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STUDENT EVALUATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A PROPOSAL FOR STUDY OF SOCIOMETRY AS AN ADDITIONAL AID

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Professors in agricultural education in larger departments may not have a great deal of contact with their students except in the classroom. Yet these professors are called upon to evaluate their students for professional positions after graduation. Sometimes the only criteria a professor has is limited personal observations of a student and the student's academic performance. Are these observations sufficient for predicting professional success?

Success in teaching often has little or no relationship with academic success. A study by Cardozier, published in 1965, found that only speech and student teaching grades at the university were predictive of teaching success. A similar finding was made by Bergstom in 1966 for high school graduates. Therefore, it might

be assumed that factors other than academic must contribute to future job success. Professors in agricultural education are able to evaluate academic performance of a student without much difficulty. However are they able to measure attributes of students other than academic successfully? This question and several closely related concerns led these researchers to examine sociometric measurement as a possible aid to predict professional expertise of their students.

Most studies done in sociometric research have been concerned with social peer groups and situations in primary and secondary schools. Sociometric measurement can be classified into two categories. In the first, students are asked about preferences on specific choice criteria, and in the second they indicate their feelings toward each other rather than their feelings based on some criteria.

Related Literature

Elsom (1967), Gronlund (1959), and Tindall (1955) showed the relationship of sociometric status as judged by students' and teachers' ratings to have an average correlation of about .60. Peers significantly identified superior intelligence in their fellow students through sociometric responses in studies by Davis (1957), Elkins (1958), Gallagher (1958) and Gronlund and Whitney (1958). In other works, Busswell (1953), Feinberg (1953), Fox and Segal (1954), Porterfield and Schlichting (1961), and Semler (1960) all found student sociometric scores to point to a level of achievement on various criteria.

Davis and Parenti (1958) and Mussen and Porter (1959) reported that sociometric scores signified emotional adjustment. Gronlund (1959) suggested that sociometric scores be combined with other diagnostic measures such as self-rating inventories and teachers' ratings of adjustment to identify potential maladjusted students.

Gronlund and Holmlund (1958) concluded that sociometric scores on certain criteria were correlated with adjustment to high school. Luhlen and Collister (1952) identified scores received on certain sociometric criteria as predicters of school dropouts. Personality differences between socially accepted and rejected students were identified by sociometric scores in a study by Guinovard and Ryschalk (1962).

Method of Study

The literature suggested that similar sociometric techniques might be useful in estimating professional competence of college students preparing to be teachers of agriculture.

In the present study it was hypothesized that senior students in agricultural education would be able to assess the professional competence of their peers. It was also hypothesized that student assessment of professional competence would be independent of personal relationships.

The subjects of the study were senior students at the University of Minnesota enrolled in teacher preparation block classes prior to student teaching in vocational agriculture at the secondary level. Sociometric data were collected for two years with 32 and 36 students responding during the respective years.

Respondents were asked to select fellow students according to given criteria. The criteria for selection were as follows:

1. Select two classmates they would most like to work with in a two man vocational agriculture department.

2. Respondents were then asked to select two students they would hire if they were a principal or superintendent of schools for various agricultural teaching situations. The situations were:

   a. Hire for a one-man department
   b. Hire as a shop teacher
   c. Hire as a high school instructor and FFA advisor
   d. Hire as a full-time adult teacher

Four professors in the Department of Agricultural Education were asked to select senior students using criteria 2 above. The professors queried had identical classes exclusively made up of the respondents in the study and had generally the same amount of contact with the respondents.

Findings

Two rank orders of students were set up based on the number of times the student was selected, first by fellow students and second by the professors. A Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient showed a significant mean correlation of .61 between student selection and the faculty selection for hire. Within student responses, student selection for hire was only correlated .47 with student selection as a personal teaching companion.

The high correlation between professors' and students' selections for hiring indicated that both groups agreed in large degree

which would be the best teachers. The lower correlation between selection as a teaching companion and hiring indicated that the senior students appeared to be able to differentiate between personal friendship and professional expertise.

Several studies of unsuccessful workers have been made where the reason for failure has been attributed to reasons other than technical competence in more than two out of three cases. In teaching, similar situations often exist. It might therefore be of value to measure other factors that might contribute to success in teaching.

The results of this study have several implications including the following:

1. Sociometric results approximate professors' ratings.

2. More extensive sociometric analysis and follow-up of seniors should be conducted.

3. Studies should be conducted over a longer period of time.

Sociometric techniques might have promise in identifying social and personality problems among students before teaching. This might be particularly important in agricultural education departments where there are large numbers of students. It is recommended that additional study be made in this area to see if this kind of information might be of value as an additional tool for evaluation.

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