

Teacher Preparation in Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: A Review of Pre-Service Teacher
Preparation Curricula

Summer of 2021, 8-week project

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A. Introduction and Research Question

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered thousands of lives in the United States through illness, economic downfall, and even death. Existing problems of racial injustice and poverty have been exacerbated and millions have been left unemployed. Children, in addition to facing learning loss from school closures, are experiencing these traumatic events in their families and communities. The pandemic-driven instability in children's lives has led K-12 educators to push for increased training in trauma-informed pedagogy (Darling-Hammond & Hyler 2020).

Trauma-informed pedagogy recognizes the traumas that students may bring into the classroom and their influence on students' ability to learn (McDaniel, 2020). Previous research has advocated its use with low-income students and students of color who may face adversity through racism and poverty (Brunzell et al., 2019). A CDC study suggests that two-thirds of people in the U.S. have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, defined as abuse, neglect, or household challenges (*About the CDC-Kaiser*, 2020). Teachers who are trained in trauma-informed pedagogy are equipped with tools to address trauma and build resilience in traumatized children (Minahan, 2019). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recommends six principles of trauma-informed practices that teachers must address: Safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender awareness (SAMHSA, 2018).

As more students are likely to experience trauma brought on by COVID-19, it is vital that teachers adopt trauma-informed classroom practices. Through a systematic review, I aim to assess the state of training in trauma-informed pedagogy in pre-service teacher education. This information will be useful for K-12 school districts, schools of education, and departments of education to understand both if and how teachers are being trained in trauma-informed pedagogy, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I intend to answer the following research question: What is the state of trauma-informed pedagogy in teacher preparation programs?

B. Methodology

I will conduct a systematic review of the current curricula of teacher preparation programs in the United States. According to researchers Mark Newman and David Gough, a systematic review is a "form of secondary level analysis (secondary research) that brings together the findings of primary research to answer a research question" (2020, pg. 4). While many systematic reviews involve the review of other research literature, educational researcher Jennifer Freeman used this method to analyze teacher preparation curricula and education policy (Freeman et al., 2014). Using a similar framework, this methodology will allow me to assess the curricula of a broad range of teacher preparation programs through quantitative analysis.

During the first weeks of the summer, I will first form a list of all undergraduate, traditional teacher preparation programs across the United States. From this list, I will collect a stratified sample of 20% of all programs, approximately 200 programs, grouped by geographic region to best represent the entire nation. Alternative teacher preparation programs, though accounting for about 19 percent of teachers, do not typically have the same levels of written coursework as traditional programs and thus will not be included in this review (Yin & Partelow, 2020). Using online course catalogues, I will then identify all courses offered by these teacher preparation programs that address students' non-academic needs and identify their course

descriptions for analysis. I will further contact the chairs or deans of education of all of the teacher preparation programs identified and request materials or syllabi from these courses. I hope to gather materials from at least 20% of the programs identified.

Next, I will review these course descriptions and materials collected and code them based on the criteria of trauma-informed pedagogy and social-emotional learning. I will monitor the demographics of the preparation programs and coding analysis in an excel spreadsheet, tracking the prevalence of terms related to the tenants of trauma-informed pedagogy. I will follow the same coding method for both the course descriptions and course materials. This will provide a more comprehensive overview of the contents of the coursework, in addition to the larger sample of course descriptions. Additionally, in order to build researcher reliability, my mentor, Dr. Janet VanLone, will code approximately 30% of the course descriptions and materials, in addition to my coding, to calculate the levels of interobserver-reliability.

After the coding is complete, I will spend the final weeks of the summer analyzing the results using descriptive statistics to evaluate the prevalence of instruction in trauma-informed pedagogy in this coursework. I will further be able to analyze these data by the demographics collected, including region, type of school (private or public), and type of program (elementary, secondary, special education). I anticipate that the demand for training in trauma-informed pedagogy from teachers and school leaders will exceed the supply of instruction in teacher preparation programs. I will then be able to write about these results for publication and use them as the foundation for my honors thesis senior year.

This research will take approximately eight-weeks to complete over the course of the summer. During the first two weeks, I will work on collecting my sample of teacher preparation programs, defining my coding criteria, and requesting the course materials from other teacher preparation programs. I will spend the next four weeks reviewing and coding the relevant course descriptions and provided materials. The final two weeks of the summer will be spent analyzing and reporting the results, as well as developing opportunities for expanding the project into an honors thesis. Ideally, I would be able to conduct this research on campus to utilize Bucknell's work spaces and meet with Dr. VanLone in-person; however, this work could be conducted remotely if need be.

C. Results

In addition to the Kalman Research Symposium, I will seek to publish this research in a teacher preparation journal and/or present it at a conference. I could pursue publication in a journal such as *Action for Teacher Education* from the Association for Teacher Educators or present my findings at the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators conference in Fall 2021. This will allow me to most expediently provide other schools of education and education policy professionals with the findings of the review. Additionally, I hope to expand this project into an honors thesis during my senior year by addressing the effects of trauma-informed pedagogy on teacher retention.

D. Faculty Mentoring

I will work on this project with Dr. Janet VanLone in the education department and rely on her expertise and professional guidance. Dr. VanLone has been my Presidential Fellowship

mentor for the past year and we have a strong relationship. We have met at least bi-weekly both in-person and on Zoom for the past year and have successfully worked on previous research projects. She has helped me to explore research in teacher retention and teacher preparation in order to craft this project and will be a great asset.

I will plan to meet with her over the course of the summer at least once a week. Ideally, this meeting will be in person, masked and outside, to discuss my weekly progress and project development; however, it could be conducted over Zoom if pandemic restrictions require remote engagement. Should either of us be unavailable for the week due to unforeseen travel or illness, we can meet over Zoom or phone as we have done previously in our time working together. Dr. VanLone will be able to provide me with guidance and assistance on the process of coding articles as well as connections with other schools of education. She will also be able to provide needed guidance about publishing in the field of teacher preparation.

E. Research Value and Conclusion

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, teachers are calling for continued training in trauma-informed pedagogy from both teacher preparation programs and professional development (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). Through this project, I aim to assess how well those demands are being met by existing teacher preparation programs. These results will be instrumental in determining how preparation programs can improve to best serve teachers and students working in this new environment. Students of color and low-income students will most benefit from the increased use of trauma-informed pedagogy in classrooms.

Furthermore, educational organizations are calling on state and federal policymakers to direct funding towards additional training in trauma-informed pedagogy and socio-emotional learning, in addition to requiring it in teacher preparation standards (TNTP, 2020). The results of this research project will help policymakers determine if it is necessary to adjust preparation standards or direct additional funding for training in trauma-informed pedagogy, helping to align education policy with research and practice. This systematic review is both timely and necessary in providing teacher preparation programs and policy makers with information about the prevalence of training in trauma-informed pedagogy in pre-service teacher preparation programs.

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