

Infusion of Skills for Undergraduate Scholarship into Teacher Education: Two Case Studies in New York and Florida

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Abstract : Students majoring in education are underrepresented in undergraduate scholarship. To enable and encourage teacher candidates to engage in scholarly activities, it is essential to infuse skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, oral and written communication, collaboration and the utilization of information literacy, into courses in teacher preparation programs. In this empirical study, we examined two teacher education programs – one in New York State and one in Florida – in terms of the approaches of the course-based infusion of skills for undergraduate research, and the effectiveness of this infusion. First, course-related documents such as syllabi, assignment descriptions, and course activities were reviewed and analyzed. The goal of the document analysis was to identify and describe the targeted skills, and the pedagogical approaches and strategies for promoting research skills in teacher candidates. Next, a selection of teacher candidates' scholarly products from the institution in Florida was used as a data set to examine teacher candidates' skill development in the context of the identified assignments. This dataset was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to describe the changes that occurred in teacher candidates' critical thinking, communication, and information literacy skills, and to uncover patterns in the skill development at the two institutions. Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore the changes in these skills of teacher candidates over a period of three years. The findings based on data from the teacher education program in Florida indicated a steady gain in written communication and critical thinking and a modest increase in informational literacy. At the institution in New York, candidates' submission and success rates on the edTPA, a New York State Teacher Certification exam, was used as a measure of scholarly skills. Overall, although different approaches were used for infusing the development of scholarly skills in the courses, the results suggest that a holistic and well-orchestrated infusion of the skills into most courses in the teacher education program might result in steadily developing scholarly skills. These results offered essential implications for teacher education programs in terms of further improvements in teacher candidates' skills for engaging in undergraduate research and scholarship. In this presentation, our purpose is to showcase two approaches developed by two teacher education programs to demonstrate how diverse approaches toward the promotion of undergraduate scholarship activities are responsive to the context of the teacher preparation programs.

Keywords : critical thinking, pedagogical strategies, teacher education, undergraduate student research

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