An Examination of the Impact of Online Test Preparation Tools on Teacher Candidates’ State Licensure Exam Scores at a Historically Black University

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While debate on the purpose, intent, and impact of required state licensure exams continues, the reality is that content and pedagogical teacher examinations remain the cornerstone of assessment of new teacher preparedness. According to McIntosh and Norwood (2004) in order to increase the diminishing numbers of African American teachers, researchers, teacher preparation entities, and policymakers must identify the performance trends of teacher candidates as well as those strategies that can be pursued to advance passage rates of underrepresented groups. Reductions in the pool of minority teacher candidates may eventually influence the learning outcomes of minority students (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010). Thus, there is
a need for definitive research to identify and examine effective and appropriate intervention tools and strategies that may serve to bridge the achievement gap between African American and non-minority teacher candidates and increase the pool of minority teacher candidates. There is a growing recognition that teacher education programs must attend to the unique strengths and needs of teachers of color (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of two online test preparation systems on the first-time Generalist and pedagogy test scores of African American teacher candidates enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program at a historically Black university in the state of Texas between the academic years of 2010 and 2014. For the year 2010-2011, the researcher will use teacher candidate scores on the state mandated TExES® Generalist Early Childhood through Grade 6 (Generalist EC-6) examination and the TExES® Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Early Childhood through Grade 12 (PPR EC-12) examination as the baseline data for comparing teacher candidates’ performance on these examinations for the years 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014.

The following research questions and hypothesis will be examined in this study:

1. What is the impact of the combination of face-to-face Content Area Review Sessions and the online Certify Teacher® exam preparation program on the first time score of teacher candidates on the TExES® Generalist EC-6 examination compared to scores of their prior year peer groups who did not utilize online test preparation supports

2. What is the impact of the combination of face-to-face Content Area Review Sessions, the online Certify Teacher® exam preparation program, and the online Texas Certification Examination Review for Teachers (T-CERT) Review Modules program on the first time score of teacher candidates on the TExES® Generalist EC-6
examination compared to the scores of their peers in the prior two academic term year peer groups who did not utilize online test preparation supports?

3. What is the impact of the combination of face-to-face Content Area Review Sessions and the online Certify Teacher® exam preparation program, on the first time score of teacher candidates on the TExES® PPR EC-12 examination compared to the scores of their peers in the prior academic year peer groups who did not utilize online test preparation supports?

4. What is the impact of the combination of face-to-face Content Area Review Sessions, the online Certify Teacher® exam preparation program, and the online Texas Certification Examination Review for Teachers (T-CERT) Review Modules program on the first time score of teacher candidates on the TExES® PPR EC-12 examination compared to the scores of their peers in the two prior academic years peer groups who did not utilize online test preparation supports?

A quantitative, non-experimental, ex post facto causal-comparative research design is proposed for this study. In this study, the causal-comparative research method is of value in identifying possible causes of observed variations in initial test scores of African American teacher candidates on state licensure exams. The researcher will use a quantitative causal-comparative (ex post facto design) to determine the cause for differences between the participants in the study. The significance of using this type of design is the capacity for the researcher to identify possible causes of observed differences in performance patterns (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Utilizing this research design will enable the researcher to examine the effects of the independent variable ex post facto. The quantitative data and results will address the research problem i.e. what is the effect of online teacher exam preparation programs on state
teacher examination scores of African American teacher candidates enrolled in a historically Black university between the years 2010 and 2014.

References


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