

The Teacher Education Center Concept: A Unifying Approach to Teacher Education

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THE Teacher Education Center concept is a unifying approach to the study of teaching and supervision. Emphasizing continuous career development, a coordinated program of preservice and in-service experiences is planned to meet the needs and interests of experienced professionals as well as undergraduate students in such a way that each becomes a student of teaching according to his own particular stage of professional development. Physically, a Teacher Education Center is a cluster of two or three geographically contiguous elementary schools, or one or two junior high schools (or middle schools), and a senior high school. Organizationally, it is a partnership between a school system and one or more preparing institutions, with the possible inclusion of the professional associations and the state department of education.

Personnel

Directing the program in each Teacher Education Center is a full-time *coordinator* who is jointly selected and employed by the school system and the preparing institution. His role in general is to put together creatively the personnel and material resources of the school system and the college or university in ways that will produce effective laboratory experience programs for the university students assigned to the Center and

in-service programs for the supervising teachers who work with these students. Stationed in the Center schools, he is in constant contact with and serves as a continuing resource to both the student teachers and the supervising teachers. He is equally and simultaneously a staff member of both the university and the school system. In coordinating the preservice and in-service programs, he unifies the interests, resources, and ambitions of both institutions and enhances the attainment of mutual objectives.

The coordinator does not serve as a direct arm of the administrative or supervisory services of any particular school building but, while working in close and constant cooperation with these services, he serves as an extension of the superintendent of schools and the dean of the college of education. Unlike the traditional supervisor, he is stationed in the Center schools; there he is easily reached and can act as a constant resource for both the preservice and in-service professionals. While coordinating the "team" supervisory effort in the Center, he can assume major responsibility for the general supervision of the student teachers. Specialized supervisory services are provided by the university and public school academic supervisors. Within

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his area(s) of competencies, the coordinator can assume such specialized supervisory responsibilities as seem appropriate to his time and talents. He may also become involved in the teaching of methods or other related teacher education courses as the needs of the program and/or the time and talents of the coordinator may dictate.

The role of the university *resource consultant supervisor* represents an extension of that of the conventional university supervisor. While serving as a supervisor, he may also serve as a curriculum and teacher education resource consultant to the Center personnel. Frequently he may work more directly with the supervising teachers than with the individual student teachers. In this manner he is free to supervise the student teacher *directly* by actual contact in the classroom or he may supervise *indirectly* through the coordinator and/or the supervising teachers.

Supervising teachers include all teachers who are in any way involved in guiding the intensive or extensive experiences of the preservice students assigned to the Center. Their role is greatly expanded beyond that of the conventional supervising teacher. Since the entire Center is a "clinical classroom," the strengths of every teacher become available in some manner for the development of prospective teachers.

The Preservice Program

The undergraduate students placed in the Center are not assigned to one supervising teacher, but instead are assigned to the Center staff or to a department within the Center staff. This places the responsibility for planning, directing, and assessing the development of the undergraduates on a number and variety of people and ultimately on the whole Center staff.

The student teachers participate in both *intensive* and *extensive* experiences. These experiences are carefully planned and individualized according to the needs, interests, strengths, and developmental patterns of the student teacher and the resources available in and to the Center.

The *intensive* experiences are similar to

those which typically have been considered to be the strength of the one teacher, one assignment situations. In the intensive experiences the student teacher perceives the overall role and responsibility of the teacher and the sequential development of skills, ideas, and practices. He experiences this by gradually assuming more and more responsibility for the instructional program, maintaining that responsibility for a period of time, and then gradually relinquishing it to the supervising teacher.

Interspersed among these intensive experiences are a number of *extensive* experiences designed to give the student teacher a broad and comprehensive contact with teaching. They can vary from short "porthole" observations to longer periods involving some participation. Student teachers might even participate, in specifically planned ways, in fields other than their primary area of specialization, teach at other grade levels, work with exceptional groups, and devote substantial time to "focused" observation in order to explore the variety of teaching styles and strategies employed by the teachers in the Center. The extensive phase may also include simulated experiences as well as micro-teaching sequences for predetermined skill development, video-tape feedback of their actual teaching, and inter-school and inter-center exchanges of student teachers.

Such experiences enable the student teacher to go beyond one model, one assignment, one frame of reference. They expose him to many models and many challenges and allow him to integrate these into a personal philosophy and professional "life style" and to develop a repertoire of teaching practices. In other words the prospective teacher puts together, with proper supervisory assistance, the best of many models, many programs, and many experiences into a meaningful, workable pattern of teaching.

The In-Service Program

The Teacher Education Center is designed to benefit not only the preservice professionals but also to assist the *in-service* professionals.

While the student teachers are developing initial teaching skills, the in-service teachers are building advanced expertise in teaching and clinical supervision. The Center concept provides for a sequence of courses, workshops, and seminars, offered in the Center, to develop a staff of *Associates in Teacher Education*. These carry graduate or special student credit and are offered free to cooperating Center staff in return for their work with student teachers.

The in-service Center staff members are given opportunities and are encouraged to participate in other kinds of professional development experiences such as attendance at local, regional, and national conferences, workshops, and clinics. National leaders in teacher education are also brought to the Center to work with the staff in developing and implementing innovative programs.

In general, the Teacher Education Cen-

ter is a vehicle and a place wherein individuals and/or teams of individuals can focus on the study of teaching and learning and can, through formal and informal means, become better and more effective teachers as well as better and more effective teachers of teachers.

Evaluation of the Teacher Education Center

Preliminary research indicates that student teachers placed in Teacher Education Centers hold more socially desirable attitudes toward supervision from university faculty members than students in non-center schools. Center student teachers also rate the evaluative criteria used by college supervisors as clearer and more adequately communicated than do non-center students.

Center students participate more widely in the total school program and become in-

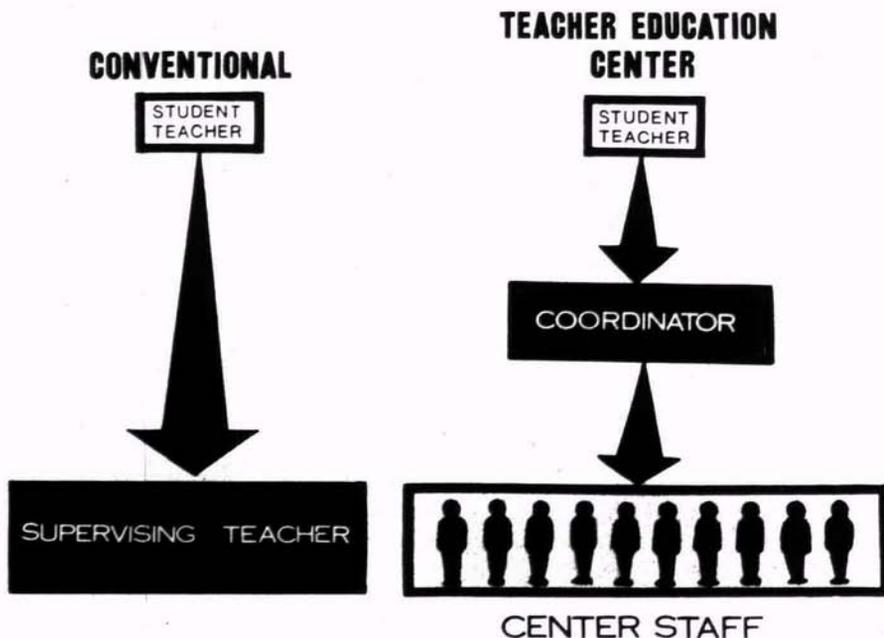


Figure 1. Comparison of the Conventional and the Teacher Education Center Approaches in Teacher Education

volved in a greater variety of experiences. Student teachers in centers also use a greater variety of instructional approaches such as team teaching, programmed learning, educational television, and audio-visual aids than students in non-center schools.

Data gathered by Amershek and Young¹ on student teachers randomly assigned to centers and non-centers in order to study teaching performance and attitudes suggest that, although student teachers typically become more closed minded, apathetic, and resistant to change while student teaching, students in Teacher Education Centers do not. They tend to decrease significantly their need for exhibitionism and increase their self-perception as a teacher.

An analysis of the teaching performance data of the two groups indicates that student teachers in centers teach differently (statistically significant) than the non-center group.

Center student teachers in instructional situations talk less; elicit more pupil responses and extended pupil initiated responses; use, summarize, and accept more pupil responses; and have a higher indirect-direct ratio as indicated by Flanders' Interaction Analysis. They also ask more divergent and elaborating questions as indicated by the OScaR 5V.

Implications for Teacher Education

Full implementation of the ideas embodied in the Center concept will ultimately establish a new kind of joint sovereignty for teacher education shared by colleges, state departments of education, public schools, and professional associations.

Additional implications of the Teacher Education Center concept might be:

1. An integration of the on-campus and off-campus aspects of teacher education programs

¹ Unpublished research conducted by K. Amershek and D. B. Young, in conjunction with the Office of Laboratory Experiences at the University of Maryland, College Park.



Figure 2. Plan for Continuing Career Development from Preservice Through Advanced Professional Status

2. The assumption of greater responsibility for the preservice component of teacher education by the public schools, and for the in-service component by the university

3. A new position (Center coordinator) shared equally by the public schools and the university

4. The emergence of new roles for teacher education personnel

5. The abolishment of direct honoraria to supervising teachers, with the subsequent adjustment of regular salaries and/or faculty loads

6. An increasing concern for teacher education performance skills in the employment of public school teachers

7. The emergence of levels of pre-professional status and delineation and a clarification of the levels of professional status

8. The strengthening of in-service teacher education programs

9. The emergence of the supervised teaching internship as the usual practice rather than the exception

10. Teacher certification after the successful completion of a supervised intern experience

11. An uninterrupted, carefully planned, sequential transition from entry into the profession to full advanced professional status

12. The emergence of standards for off-campus clinical Teacher Education Centers. □

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