

Beliefs about the Purpose of Public Education: Implications on the Hiring of Early Childhood Faculty

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Many times, the search process is steeped in traditional methods, questions, and procedures that limit the depth and scope of a search. The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs of faculty in colleges of education for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of what early childhood faculty believe. What was discovered was there is a generally homogenous view of the purposes of education. Yet, there were differences in beliefs with regard to gender, race, university size and rank which allowed for recommendations on lines of inquiry as to beliefs.

Introduction

One of the most important responsibilities administrators engage in is the recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and retention of new faculty. Each new hire either brings positive, negative, or neutral consequences to the existing team. Successful hires can instantly promote the productivity, success, and collegiality of the department. Unsuccessful choices can immediately or slowly destroy relationships, programs, and morale within a department. Some new faculty appear to initially have a neutral influence on a department, meaning they don't contribute or destroy the existing departmental structure. In the opinion of the authors, this is also an unsuccessful hire. Hiring decisions influence the department and college for years.

Likewise, the job satisfaction of the new employee will be greater if the candidate is aware of and understands the culture of the department.

During the interview process, the applicant is interviewing the department as much as the committee members are interviewing him/her. The committee is looking for the right person to fill specific needs or gaps in on the existing team. They are seeking to answer the question: Will this potential colleague add a new dimension to the group strengths?

The applicant, faculty, and administrators' desire for this to be a successful long-term relationship, therefore, they want to make the best decision possible. It has been stated that hiring is the "million dollar decision" (Cook, 2013). Traditionally, committee members consider education, experience, personality characteristics, and collegiality when making hiring decisions. It is the belief of the authors that committee members should expand their considerations to include belief systems as well.

Historically, the traditional process of faculty searches is similar regardless of institution. These practices include choosing the members and chair of the search committee, developing an advertisement, reviewing curricula vitae, conducting phone interviews, inviting highly regarded candidates to campus for the marathon interview, completing background checks, checking references, and ultimately, making an offer. Each of these practices is part of a well-known, established process that is shared by most institutions.

However, many of the decisions that are made are ephemeral. They are based on immediacy, initial impressions, personality characteristics, and the results of generic, standard interview questions. Very seldom do committee members delve “deeper” into the candidates to ensure he/she will be a successful fit for the job. The purpose of this study was to examine general trends in beliefs that educators in Colleges of Education hold. How might this information be of assistance to search committees? What are the characteristics of faculty in education? What predispositions do faculty have and where can deviations be found? While these tendencies can be seen across various fields, the focus of this particular study is on hiring early childhood education faculty.

Review of Literature

In order to gain a better understanding of the conditions and experiences surrounding the hiring of early childhood faculty, previous work was reviewed on the subjects of teacher education supply, the hiring process, and gender issues in teacher education faculty. Due to these issues, teacher education departments face an uphill battle in expanding their faculty as well as replacing those members who retire or move on to another institution.

The authors reviewed the literature regarding supply and hiring as factors that impact the

process of hiring new faculty in early childhood education positions. In addition to reviewing the literature of supply they also reviewed the available literature on the demographics of early childhood faculty.

Supply

Wolf-Wendel, Baker, Twombly, Tollefson, and Mahlios (2006), look at the data of recent doctoral recipients and attempt to discern if they are moving into higher education, K-12, or private companies. The authors found: “Within fields like foundations and mathematics education, 55 percent of the doctoral recipients in 2000 wished to become faculty, while, within fields like foreign language and early childhood education, only 32 percent expressed a similar intent” (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2006, p. 274). The fact that only 32 percent of early childhood doctoral recipients expressed an interest in pursuing a career in academia is alarming and sheds light on the possible shortage of professors in this area.

In order to explain the lack of early childhood doctoral recipients, Wolf-Wendel et al. outlined possible paths these new recipients took. While one path to work at a Research Intensive institution could be traced back to attending a highly selective undergraduate institution, most of these individuals did not attend a traditional teacher education program and if they taught in a K-12 environment it was a brief experience. The most common path to higher education “. . . consists of individuals who are older and who worked full time in graduate school within the public schools or as full-time faculty members before graduating with their doctorates” (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2006, p. 293).

As explained above, there is a shortage of early childhood doctorates who attended a traditional teacher education program and taught for a longer period in a K-12 setting. As Twombly, Wolf-Wendel, Williams, and Green state: “It appears that teacher education programs

face personnel shortages as serious as those in K-12 education” (2006, p. 507). Twombly et al. explain that one reason for this shortage could be attributed to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) policy of teacher education professors having K-12 experience. The 2008 NCATE Unit 5a Standard for Acceptable states “Professional education faculty have earned doctorates or exceptional expertise that qualifies them for their assignments. School faculty are licensed in the fields that they teach or supervise but often do not hold the doctorate. Clinical faculty from higher education have contemporary professional experiences in school settings at the levels that they supervise.” (NCATE Unit Standards, 2008).

The authors go on to explain: “. . . shortages in teacher education are apt to be linked to those in K-12 education and will, in turn, reduce the nation’s capacity for producing new teachers.” (Twombly et al, 2006, pp. 507-508). If conditions like this continue, Twombly et al. suggest that teacher education programs and NCATE may need to rethink the qualifications needed by faculty who are seeking employment in higher education. In order to address the issue of having professors with terminal degrees who also have K-12 experience, Twombly et al. suggest “. . . schools have an obligation to actively engage in recruiting doctoral students into the field and providing them with the skills to be successful in the institutions within which they will work” (2006, p. 510). While recruiting those from the immediate area may not help to increase the diversity of the department, it can help with the lack of qualified faculty in the discipline as a whole. However, if faculty are devoted to recruiting high quality doctoral students, they must accept the fact that those with different beliefs and philosophies are needed to move the field of education forward.

Washington (2008) found that, “Early childhood departments have a disproportionate number of part-time and adjunct faculty members,

and as a result, the ratio of students to full-time faculty in early care and education programs is 61 to 1 as opposed to 39 to 1 in higher education overall. Part time faculty make up 57 percent of total faculty across two- and four-year institutions. Moreover, much of this faculty is aging; meaning that they may either retire soon or need additional professional development support” (p. 16). Maxwell, Lim, and Early (2006) surveyed California educators and found that 52.4% of faculty at four year teacher preparation institutions possessed doctorates. These interesting employment trends lead to a wide applicant pool regarding faculty credentialing in early childhood educators.

Faculty Demographics

The National Center For Education Information (NCEI) surveyed 2,500 randomly chosen K-12 public schools throughout the United States utilizing a 33 item mail in or online survey. From this group NCEI received 1,076 usable surveys from teachers and then compiled the report “Profile of teachers in the U.S. 2011”. The demographics of the participants in this study were 84% female, 16% male; 84% White, 7% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 4% Other (Feistritz, 2011). If we take this report to be an example of the demographics of the teaching population it shows that the overwhelming majority are white females. A report by Eduventures shows that in Fall 2005, 82.6% of faculty in Schools of Education are white and also during the same time period 63% of faculty were female.

As found by Grant and Gillette (1987) and Tokarczyk (1988), the majority of teacher educators are white middle class females (Galman, 2012). This is supported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that found in 2011, only 2.3% of pre-school and kindergarten teachers were male and 18.3% of elementary and middle school teachers were male (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2012). One problem with this paradigm is that if the majority of future teachers are also from

the same demographic then certain philosophies and beliefs may be reinforced in the university classroom instead of challenged. "It is possible that many of them could be participating in socializing girls and women rather than in challenging valued identities and interrogating preservice women's reluctance to politicize their work, critically examine their gendered, raced, and classed habitus and transgress 'niceness.'" In other words, we as teacher educators may be protective of and intent upon managing and preserving our enactments of valued identities (and subsequent moral careers)" (Galman, 2012, p. x). As found by Flynn, Kemp, and Page 2013, the majority of teacher educators are white and they most closely identify with essentialism in their beliefs about the purpose of education. In the same study it was discovered that minority teacher educators favored postmodern/social reconstruction beliefs about the purpose of education.

Hiring

The hiring process at institutions of higher education is an experience that requires an enormous amount of time and work on the part of the search committee. The most important thing that a department chair can do is ensure that the committee is prepared and supported. Murray (1999) offers the advice that committee members should work to agree on the most important requirements for the position and develop a set of structured questions that every candidate interviewed will answer. In addition to asking a pre-determined cadre of questions Murray goes further to explain they should develop "... the criteria for a good, an acceptable, and a poor answer. In other words the committee should develop an interview guide or protocol" (Murray, 1999, p. 49). It is imperative that department chairs ensure they select committee members who are devoted to advancing the department in terms of collegial work and scholarship.

Many universities are facing the same task of looking to diversify their faculty. While there have been many positive steps in the past decade to make higher academia more diverse, it is generally accepted that there is still much more to be done. Pauline Kayes, president of Diversity Works, Inc. created a workshop that provided professional development which sought to "...increase understanding among White faculty, administrators, and staff of the common challenges, struggles, and experiences of faculty and staff of color in predominately White colleges and universities" (2006, p. 67). Kayes argues that all search committees and chairs should receive diversity training if they are truly interested in attracting diverse applicants. Diversity brings different ideas, cultures, and perspectives together and it helps the intellectual thought of a department to achieve a greater understanding of others. As Smith and Moreno explain: "Greater diversity is essential if departments and institutions are to have the expertise and perspectives that they need. Finally, and perhaps most overlooked, a relatively homogenous faculty limits the future development of diversity in leadership, as most academic administrators come from faculty ranks" (Smith & Moreno, 2006, p. 64).

While a well-prepared and diverse search committee is essential to hiring qualified faculty there is still an unknown as to what attributes departments look for when searching. In a study of the hiring process in political science departments, Fuerstman and Lavertu found that "fit" was the most important factor, meaning the candidate needed to be qualified in at least the sub-field. "The importance of fit affirms that market demand is the greatest force working against certain job candidates, irrespective of their quality. The value of publications varies depending on the type of school, while the importance of teaching experience and letters of recommendation is constant and strong across school types" (Fuerstman & Lavertu, 2005, p. 736). Although this study reflected political

science departments, it mirrors what teacher education departments also look for in candidates.

The candidate that is the best “fit” can vary from year to year within the same department. As Dettmar (2004) explains: “The scholarly contours of a department shift over time, with the interests of its current members, new directions in the field, and the interests and passions of undergraduate and graduate students” (para. 7). Hiring someone who is qualified and a great fit for the department may mean the person will leave within a few years to go to a more prestigious university. However, Dettmar suggests this means the department hired well (2004).

An important aspect of hiring the best fit for the department can be as simple as choosing the person the committee members agree would be the best colleague. Therefore sometimes a better fit for a department may be someone who is not as published or experienced. This is a point where the chair becomes important due to the responsibility they have for choosing the best people for the search committee and also ensuring the new faculty understand, appreciate, and respect the needs, attitudes, and desires of the department. According to Dettmer (2004): “. . . we ask ourselves and our colleagues to do a difficult thing: identify and hire scholars and teachers who will make the rest of us look bad” (para. 24). The need to diversify and keep a department moving forward requires the hiring of faculty members who bring in new ideas, cultures, and philosophies. This can make existing faculty members uncomfortable and less secure about his/her job.

Summary

As the research suggests, there are many factors that affect the hiring process of new faculty members. There is a shortage of qualified applicants in teacher education at the elementary level that contributes to it being harder to hire diverse faculty. The need for the department chair

to ensure the search committee is well-trained and clear in the needs of the department is also crucial if a department desires to hire diverse faculty. Finally, regional immobility is a major factor in causing many teacher education departments to have a hard time bringing in those with diverse ideas, cultures, and philosophies.

Methodology

As noted previously, the purpose of this analysis was to discover what early childhood education faculty members believe about the purpose of public education. This information could be used to help search committees make informed decisions during the interview process. In order to accomplish this, an instrument, based on the work of Gutek’s (2004), *Philosophical and Ideological Voices in Education*, was constructed to help define belief systems. The instrument, designed by Page and Kemp (2013), utilized the basic educational philosophies of essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and postmodernism/social reconstructionism to create a survey that addressed the fundamental tenets of each educational belief system. The specific number of questions can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Breakdown of statements

Educational Philosophy	Number of Statements
Essentialism	5
Perrenialism	6
Progressivism	6

The statements were all worded in the affirmative with responses given on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 6 being “Strongly Agree.” A sample statement reads, “Promoting future economic success is one of the main reasons that we have public schools.” In addition, there were two additional statements:

- The purpose of education is to expose the conditions of domination present in society.

- Standardized testing is a viable means of judging the quality of an education.

Furthermore, there were a variety of demographic items shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Demographic Variables

Region (based on U.S. Census data)
University Size (based on AAUP categories, ie., Doctoral...)
University Type (Public/Private/Private for Profit)
Rank
Subject(s) Taught
Teaching Responsibility (Doctoral, Master's, Undergrad, etc.)
Age (By Range)
Gender
Race

Validity and Reliability

The instrument was created by two curriculum theorists (Page & Kemp, 2013) using, as noted above, Gutek (2008) as a model. While there are many sources of information about education belief systems, this was deemed a good choice because of the stature of Gutek. In addition, the instrument was vetted by an additional curriculum theorist for the variety of topics and by two outside readers for clarity, singularity and diversity. This evaluation of the instrument allowed for basic content validity and safeguarded the quality of the statements. In order to ensure that the instrument had validity beyond content validity, will also be addressed through convergent validity and discriminant validity. In order to show both of these forms of validity, a series of correlations were conducted to show the relationships between similar subjects. These different relationships are found in Table 1. An argument could be made that a confirmatory factor analysis would be an appropriate analytical procedure to validity. However, because the instrument was not designed to confirm any

particular construct, a confirmatory factor analysis would not be suitable.

Based on the correlation matrix, it is easy to see the relationships between the variables. For instance, there is a strong correlation between patriotism and beliefs about the American dream. In addition, the perennialist ideals of cultural replication and traditional content are closely aligned with the other conservative issues. Finally, the more radical items from the instrument (social equality and domination) are also closely related. All of these suggest there is convergent validity to the instrument. Conversely, these variables have either no relationship, a small relationship, or an inverse relationship with their philosophically opposites. The perennialist, economic, and socially patriotic items are different from the more radical items. This suggests that there is discriminant validity due to the fact that there is little or no relationship.

This was the fourth administration of this instrument. This survey had good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .855. This is above the preferred .8 as suggested by Pallant (2007).

Respondents

In order to ensure that there was a diverse sample of faculty for this study, respondents were chosen using the U.S. News and World Report list of top colleges and universities. A random sample of 100 of the top 200 national universities and a random sample of 100 of the top 200 liberal arts colleges were selected. In addition, 43 other institutions (based on convenience and contacts) were also added for a total of 243 universities. A total of 5,008 surveys were sent out over the course of fourteen days (due to mail server limitations). A link was sent to the selected faculty members with instructions explaining the study, reliability statistics, and a statement clarifying that by completing the survey, consent for use was being granted.

Email addresses were manually found for each university and compiled into a master list. One hundred forty-two were returned for one of the following reasons: (1) bad email address, (2) sent to spam, or (3) faculty member on sabbatical leave. In addition, seven faculty refused to answer the survey for a variety of reasons like questioning survey research, disagreement with the content of the survey, and no interest. There were a total of 752 respondents for a 15% response rate. Online survey companies (Sacks, 2010) note that for external surveys, a common rate of return is 10-15%. The online survey company SuperSurvey found that the total response rate for online surveys was 13.35% with an average survey response rate (broken down by rate) as 32.52%. However, they note that the larger the number of surveys sent out the smaller the response rate (Hamilton, 2009). What is more important is if the respondents are representative of the group. As noted previously, this was sent to the top 100 national universities, the top 100 liberal arts colleges and 43 other random universities. There was equal representation for all regions and university types. There were thirty-four respondents that answered "other" or "prefer not to answer". There were twenty respondents that declined altogether to answer the university description item. For this survey, a demographic limiter was included to create subsets of the initial data. For this study, only faculty that identified themselves as teaching in early childhood programs were included. This narrowed the respondent pool to 130.

In order to determine if there were any differences based on the various demographic variables, an Analysis of Variance was conducted for each item that had more than three choices. In addition, if there were only two choices, a t-test was run. For all of the items in the Purpose of Public Education Survey, an ANOVA or t-test was conducted on all of the items. Items that were not found to have any differences were excluded from the analysis.

Finally, a determination was made that one of the initial demographic variables had to be manipulated in order for this analysis to take place. For the purpose of this study, race was defined as either Caucasian or minority. The reason for this distinction was that, in general, faculty in colleges of education are predominantly Caucasian. As Hodgkinson (2002) explains, "... the teaching force is actually becoming increasingly White, due mainly to the striking decline in Black, Hispanic, and Asian enrollments in teacher education programs since 1990, with a proportionate increase in minority business majors" (p.104). Therefore, a determination was made to split race into two categories in order to make statistical analysis possible.

Results

Referencing the data collected, there are a number of differences in the beliefs of the purpose of public education depending on university size, rank, age, gender, and race. These differences will be delineated in this section.

A general look at the beliefs of early childhood faculty can be found in Table 1 (for full statements for each variable, please see Appendix A).

At this point it is interesting to note that the lowest overall mean was for standardized testing ($M=2.26$), while issues such as the purpose of public education focusing on students being able to use multiple sources of information, being able to actively construct knowledge, being well rounded and pushing toward social equality were all at the top of the scale.

As noted previously, there were four areas in which differences were found: university size, rank, gender, and race.

University Size

The first difference that was discovered was related to the size of the university in which the faculty member was employed (see Tables 2 and 3). It was discovered that the statement, “A main reason for public education is to expose the conditions of domination present in society,” was found to be statistically different among the university sizes. A one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to reveal any differences between the size of the university and the items on the Purpose of Public Education Survey. The classifications of university size (based on AAUP definitions) were baccalaureate institutions, Master’s institutions, and doctoral institutions.

There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level between the different groups ($F(2, 127) = 4.39, p = .014$). Being that it was a six point scale, the difference was moderately significant. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .065. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey’s HSD indicated that the mean score of doctoral institutions ($M=4.07, SD=1.147$) was significantly different from Master’s institutions ($M=3.41, SD=1.301$). There were no differences when either group was compared to baccalaureate institutions. It should be noted that the difference fell over the mean of the scale indicating that faculty from doctoral institutions agreed with the statement, while faculty from Master’s institutions disagreed with the statement.

Rank

Rank was defined as: Lecturer, instructor, assistant professor, associate professor and full professor. Out of all of the items in the survey, the only one that had a significant difference was the statement, “Developing morality is a prime purpose of public education.” A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the variable of rank to determine if rank affected beliefs about this item. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level, ($F(4, 108) = 3.416,$

$p = .011$). The difference between associate and assistant professor was almost a full point on the scale (.972). The effect size, calculated using eta squared was .114 indicating a high medium effect. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of associate professors ($M = 4.63, SD = .839$) was significantly higher than those of assistant professors ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.381$). Similar to university size, the difference in scores almost fell across the mean revealing that associate professors viewed morality as being a purpose of public education while assistant professors, as a group, did not. All other ranks were not found to be significantly different. For a full report of the statistics, please see Tables 4 and 5.

Gender

The demographic variable that had the most diverse response was gender. Gender was defined as male, female, or transgendered. Because there was only one respondent that selected transgendered, it was removed from the analysis. In addition, it should be noted that the vast majority of the respondents (75%) were female. This is reflective of the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics that indicate 76% of public school teachers were female (2010). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the views of the purpose of public education related to gender. Initially, all statements from the instrument were included for identification purposes. The initial analysis revealed that there were two statements the might have significant differences. Before performing an analysis on these two statements, it was decided a Bonferroni correction was necessary because there were two tests being conducted on the same data set. Because of the necessity of this correction, the p level was set at .025.

As noted, there were two statements that had significant differences between the groups. The first, “Getting a job and/or going to college is

one main reason for public education,” revealed that female respondents ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .995$) viewed getting a job or going to college was a higher priority as a purpose of public education than male respondents ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.106$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = $.65$) was moderate (eta squared = $.06$). The second statement, “A primary purpose of public education is to teach the content that is traditionally taught in schools,” also found female respondents ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.225$) scoring higher than male respondents ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.234$). Like university size, one of the scores (female) scored above the mean while the other scored below. Interestingly, both scores were relatively low which suggests that neither group felt that traditional content was a primary purpose of public education. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = $.6$) was low moderate (eta squared = $.04$).

Race

The final demographic variable that yielded differences was race. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the views of the purpose of public education related to gender. Initially, all statements from the instrument were included for identification purposes. The initial analysis revealed that there were two statements that might have significant differences. Before performing an analysis on these two statements, it was decided a Bonferroni correction was necessary because there were two tests being conducted on the same data set. Because of the necessity of this correction, the p level was set at $.025$.

The first statement that revealed a difference in beliefs based on race, “Promoting the continuance of the cultural values of the United States is one of the main reasons for having a public education system,” suggests that minority educators see the importance of cultural heritage. Minority respondents ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.082$) were significantly higher than Caucasian

respondents ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.236$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = $.89$) was moderate (eta squared = $.05$). The other statement that had a significant difference, and met the Bonferroni standard, “Completing a teacher preparation program is essential to becoming a successful teacher,” revealed that minority respondents ($M = 5.57$, $SD = .852$) score answered significantly higher than their Caucasian counterparts ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.331$). The degree of differences in the means (mean difference = $.89$) was also moderate (eta squared = $.05$). For full statistical information, see Tables 9 and 10.

Discussion

A Definition of Early Childhood Faculty

Before entering into a detailed discussion of the results of this survey focused on a sample of early childhood education faculty, it should be noted that there was an interesting general finding. For the most part, early childhood education faculty have a homogenous view of the purpose of public education. As a whole, there were few differences among faculty beliefs about the purposes of public education for faculty in early childhood education. A brief look at the descriptive data (see Figure 1) reveals that early childhood faculty believe that academically, the purpose of public education (and an assumption could be made the purpose of early childhood education) consists of students being able to use multiple sources of information, to actively construct knowledge, and to have the basic skills necessary for educational advancement. The particular statements suggest a definition of a public education system that aligns with current practice.

Socially, schools should pay attention to the well-being of the child, make sure they are well-rounded and that there is some sort of equal opportunity for each child. Each of these particular statements had a mean that was

above five on a six point scale, suggesting a strong belief. Therefore, this could be used as a basic definition of the beliefs of early childhood educators. In essence, early childhood faculty believe that the purpose of public education for young students involves teaching students to use multiple sources of information, to actively construct what they learn and develop the basic skills necessary for academic success. In addition, it is a time that requires focusing on making sure the students are safe and enjoy learning. Finally, there is a shared belief that all students have the opportunity and the right to learn. Because of the seemingly consistent beliefs systems of early childhood faculty, interview questions related to the norm will be suggested for the purpose of helping search committees more effectively focus on understanding each candidate's belief systems and determining if he/she would best meet the needs of the department.

Figure 3: Strongest beliefs among early childhood faculty

Being able to use multiple sources of information to make decisions is a main goal of public education.
The active construction of knowledge is a primary purpose of public education.
One main purpose of public education is to develop well-rounded individuals.
One main purpose of public education is to promote social equality in society.
One primary purpose of public education is to help students develop the basic skills necessary to be successful in life.
One main purpose of public education is to promote the well-being of all individuals.

Potential Areas for Questioning

Based on the common responses the following suggestions are made to enable search committees to query candidates about issues related to the norm.

1. Being able to use multiple sources of information to make decisions is a main goal of public education.
 - a. How do you infuse technology into your classroom?
 - b. What are your expectations regarding teaching and doing research based on availability of information?
 - c. If you were given a new course preparation, how would you approach the task of designing the course?
2. The active construction of knowledge is a primary purpose of public education.
 - a. How would you define your teaching style?
 - b. If I were to walk into your early childhood classroom, what would I see?
 - c. What is your philosophy of early childhood education?
3. One main purpose of public education is to develop well-rounded individuals.
 - a. What do you consider to be the three most important things that should be taught in _____? This might reveal breadth vs. depth.
 - b. As a professional, in what areas would you most like to develop?
4. One main purpose of public education is to promote social equality in society.
 - a. What are your views on homogeneous grouping in schools?
 - b. What are your suggestions for closing the achievement gap in elementary schools?
 - c. What are some best practices to reduce school failure and drop out rates among high risk student populations?
5. One primary purpose of public education is to help students develop the basic skills necessary to be successful in life.
 - a. How would you define yourself based on learning theory? Curriculum theory? Pedagogical theory?
 - b. How would you describe your philosophy on classroom management?

- c. What do you think the role of the teaching of basic skills fails to do in terms of the greater curriculum?
6. One main purpose of public education is to promote the well-being of all individuals.
 - a. Many faculty members are all about the content. What are your feelings about students?
 - b. What are your views on the concept of educating the whole child?
7. General questions to get at the fit issue for your university.
 - a. Why do you think you would be a good fit for our university?
 - b. What part of being an early childhood professor gives you the most satisfaction?
 - c. What part of the work is most difficult?

Demographic Variations

One main purpose of this study was to determine if the belief systems of educators was universal, or if there were variations due to variables such as location, experience, age, rank, gender and a variety of other attributes of faculty. What was discovered, as mentioned previously, was that the general belief systems of early childhood faculty can be fairly accurately defined. In fact, the only statistically significant variations from the norm did not involve the statements with the highest means. The variations in beliefs occurred in statements means that were much lower. The only variables that revealed any deviations were university size, rank, gender, and race.

In order to adequately discuss the variations in scores, it is important to reiterate that these variations only suggest small differences in beliefs about the purpose of the public education system. For each of the variations, the statement(s) in question will be reviewed along with the difference in means. Potential questions related to investigating these issues will also be suggested.

University Size

As noted previously, one of the derivations from the norm occurred in regard to university size. University size was defined as baccalaureate, Master's or doctoral universities. The difference was found with regard to the statement, "A main reason for public education is to expose the conditions of domination in society." Faculty from doctoral institutions collectively agreed with this statement (M=4.7) while faculty from Master's institutions did not (M=3.41). While the reason behind this distinction is not crucial to this difference, an argument could be made that doctoral institutions focus more in critical theories of education as part of a comprehensive doctoral program. More importantly, if a candidate for a position has been recently employed at a doctoral institution, understanding his/her beliefs about critical theory and domination would enable a search committee to more clearly accommodate the candidate's beliefs within the broader structure of the department and college. Because of the specific views of critical theorists, understanding the depth of this particular belief system might help search committees fill in gaps in philosophical beliefs in departments or more successfully navigate whether or not a candidate is a good fit for a department. With this in mind, questions that might be useful to ask a candidate from a doctoral institution might include:

- How do your goals as a faculty member align with the mission of the University?
- Are you more interested in teaching or conducting research?
- How do you compare/contrast your philosophical beliefs with what pre-service teachers need to learn to be successful in the classroom?
- There are theorists that suggest that the social structures in the United States have a great influence over academic success. What are your beliefs about this statement?
- Some faculty believe that the purpose of teacher education is to instill the skills

and content necessary for the day-to-day operations of a successful classroom. In early childhood classes, is there any utility to studying critical theory as it relates to educational growth?

- How will you manage the tripartite nature of the professoriate?
- What are the differences in how you will approach undergraduate teaching and graduate teaching?

Rank

Like university size, rank was another variable that had only a singular difference. In the case of rank, associate professors (M=4.63) believed that, “Developing morality is a prime purpose of public education,” was more important than assistant professors (M=3.66). Here it is interesting to note that the associate professor mean was almost a full point higher than that of assistant professors. The significant difference could be attributed to the average age of assistant professors and associate professors. As one goes through life they may see their beliefs and values change. As they mature, professors are also exposed to more moral failures in society which might increase the importance of this belief. Also, since most teacher educators have experience teaching K-12 it could be assumed that assistant professors beliefs about education are in line with the currently held idea that increased test scores are the most important thing in education. Interestingly, this finding is in direct contradiction to a previous study of pre-service and in-service teachers that found that over time this belief goes down (Page & Kemp, 2013).

Since many search committees are composed of associate and full professors, committee members (and university administrators) need to be cognizant of possible beliefs that are different and might be embraced by assistant professors.

Questions that might be helpful to ask candidates include:

- Values education has gone out of vogue since the institution of No Child Left Behind. While there are voices about the necessity of teaching values, ethics, and morality, what are your views about this related to early childhood education?
- Describe your beliefs about character education in public schools.
- How will you assist pre-service and in-service teachers in becoming more ethical in his/her practice?

Gender

As for the demographic related to gender, there were two statements that had significant differences. In both cases, the mean for female respondents was higher than the mean for male respondents. In this case, the issues were, “Getting a job and/or going to college is one main reason for public education,” and “A primary purpose of public education is to teach the content that is traditionally taught in schools.” In the case of “Getting a job...,” both female and male respondents agreed that securing a job and/or preparing for college was a primary reason for public education. However, female respondents were much more definitive in their assessment of this aspect of the public education system with the mean being .65 higher. Likewise, regarding traditional content, female respondents were higher (.6 difference), but with both groups hovering around the natural mean of 2.5. This might suggest that female respondents have a more traditional view of public education. This traditional view is aligned with the ideas presented by Galman that teaching is a feminized profession and societal beliefs that teachers should be moral and have good character. There is a generally accepted social norm that teachers are to be strong role models for P-12 students. Also, many female teachers are also mothers. Mothers can’t help but think about their own children when answering survey questions regarding education. Most mothers would consider going to college and getting a job an important measure of

educational success for their own children. The multiple roles teachers have may have influenced the survey. In order to address these issues, search committees might want to ask questions such as:

- Do you believe a person's morals and beliefs affect their ability to be an effective teacher?
- What are your thoughts on the lack of male early childhood teachers in the profession?
- Describe your beliefs about the introduction of career readiness information into elementary school.
- What content do you think should be taught in elementary schools?
- What role do elementary teachers have in preparing young students for real life?

Race

The final demographic variable with significant differences was race. As noted previously, because of the disparate numbers of respondents across all races, the category was divided into Caucasian and minority educators. In both cases, minority educators had the higher mean (M=4.64) versus Caucasian educators (M=3.75) regarding, "Promoting the continuance of cultural values of the United States is one of the main reasons for having a public education system," and, (M=5.57 vs. M=4.68) regarding, "Completing a teacher education program is essential to becoming a successful teacher." What this might suggest is that minority educators may have tuned into the word cultural. Culture is incredibly important to minority populations. Also, minority educators were more apt to embrace the importance of completing a formal teacher education program. As a result of these findings, search committees might want to consider addressing issues such as...

- What issues other than content should be taught in the elementary classroom?
- What role does culture play in an elementary classroom? What role does it play in a pre-service and in-service educator's classroom?

- What are your beliefs regarding the purpose of teacher education?
- In your opinion, what are some non-negotiables that must be included in a teacher education program?

Conclusion

The decision to hire faculty is of utmost importance to a department, college and university. For anyone that has gone through the laborious task of filling an academic vacancy, it is apparent that there is a strange dichotomy between tension and commonality. Searches have a certain feel to them. There are pages of standard questions. There are forms. There are stilted conversations over dinner. However, perhaps the process shouldn't be as rote as some committees practice. The purpose of a search is to not only finding a good fit, but finding a colleague that will either expand the department and/or college with new ideas, innovations, and beliefs or fit in with the status quo because of the mission and the vision of the organization. In either case, moving beyond the necessities of employment regulations and compatible interviews, committees and chairs should use the interview process as an opportunity to understand the candidate more thoroughly. The committee should engage in intentional dialogue that probes into the early childhood candidates' beliefs regarding a wide variety of educational issues. The questions the committee members ask will give the candidate insights into what values and philosophies the department shares or needs. These discussions will allow the committee to understand the person not only in relation to the other candidates, but as individuals that bring in various theoretical frameworks regarding teaching, curriculum, and education. These considerations will enable the committee and department chair to make the best departmental hire possible.

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Tables

Table 1: Convergent and Discriminant Validity Correlation Matrix (Pearson Correlation)

	Promoting future economic success is one of the main reasons that we have public education.	Getting a job and/or going to college is one main reason for public education.	One main purpose of public education is to promote the American Dream.	Fostering patriotism is a primary purpose of public education.	Promoting the continuance of the cultural values of the United States is one of the main reasons for having a public education system.	A primary purpose of public education is to teach the content that is traditionally taught in schools.	One main purpose of public education is to promote social equality in society.	A main reason for public education is to expose the conditions of domination present in society.
Economic Success	1	.629**	.455**	.361**	.360**	.289**	.067	-.143**
Getting a job/college	**	1	.356**	.257**	.249**	.348**	.155**	-.092*
American Dream	.455**	.356**	1	.470**	.549**	.288**	.030	-.102**
Patriotism	.361**	.257**	.470**	1	.569**	.381**	-.108**	-.118**
Continuing Cultural Values	.360**	.249**	.549**	.569**	1	.357**	-.027	-.075*
Traditional Content	.289**	.348**	.288**	.381**	.357**	1	-.046	-.084*
Social Equality	.067	.155**	.030		-.027	-.046	1	.398**
Expose Domination	-.143**	-.092*	-.102**	-.118**	-.075*	-.084*	.398**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
MultipleSources	131	5.40	.839
ActiveConstruction	131	5.38	.854
WellRounded	131	5.31	.735
SocialEqual	130	5.25	.907
BasicSkills	129	5.12	.866
WellBeing	131	5.07	1.061
Uniqueness	131	4.94	.926
CreatingDestiny	130	4.90	.861
Productive	131	4.85	1.009
WorkwithOthers	131	4.84	1.021
ChoiceNotEnvironment	131	4.81	.985
Responsibility	130	4.80	1.081
TeacherPrep	131	4.79	1.307
JobCollege	131	4.61	1.071
TradRoleNotDeterm	128	4.54	1.071
EconSuccess	131	4.43	1.015
Morality	130	4.05	1.187
CriticalSocialNorms	131	3.91	1.243
AmDream	130	3.88	1.128
ContCulture	131	3.83	1.235
ExposeDom	130	3.80	1.248
TradContent	130	3.58	1.281
FitIntoSociety	131	3.46	1.223
Patriotism	131	3.28	1.248
StandardTest	131	2.26	1.287
Valid N (listwise)	122		

Table 3: University Size Descriptives

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Doctoral Institution	76	4.07	1.147	.132	3.80	4.33	1	6
Master's Institution	37	3.41	1.301	.214	2.97	3.84	1	5
Baccalaureate Institution	17	3.47	1.328	.322	2.79	4.15	1	6
Total	130	3.80	1.248	.109	3.58	4.02	1	6

Table 4: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.975	2	6.487	4.387	.014
Within Groups	187.825	127	1.479		
Total	200.800	129			

Table 5: Rank Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Morality	Lecturer	5	4.20	.837	.374	3.16	5.24	3	5
	Instructor	15	4.33	.724	.187	3.93	4.73	3	6
	Assistant Professor	38	3.66	1.381	.224	3.20	4.11	1	6
	Associate Professor	27	4.63	.839	.161	4.30	4.96	3	6
	Professor	28	3.79	1.258	.238	3.30	4.27	1	6
	Total	113	4.04	1.195	.112	3.81	4.26	1	6

Table 6: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Morality	Between Groups	18.162	4	4.540	3.461	.011
	Within Groups	141.697	108	1.312		
	Total	159.858	112			

Appendices

Appendix A Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
(EconSuccess) Promoting future economic success is one of the main reasons that we have public education.	131	4.43
(WellRounded) One main purpose of public education is to develop well-rounded individuals.	131	5.31
(SocialEqual) One main purpose of public education is to promote social equality in society.	130	5.25
(JobCollege) Getting a job and/or going to college is one main reason for public education.	131	4.61
(ChoiceNotEnvironment) One main purpose for public education is to instill in students that their choices are not determined by their environment.	131	4.81
(WorkwithOthers) Being able to work with others is one of the main purposes of public education.	131	4.84
(AmDream) One main purpose of public education is to promote the American Dream.	130	3.88
(ContCulture) Promoting the continuance of the cultural values of the United States is one of the main reasons for having a public education system.	131	3.83
(CriticalSocialNorms) Being critical of social norms is a primary purpose of public education.	131	3.91
(FitIntoSociety) One of the main reasons for public education is to help teach students to fit into society.	131	3.46
(CreatingDestiny) Cultivating in students an awareness for creating their own destiny is a primary purpose of public education.	130	4.90
(Uniqueness) One primary reason for public education is to foster the uniqueness of each individual student.	131	4.94
(ActiveConstruction) The active construction of knowledge is a primary purpose of public education.	131	5.38
(MultipleSources) Being able to use multiple sources of information to make decisions is a main goal of public education.	131	5.40
(WellBeing) One main purpose of public education is to promote the well-being of all individuals.	131	5.07
(BasicSkills) One primary purpose of public education is to help students develop the basic skills necessary to be successful in life.	129	5.12
(Morality) Developing morality is a prime purpose of public education.	130	4.05
(Patriotism) Fostering patriotism is a primary purpose of public education.	131	3.28
(Productive) A main purpose of public education is to create productive citizens.	131	4.85
(TradRoleNotDeterm) A primary purpose of public education is to teach that a person's traditional role in society is not a determining factor in future success.	128	4.54
(Responsibility) Developing responsibility is a primary reason for public education.	130	4.80

(TradContent) A primary purpose of public education is to teach the content that is traditionally taught in schools.	130	3.58
(ExposeDom) A main reason for public education is to expose the conditions of domination present in society.	130	3.80
(StandardTest) Standardized testing is a viable means of determining the quality of a student.	131	2.26
(TeacherPrep) Completing a teacher preparation program is essential to becoming a successful teacher.	131	4.79
Valid N (listwise)	122	

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