

Note de recherche / Research Note

Teacher Ratings of Two Inservice Education Programs on Classroom Management

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Although teachers consider classroom management skills very important (Doyle, 1985, 1986), preservice teacher education does not adequately stress them. Literature on inservice education and staff development (Cooper & Jones, 1984; Doyle, 1986; Evertson & Smylie, 1986; Fullan, 1985; Griffin, 1983; Guskey, 1986; Levine, 1984; Schlechty, Crowell, Whitford, & Joslin, 1984; Ward, 1985; Wildman & Niles, 1987) indicates some features of effective inservice education on classroom management: teachers wanting the inservice should prescribe it and should participate in planning it; inservice education should be provided in a series of sessions allowing time for application between sessions; there should be time for discussion and feedback about the usefulness of skills taught; and inservice should deal with both school-wide educational issues and individual concerns. These features of effective inservice are well documented in theory and research on school-based staff development (Evertson & Smylie, 1986; Fullan, 1985; Guskey, 1986; Wildman & Niles, 1987).

In Saskatchewan, teachers have attended two inservice programs on classroom management during the past three years. One series, *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* (Sanche, Sorsdahl, Schwier, & Clark, 1985), is an eight-part videocourse used as school-based staff development for the whole staff, while the other, *Project T.E.A.C.H.* (1976), is a fifteen-part course taught to groups of 20–30 teachers by a teacher specially prepared to offer it. Both courses are skills-based and adaptable to individual requirements. Both include individual practicum assignments between sessions in participants' classrooms as well as group follow-up discussion and feedback. Our research sought to determine if teachers rated one of the two approaches to inservice education on classroom management more favourably than the other, and to find

whether teachers who completed only part of the practical application activities associated with the series *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* rated their inservice less favourably than did those who participated fully in all activities associated with the two courses. We also obtained demographic data to see if factors such as age, gender, teaching experience and location affected teacher responses to inservice education.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects included teachers who had completed either *Project Teach* ($N=44$, designated Group 1 [Instructor]) or *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* ($N=393$). The latter were further divided into two groups: those who had completed both the videotape inservice and all application activities (Group 2: Video+; $n=286$) or those who had completed the inservice but had not completed all the application activities (Group 3; Video; $n=107$). The 107 teachers in Group 3 had not done one or more inservice procedures. A respondent in Group 3, for example, may have omitted the practica or follow-up activities originally designated.

The Inservice Programs

The inservice teacher education programs of this study are both intended to help teachers enhance their classroom management skills. Both courses are taught over several months, and are eclectic in content and approach. Both courses emphasize the importance of good communication skills, of creating a positive, supportive classroom climate, of developing preventive classroom management skills, of developing corrective classroom management skills, and of applying or trying out new skills in the classroom between inservice sessions.

Project Teach and *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* differ in mode of delivery and in the overall duration of each inservice course. While *Project Teach* is offered face-to-face in 2.5 hours of instruction a week over 15 weeks, *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* is a videocourse of eight 2-hour inservice sessions at monthly intervals with 2.5 hours of practical application activities between sessions. Overall participation time is approximately equivalent in the two courses although they differ in duration. (*Project Teach* occurs over approximately four months, *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* over approximately eight months.)

A major distinction between the two inservice courses is the mode of delivery. *Project Teach* is taught live by a carefully selected and specially trained teacher, while *Mondays, Marbles and Chalk* is delivered on videotape by two

narrators. The live presentation of *Project Teach* is adaptable to participants' needs whereas the video presentation has no outside presenter and gives prepackaged content in a preplanned format.

Survey Instrument

The Evaluation Form for Teachers (EFT) was designed to gather evaluative data from all participants in the study. It is a thirty-one item questionnaire in five subscales. The survey instrument was analyzed for the reliability of each of the subscales and for the entire instrument. Reliability for the total instrument was .966 (Cronbach's alpha). Subscale scores were also highly reliable, with alphas ranging from .817 to .959.

High intercorrelation of subscales contributed to the reliability of the entire instrument, but the amount of shared variance among subscales also showed that the survey instrument was largely univariate. The analyses and discussion were therefore based upon total survey instrument scores rather than on subscale scores.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed to compare preferences of teachers who participated in the three treatments: Instructor, Video+, or Video. We used a one-way analysis of variance to compare the three groups on the total EFT scores. The groups were significantly different ($F=12.23$; $df=2,434$; $p<.001$). Scheffé multiple comparison tests revealed a hierarchical relationship among the three groups such that Instructor > Video+ > Video (see Table 1). We considered participants' teaching experience, gender, rural or urban location, and grade level taught, subsequently doing a factorial analysis of variance on the total instrument score and its five subscales. A 3x4 factorial analysis of variance revealed teachers in secondary settings rated inservice education less favourably than did those in the intended target audience ($F=3.84$; $df=4,432$; $p<.01$), and there was no interaction with groups ($F=.965$; $df=7,431$; $p>.05$).

To examine the effect of amount of teaching experience upon inservice ratings, we divided subjects into two groups: ten or fewer years, and greater than ten years of teaching experience. We likewise grouped teachers in K-6 and teachers in grades 7-12. Main effects and an interesting interaction were obtained on total survey instrument scores. Participants with more than ten years of teaching experience rated their inservice training significantly higher than did those with less experience ($F=5.69$; $df=1,412$; $p<.05$). Teachers in grades K-6 rated their training more favourably than did those in grades 7-12 ($F=7.55$; $df=1,412$; $p<.01$). These ratings confirm that the series was seen more positively by the intended target audience for the

TABLE 1
Means and Multiple Comparisons (Scheffé) for the Inservice Approaches

<i>Group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Multiple Comparisons</i>		
			<i>Instructor</i>	<i>Video+</i>	<i>Video</i>
Instructor	4.75	.70		*	*
Video+	4.27	.79			*
Video	3.97	.84			

* $p < .05$

inservice package. Of greater interest was an interaction between grade level and experience ($F=4.42$; $df=1,412$; $p < .05$). Examination of means showed the interaction was the result of lower scores by less experienced, higher grade-level teachers. When teachers at higher grade-levels had more teaching experience, their opinions of inservice education were significantly higher. Teachers in lower grades, however, responded similarly regardless of experience. Experienced teachers may have been able to transfer or to generalize the inservice information from elementary to secondary settings more readily than could inexperienced teachers.

Gender of the respondents showed no correlation with total instrument score ($F=.25$; $df=1,347$; $p < .05$) or with results on the subscales. The producers of *Mondays* sought a balance between male and female teachers, children, and narrators to get acceptance among teachers of both genders.

Urban and rural respondents differed significantly ($F=4.46$; $df=1,347$; $p < .05$). An examination of group means indicated that rural teachers ($M=4.27$) rated inservice education more favourably than did urban teachers ($M=4.12$). It is worth underscoring that both means are positive (on a scale of 6), indicating that these inservice education events were more positively received in rural settings, not that they were disliked by teachers in urban settings.

DISCUSSION

Clear differences among the three groups on total survey instrument scores suggest that participants preferred the instructor-led seminar over either video-based approach. Further, participants taking the complete video-based inservice (including comprehensive materials, ample opportunities for interaction with colleagues, and extensive practicum experience) rated inservice higher than when various parts were missing. Thus instructor-led inservice and video-based inservice providing much interaction and practice were both preferred to video-based instruction lacking them. The content of each inservice approach was very similar. The key difference was likely the human element—the instructor.

Instructor-led inservice featured a highly trained and involved leader who "taught" the content of the course and interacted closely with participants. In video-based groups, narrators "taught" fixed content on video tape, and peer leaders drawn from the staff facilitated discussions and activities according to printed instructions in accompanying manuals. Thus staff leaders were not "content experts," and were not expected to deliver instruction. In some schools, the absence of printed materials, discussions, and application activities further diminished the amount and quality of interaction.

Increases in activities to facilitate interaction also increased participants' preference for inservice. Instructor-led inservice allowed the greatest potential flexibility among the three approaches since the instructor could accommodate local issues. The video+ instruction permitted some discussions of individuals' interests with colleagues and in application activities. The least flexible treatment was video only, in which materials, discussions, or applied activities were omitted. In this treatment, content was delivered via videotape, and there were fewer opportunities to adapt material to local and teacher concerns. This finding corroborates those of earlier studies (McConkey & O'Connor, 1983; Wade, 1985) suggesting that strong leadership is important in successful inservice teacher education, that tutors should receive specific training, and that training events are less effective if participants are treated as minor contributors. Our results show that the critical common factor in inservice education is the quality of participant interaction. When teachers see inservice as credible and flexible, they think it successful. Trained instructors provided the most credible, flexible, and adaptable instruction, while volunteer staff leaders and video-based instruction were less accepted.

Our demographic analyses were interesting, if not conclusive. Participants from rural settings rated inservice education more highly than did participants from urban settings. Although the results were statistically significant, the means qualify the interpretation of the result; rural participants had a mean of 4.20, compared to a mean of 4.10 for urban participants on the total instrument score (maximum possible, 6). A logical interpretation is that both urban and rural participants responded positively to inservice training. Although we do not wish to over-emphasize this finding, the urban/rural difference may be of interest for future studies. The lower urban rating may show the greater number of inservice choices available to urban groups, and thus their higher expectations of inservice training interventions.

We suspected newer teachers might more favourably receive inservice education than would those with experience. Experienced teachers might have developed effective strategies over the years, and resist change. Instead, the more experience teachers had, the more positively they rated inservice education. Newer teachers may have been recently exposed to ideas presented in the inservice education in their preservice university programs, and thus rate the intervention less favourably than those away from formal academic

programs for some longer time.

Future studies of modes of inservice delivery should include such additional dependent variables as teachers' perceptions of their gains in skills and knowledge. Our questionnaire sought to take these notions into account but subscales should be refined to measure these constructs adequately. In future studies, specific instrumentation should be developed to measure teacher gains in skills and knowledge.

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