

Autonomy Versus Interconnection Within a Cohort Model of Undergraduate and Graduate-Level Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

Quality educator preparation is key to effective P-12 teaching. Miller (2010) documented some of the proficiencies that effective teacher preparation programs should stress so their teacher candidates can meet the needs of 21st century students. Among the various proficiencies cited were demonstrating proficiency in assessments and mastering content-specific instruction. Undergraduate and graduate-level initial teacher certification students who experience educator preparation via cohort-based teaching models (both online and face-to-face) find themselves experiencing the occasional contrasting tendencies of autonomy and interconnection daily. While the performance of teacher candidates' work product at the university level is measured separately through both university-based and external assessments, the cohort-based teaching model is largely based on shared experiences, collaboration, and encouraging candidates to view themselves as members of a group as well as individuals pursuing the objective of becoming P12 teachers. While there are instances where this contradiction is pronounced such as in the assignment of grades, the autonomous nature of field-based student-teaching experiences within separate classrooms across different schools, and individualized feedback and direction from instructors, the autonomy and interconnection often work together when candidates' personal experiences are brought back to the group for the purposes of reflection, collective analysis, and brainstorming solutions to field-based challenges encountered during student-teaching experiences. Presenters will discuss how the interaction between candidates' autonomous personal experiences and the cohort model's interconnection emphasis on group reflection, ongoing peer, instructor, and emotional support, networking, and shared experiences provide teacher candidates with meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: cohort model, teacher preparation, teacher candidate, teacher proficiency, teacher collaboration