
  - -Coursework in mathematics and English/language arts was associated with effectiveness among 2nd-year teachers, but not 1st-year teachers
- NYC Pathways Study is important for several reasons
  - -One of first U.S. teacher prep studies to use large-scale data
  - -Included all NYC university preparation programs, TFA, and NYC Teaching Fellows Program
  - -Examined characteristics across pathways associated with teacher effectiveness

Brouwer and Korthagen

Mixed-Methods Study from Netherlands (2005)

- Large-scale study: how elementary and secondary candidates' preparation experiences were associated with their instruct. practices in first 2 years
  - -Survey data from 148 candidates, 128 cooperating teachers, 31 university supervisors
  - -Interview/observation data from 12 candidates; interview data from 17 cooperating teachers, 12 university supervisors
- Findings
  - -In 1st year, most teachers in survey sample focused on teacher-centered instruction and strict discipline (inconsistent with preparation program)
  - -In 2nd year, most were using the types of instructional practices that had been emphasized in their courses and student teaching
- The authors concluded that the teachers' practices "resulting from their pre-service programs went through a latency period during their entry to the profession" and then re-emerged.

A Conception for the Future of Teacher Education Research

How Teacher Education Research Programs Can/Should Evolve

- TE research needs to be longitudinal
  -e.g., follow program graduates for 3-4 years; follow 1st-year candidates for 3-4 years through their programs
- TE research should be large-scale
  -e.g., samples of 200 elementary candidates, 100 special education candidates, 150 secondary math candidates
- TE research needs to involve multiple methods
  -e.g., data from surveys, interviews, cl. observations, stud. assessments
- TE research needs to have an explicit focus on equity issues
  -e.g., how to prepare teachers to work with ELLs; how to address inequities in the distribution of effective teachers
- TE research should focus on a range of preparation programs/pathways
  -e.g., programs at research universities, large public teaching institutions,
  small liberal arts colleges, alternate licensure programs

A Conception for the Future of Teacher Education Research

How Teacher Education Research Programs Can/Should Evolve

- TE research needs to be carried out with teacher educators
  -e.g., university course instructors, field instructors, cooperating teachers
- TE research should bring together subject-matter experts with researchers in areas such educational policy, economics of education, sociology of ed.
  -e.g., math education scholars and sociologists (Paul Cobb & Ken Frank)
- TE research needs to examine ways in which student teachers' practical experiences are linked to theory
- TE research should include multiple ways of measuring competence or effectiveness at different stages
  -e.g., final year of preparation, 1st year of teaching, 5th year of teaching)

Connections Among Teaching Candidates' Experiences

- Linkages between theory and practice
  -A situated learning perspective: congruence between courses, field experiences, and school contexts for 1st- and 2nd-year teachers
  -But also: How well robust TE programs prepare teachers to respond to challenging school and district contexts (e.g., low-performing school, high-poverty school)

- Role of teaching candidate assessments
  -Many promising assessments exist (e.g., CLASS)
  -Need to develop sets of teacher assessments that (a) increase in complexity over time and (b) are linked to common vision of effective teaching

Connections Among Teacher Educators and Researchers; Between IHEs and School Districts

Connections Among Teacher Educators and Researchers

- Future studies should involve university course instructors and field instructors in helping design and conduct research
- Future studies should bring together scholars in areas such as literacy, math, and GATE with scholars in sociology, economics, and ed policy

  -Example: TE research at Michigan State University

  -Example: NYC Pathways Study

Connections Between Universities and School Districts

- Future studies should partner with school districts

  -Studies could involve cooperating teachers, principals, and directors of curriculum, professional development, and human resources

  -These individuals have knowledge about the characteristics of teachers who have graduated from certain TE programs, how they're likely to fare when they encounter demanding testing/accountability policies

Role of the Virginia Longitudinal Data System in this Research Program

How the VLDS Could Support this Research Program

- It is very challenging for universities to track their teaching candidates into their first two years of K-12 teaching following graduation; the VLDS could play an important role in such efforts
- Policy makers are increasingly interested in understanding how teacher education programs contribute to the effectiveness of beginning teachers; the VLDS could help provide data on the effectiveness of 1st- and 2nd-year teachers
- Following the NYC Pathways Study, it is very important to include teaching candidates and program graduates from multiple institutions in the same study; the VLDS could help here as well

  -The idea is to identify common features across programs that contribute to instructional quality, retention, and effectiveness in the first two years of teaching

Role of the Virginia Longitudinal Data System in this Research Program

How the VLDS Could Support this Research Program

- We are interested in studying factors that affect the decisions of individuals from rural or urban areas to return to their communities of origin (or similar communities) and teach there for extended periods; the VLDS could play an important in such research
- We are also interested in studying which programs prepare teachers to eventually move into leadership roles in their schools and districts (e.g., as principals, department chairs, grade-team leaders, instructional coachers, teacher association leaders, district administrators, etc.). The VLDS could play a key role here as well

Conclusion

- This is an exciting time to be involved in teacher education research, but it is also a challenging time
- The Curry School of Education is looking to partner with other IHEs in Virginia to initiate longitudinal research on teacher preparation
- The Virginia Longitudinal Data System could strongly enhance efforts to engage in multi-year research on teacher education

Contact
Peter Youngs, Associate Professor
University of Virginia
Dept. of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
(434)924-1752
pay2n@virginia.edu

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