

2013

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Citation/Publisher Attribution

Kim, H. (2013). Passion on teaching beliefs and efficacy. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 17(4), 20-27.

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Key words: EFFICACY-1, STUDENT-2

Passion on Teaching Beliefs and Efficacy

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Abstract

Despite the positive impact of passion on teaching related activities and perspectives, a limited number of theoretical and empirical studies have been done on the role of passion in early childhood preservice teachers' beliefs and their teacher efficacy. Therefore, this study was to review the theoretical framework of passion for teaching and to examine early childhood preservice teachers' passion for teaching children and its impact on their constructivist teaching beliefs and teacher efficacy.

Significance and Purposes of the Study

Teaching is physically and socio-emotionally demanding and requires a high degree of dedication and motivation. Becoming an early childhood teacher involves a complex process of transformation from a teacher candidate to a fully qualified teacher that requires commitment to and passion for the teaching profession (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Hamman & Romano, 2009; Ledoux, Yoder, Hanes, & McHenry, 2008; Rose & Rogers, 2012; Sinclair, Munns, & Woodward 2005; Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008).

A considerable body of research has shown that passionate teachers have a positive impact on their teaching and on student learning (Day, 2009; Kim & Lane, 2013; Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008). Vallerand, Fernet, and Guay (2008) reported that passionate teachers manage to achieve a state of harmony between their teaching and their other activities. However, this passion may cause burnout among novice teachers due to the intensity involved in teaching and the imbalance that may exist between teaching and other life activities

Although much attention has been paid to the role of passion in teaching, there are only a limited number of empirical studies on the role passion plays in early childhood preservice teachers' efficacy. Thus, first, this study was to review the theoretical framework of passion for teaching to better understand the role of passion in teaching young children. Second, with 77 early childhood preservice teachers, this study examined early childhood preservice teachers' passion for teaching children and its impact on their adaptive outcomes such as constructivist teaching beliefs and general teacher efficacy.

Theoretical Framework of Passion for Teaching

The conceptualization of passion has been well supported empirically in areas other than teacher education, showing two types of passion associated with different affective experiences:

harmonious passion and obsessive passion (Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008; Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratella, Leonard, & Gagne, 2003; Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, & Grenier, 2006).

According to Vallerand et al. (2003), “passion is a strong inclination or desire toward an activity (e.g., one's job) that one likes (or even loves) and finds important and in which one invests time and energy”. Based on the self-determination theory, Vallerand et al. (2003) denominated two different types of passion, harmonious passion and obsessive passion, depending on the process of internalization that relates to one's identity. While harmonious passion emanates from an autonomous internalization rooted in an intrinsic tendency of the self, obsessive passion results from a controlled internalization of the activity into one's identity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2003).

Passion for teaching theoretically grounded on Vallerand et al.'s speculation on passion has also been found in the literature (Vallerand et al., 2003). According to this perspective, harmoniously passionate teaching can be seen as occupying a significant but not overpowering space in the teacher's identity and as being in harmony with other aspects of the teacher's life. This enables teachers to fully concentrate on the teaching-related-task and to focus their attention and energy on other tasks at hand without inclining to teaching. On the other hand, teachers with an obsessive passion are controlled by their teaching-related activities. Because teaching becomes out of the teacher's control, it can invade other parts of his or her life, resulting in less adaptive outcomes, in general.

Early Childhood Preservice Teachers' Passion

In order to analyze early childhood preservice teachers' passion for teaching and its impact on adaptive outcomes such as constructivist teaching beliefs and teacher efficacy, the following questions were examined:

1. How passionate are early childhood preservice teachers about their preparation for the teaching profession?
2. To what extent does early childhood preservice teachers' passion, among other predictors (i.e., status in the program and educational family context), explain their teaching beliefs and sense of teacher efficacy for their future professional teaching?

Despite the lack of research on the role of harmonious passion in determining preservice teachers' outcomes such as teacher efficacy and teaching beliefs, based on theoretical research and with empirical support from other work areas, this study expected that harmonious passion can be positively associated with preservice teachers' experience in the teacher education program in their preparation for the teaching profession and their identity as a teacher candidate, which may be associated with their teaching beliefs and their sense of teaching efficacy (adaptive outcomes). On the other hand, compared to harmonious passion, obsessive passion can be less positively associated with their experience in the aforementioned adaptive outcomes.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this research study were 77 early childhood preservice teachers in the junior and senior levels at a state university in the U.S. Midwest in 2011. This study included these

preservice teachers as they were all fully admitted to the professional education program and considered official teacher candidates. The average age of the participants was 21.6 years ($SD = .82$, range = 20–24 years); 96.1% were Caucasian White; 80.5% were single.

Instrumentations

Preservice Teachers' Passion. The Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003) that contains two sections, harmonious and obsessive passion, with six-items each, was used. To fit the sample, preservice teachers, some words were modified. A sample item for harmonious passion is “My job as a teacher candidate is in harmony with the other activities in my college life”; a sample item for obsessive passion is “I have almost an obsessive feeling for my job as a teacher candidate.” The Cronbach's alpha values for these two subscales were .90 and .66, respectively. The sample showed a better internal reliability in harmonious passion and a lower one in obsessive passion than Vallerand et al.'s study, with .87 and .67, respectively (see Table 1).

[Table 1]

Adaptive teacher outcomes: teaching beliefs and teacher efficacy. This study included teacher beliefs and teacher efficacy as adaptive outcomes. Especially, to gauge the impact of preservice teachers' passion on adaptive teacher outcomes, constructivist teaching beliefs and general teacher efficacy were used.

For teaching beliefs, the Teacher Beliefs Survey (TBS) developed by Woolley, Benjamin, and Woolley (2004) was used to gauge preservice teachers' teaching beliefs. This study only used 24 items to gauge constructivist teaching beliefs and traditional teaching beliefs. Each construct was comprised of 12 items and all items were rated by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha values for constructivist teaching beliefs and traditional teaching beliefs were .94 and .88, respectively.

To gauge teacher efficacy, preservice teachers' efficacy was assessed by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993)'s Teacher Efficacy Scale (Short Form). This measure contains 2 constructs: personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE). Each construct consists of 5 items that assess the degree to which preservice teachers feel efficacious about their teaching capabilities. Preservice teachers' efficacy was scored by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha values for PTE and GTE were .75 and .55, respectively. Mean scores of all scales were used in the analyses.

Preservice teachers' status in the program. Status in the teacher education program was categorized into 1) junior and 2) senior. This study only collected data from those students who were fully admitted to the early childhood education program and who had taken method courses.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, multiple independent t -tests, Pearson's correlation, and hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to answer the research questions. For hierarchical multiple regression analyses, violation of multicollinearity was checked by examining tolerance

and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) using two collinearity diagnostic factors, an individual R-square value and a VIF.

Results

Early childhood preservice teachers' passion for their preparation for the teaching profession

According to descriptive statistics, the preservice teachers showed high scores on the overall passion scale (the mean and the standard deviation were 4.73 and .86 respectively), showing they were passionate in doing their work in the teacher education program to be a professional teacher in the near future. Passion criteria (the mean and the standard deviation were 6.24 and .88 respectively) and harmonious passion (the mean and the standard deviation were 5.14 and 1.17 respectively) also showed high mean scores. Conversely, the participating preservice teachers showed relatively low scores on obsessive passion (the mean and the standard deviation were 3.29 and .98 respectively).

The result of Pearson's correlation analysis showed that harmonious passion was positively related with constructivist beliefs (the Pearson's correlation coefficient equaled .30 with the p value of below .05), while there was no relation with general teaching efficacy (the Pearson's correlation coefficient equaled -.17 at the p value of .05) or personal teaching efficacy (the Pearson's correlation coefficient equaled .03 at the p value of .05). Obsessive passion did not relate with teaching beliefs or teacher efficacy (see Table 2).

[Table 2]

The impact of passion on teacher beliefs and teacher efficacy

Hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed to examine how the preservice teachers' status in the program and their passion predicted two adaptive teachers' outcomes (constructivist teaching beliefs and general teaching efficacy) (see Table 3).

[Table 3]

First, the overall regression model for constructivist teaching beliefs was significant. The F value (3, 77) equaled 6.54; therefore, the p was less than .001. The regression coefficient equaled .212, explaining 21.2 % of the prediction on preservice teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs. Status in the program (beta was equal to -.229; the t value was 2.03, therefore the p value was less than .05 at the first step; beta was equal to -.326, the t value was -2.13, therefore the p value was less than .05 at the second step) remained the most significant factor to predict early childhood teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs. The results revealed that harmonious passion and obsessive passion were statistically significant in predicting preservice teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs by adding 7.8% of the overall prediction.

Second, the overall regression model for general teacher efficacy was significant; the F value (3, 77) equaled 3.75, therefore the p value was less than .05; the regression coefficient equaled to .134, with 13.4 % of the prediction on preservice teachers' general teaching efficacy. Interestingly, status in the program was not a significant predictor at the first step but when

harmonious passion and obsessive passion were added to the model, preservice teachers' status in the program turned out to be a statistically significant predictor for general teaching efficacy.

Conclusion

The result showed that the early childhood preservice teachers were, overall, highly passionate in doing their work in the teacher education program to be professional teachers in the near future and they showed high harmonious passion, implying that they were developing adaptive outcomes for their future success as professional teachers. The results of the study also indicated that preservice teachers in junior status were more passionate about their job as a teacher candidate, with higher scores in harmonious passion than their counterpart preservice teachers in senior status.

As assumed, along with preservice teachers' status in the program, preservice teachers' passion (both harmonious and obsessive passion) was a significant predictor of preservice teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs and general teaching efficacy. Teachers' harmonious passion played a moderating role in improving teaching efficacy over the teacher education program.

Taken together, the result of this study is significant in helping us better understand how preservice teachers' passion influences their adaptive outcomes as a teacher candidate to promise their successful career preparation period in the teacher education program. The teacher education program should provide early childhood preservice teachers with a healthy environment with ample opportunities for making social networks to share their experiences and support each other in order not to lose their initial passion for their preparation to be a teacher and their love for their future job working with young children. This study suggests that more empirical studies should follow to examine the factors that can influence early childhood preservice teachers' trajectories of their adaptive passion and its impact on their student learning as well.

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