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PERSONALITY AND THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING DISPOSITION:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

By  
Laura G. Norton

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 2004

Approved by  
Dr. Klanderman/Dr. Dihoff

Date Approved 5/4/04

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Laura G. Norton  
THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING DISPOSITION:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY  
2003/04  
Dr. Klanderman and Dr. Dihoff  
Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine the possible role personality dispositions plays in the effectiveness of an educator. Fifteen special education teachers deemed as particularly “effective” by administrators and fifteen special education students enrolled in introductory level special education classes participated in this study. Indicated in previous studies as important to self-reflective processes, the personality traits of Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor were analyzed by the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory, completed by both groups. Special education teachers only completed a General Information Questionnaire to provide background and job satisfaction information. Independent t-Tests were used to determine differences between special education teachers and students in the areas of Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor. Results indicated special education students and teachers scored significantly different from one another in regards to Emotional Stability, with teachers scoring higher. There was no significant difference between scores in Original Thinking and Vigor. Background information indicated special education teachers surveyed had a diverse working background in education and were generally satisfied with their careers.

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And lastly, to all the children who have touched my life. It is through examining the world through your eyes that I am motivated to leave my mark on the world and strive to make education in this society a wonderful and rewarding experience for every child.

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## Chapter One

### *Need:*

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide quality teachers for our nation's schools. With the need for approximately 2.4 million teachers by the year 2012, Eastern Kentucky University Education Dean, Mark Wasickso, believes "[t]he recruitment, selection and preparation of these new educators offers monumental challenges and also the greatest opportunity for improving the quality of education received by our nations youth" (p. 1, 2003). However, current accreditation standards must be revised to ensure quality, effective educators are produced. Colleges and universities are devoting more time to the study of "effective" educators, and, specifically, ensuring candidates are meeting the "disposition" requirement in accreditation programs. Despite their time and energy, a determinant(s) for effectiveness is not clear, and whether such a factor(s) exists is still up for debate. Nevertheless, educational researchers agree that "teacher quality-knowledge and effectiveness-is the number one school based factor in student achievement" (NCATE, p. 2, 2003), and therefore, deserves their full attention.

In addition to improving licensing procedures, research is also examining the cause of high attrition rates in the field of education. Low-poverty schools experience attrition rates 50% higher than suburban districts (Darling-Hammond, 2003) and, overall,

there are more openings in the field than there are willing applicants. Consequently, many educators are entering the field with emergency licenses and have not undergone the standard certification process. These factors raise concern over whether or not some teachers are even *prepared* to serve as instructors, let alone if they are effective in their jobs. In light of this knowledge, the NCATE Commission has called for a “national effort to improve teacher retention by fifty percent” (Wise, p. 5, 2003). The Commission hopes to reach this goal by 2006 and is motivating schools to achieve it by establishing a network of educators within the schools to band together and examine current research on children and learning (Wise, 2003). Further, the Commission is requiring higher standards for teacher preparation and accreditation and is working to establish more “rewarding” (Wise, p. 5, 2003) career paths for teachers.

In taking the above factors into consideration, it is clear that further research needs to be done in examining the qualities of effective teachers.

*Purpose:*

An overwhelming majority will agree dispositions play a tremendous role in effective teaching. Current literature defines “effective” and “disposition” in a vast number of ways; and because there is an increased need for effective educators, a surge in interest in this topic is occurring in accreditation programs across the country. This exploratory study examines the possible role personality disposition plays in the effectiveness of an educator. It is hoped that this study will lend further support for the importance of creating and maintaining effective educators in the workplace and give

insight into other factors, such as job satisfaction, which may be contributing to the overall effectiveness of a teacher.

*Hypothesis:*

This study will use the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory to assess areas of Ascendancy, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Sociability, Self-Esteem, Cautiousness, Original Thinking, Personal Relations, and Vigor. The researcher predicts effective educators will score consistently with each other, specifically scoring highly in areas of Ascendancy, Sociability, and Original Thinking, as compared to special education students in their early years of study. A General Information Questionnaire will be provided as well, to provide baseline data for this exploratory study. However, no predictions will be made in regards to these areas assessed in this particular study.

*Background:*

*Philosophical Background:* Philosophers and theorists have debated educational theory and effective teaching practices since the times of the ancient Greeks. Socrates' (469-399 B.C.) early writings demonstrate his firm belief in the relationship between rhetorical questioning and learning (Hills, 2000). To Socrates, intellectual and philosophical growth could not result unless a student was willing to question his beliefs and acknowledge the possible flaws in reasoning; therefore, the primary role of instructor must be that of a guide (Hills, 2000). As a student of Socrates, Plato (428-348 B.C.) agreed "questioning" (the "Socratic teaching method") was key to the acquisition of knowledge, but of utmost importance was the character of the educator (Smith, 2002). Viewing education as a "moral enterprise" (Smith, 2002, p. 2), Plato argued for educators

with genuine concern for their student's well-being. Also central to Plato's, and later, Aristotle's (384-322) theory was the notion of "lifelong education" (Smith, 2002, p. 2). Both Plato and Aristotle agreed education should continue throughout the lifespan, and further, should include all aspects of the individual: intellectual and philosophical growth and physical strength (Smith, 2002). Accepting his predecessors views on education, Aristotle put forth the suggestion that true knowledge could not be obtained from mere learning, but had to be demonstrated and performed to be ultimately understood (Smith, 2002).

Ideas on proper education began to grow even more specific with the passage of time. Roman philosopher Quintilian (35 AD), stressed the importance of early development for a child's educational growth. Because the nurse is often the first person the child hears, Quintilian believed the nurse must possess significant language skills and, ideally speak in a philosophical manner. Well-educated parents would favor optimum educational growth, and the child's teacher should use variety in her instructional methods to ensure the child was entertained. Quintilian was also revolutionary in believing praise and rewards best benefited the child's growth. (Butler, 1920).

Much later in time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), continued to elaborate on the notion of child-centered learning, fostered by Quintilian. Believing children are innately pure and innocent, Rousseau cautioned that we must be attentive to the various stages of growth and foster educational learning in such a way as to supplement the environment and child's capabilities. Educators will be most effective if they individualize their teachings to best suit a child's unique needs. Rousseau's theory also shows the early formation of what is today called "discovery learning." For learning to

be truly understood, the teacher should allow the student to examine (discover) the world and derive his/her own conception of its workings; teachers should not supply all the answers. (Smith, 2002).

*Background of Education in the United States:* Educational curriculum in the 1800s involved little state and government involvement and was ultimately controlled by local officials and the instructor (or “master”), offering little consistency from town to town and state to state. An “effective” educator met the expectations of the town and was therefore, allowed to instruct the students. However, with an influx in immigration to the United States, local power waned as curriculum suddenly included “book adoption policies” (Education Week, 2000, p. 124) set forth by the government in efforts to control subject matter and provide a sound structure to what the newly emerging population should be taught. “Common schools” were established to provide free elementary education for all children in the United States, further contributing in efforts to assimilate newly immigrated children. Individuals such as Horace Mann, feared without this change, the stability of the newly formed republic would be jeopardized (Button & Provenzo, 1989). Although fear seemed to be the motivating factor in implementing educational reform, the uniform curriculum measures shifted evaluation of teaching effectiveness to the national level.

At this time, terminology changed in the field, as well. The original term of “master,” was replaced by “teacher,” symbolizing a new attitude towards the educator. Previously, masters were seen as those well-rehearsed in the “classics” and were devoted to the moral well-being of their students (Button & Provenzo, 1989). In contrast, “teachers” were expected to instruct elementary subject matter and deal with issues

concerning classroom management (Button & Provenzo, 1989). Mann also believed teachers must possess a new attitude, beneficial to the student and society, at large. Mann urged teachers to stray from methods of harsh discipline, once seen as most effective for student learning, and focus on providing students with affection, while still implementing instruction (Button & Provenzo, 1989).

The influence of Psychology, seen in Mann's approach to teaching, also began to influence classroom instruction. One reflection of this is the replacement of "drilling" with the controversial approach of Progressive education. Progressive education, praised by many "experts" as the newest, most effective learning tool, focused on active learning, with the belief that education should be an enjoyable, pleasant experience and a place to master the useful and practical knowledge to succeed in everyday life (Education Week, 2000). Deriving from Progressive reform was "life-adjustment" education (1940s/1950s). This new program was based on the recognition that not every student would be continuing their education beyond high school and would instead benefit more from useful courses ranging from citizenship and family life to dating and leisure time (Education Week, 2000, p. 129). Although forms of Progressive and life-adjustment education are still considered useful in some settings, preoccupations with World War II, and the Cold War, caused such ideas to disintegrate, as the government saw an increasing need for effective education to enforce student comprehension in mathematics, science, and foreign languages, in hopes of training a more competitive population in foreign affairs.

Despite curriculum reform efforts during the 1950s and 1960s, public dissatisfaction with education grew in the 1970s and 80s, as many saw American students

lagging behind foreign competitors. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, which further emphasized this alarm. The publication declared the nation's schools to be "woefully inadequate" and called for "ways of measuring whether students had mastered a rigorous curriculum" (Education Week, 2000, p. 162). The influence of this 1983 publication is still seen today. Today, testing is held in high regard, consequently affecting curriculum subject matter, curriculum approach, and often whether or not a student will graduate and a faculty member and/or school will be well respected. Because testing holds so much power in education today, it is an area of intense debate and controversy; those instructors not fulfilling these criteria are often not seen as "effective."

As a possible reflection of changing expectations in education, organizations such as the The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), are re-evaluating performance standards. According to the CEC, the revised standards "reflect a major change in the approval process," (CEC, 2002, p. 2) and call for adequate demonstration and evidence of comprehensive program and candidate assessment. CEC standards were approved by NCATE and beginning in 2003, accreditation programs are expected to comply. Consequently, colleges and universities around the country are re-evaluating their program standards to meet the demands of organizations such as CEC and NCATE, and to ensure quality educators are produced. A more comprehensive examination of these organizations and their research will be examined in Chapter Two.

*Definitions:* For purposes of this study, the terms below are defined as follows:

Effective educator: An instructor who meets the criteria for “target” level

“Dispositions” as described in Standard 1.6 of NCATE standards:

“Candidates work with students, families, and communities in ways that reflect the dispositions expected of professional educators as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. Candidates recognize when their own dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so”

(NCATE, 2003, p. 4-5).

In addition to meeting NCATE requirements, the educator should be seen as particularly successful by superiors.

Disposition: “Disposition,” as defined in Eastern Kentucky University research, is the “attitudes, beliefs, professional commitments, and/or perceptions that educators possess...” (Eastern Kentucky University, 2003, p. 2).

Self-reflection: the ability to “spontaneously” and “deliberately” re-evaluate and adjust perceptions (reported in Giovannelli, 2003, p. 2; Johnson, 1999).

*Assumptions:*

The researcher is aware that “effectiveness” in teaching is interpreted in many ways. However, it is assumed that participants satisfied the definition supplied by the researcher and were accurately selected by superiors for fulfilling the requested criteria. The researcher recommended personality inventories and questionnaires to be completed in a quiet atmosphere, free of distractions and it is assumed that this request was made.



Further, it is assumed written directions for completing the personality inventory and questionnaire were followed and participants took their time in choosing their response.

*Limitations:*

Because a larger sample size could not be obtained, responses may not accurately characterize a general, random sampling of “effective” teachers. Because there is no method (as of yet) to distinguish effective teachers from the general teaching populations, the researcher relied on opinion from the principals/administration of the participant’s school/district, also perhaps effecting the reliability of the sample. Personality inventory and job satisfaction questionnaire were completed by “effective” teachers in the Southern New Jersey region, and results cannot be generalized to other geographical regions.

*Summary:*

Researchers agree a revision in accreditation standards is necessary to create effective educators. Further, with climbing attrition rates in the field of education, more adequate measures for screening potential teacher candidates are necessary for the well-being of the individual candidate and overall field. Researchers are attempting to understand the nature of the effective educator, and it is hoped that this study will contribute to their efforts. Chapter Two will discuss specific research efforts and results, and allow a more complete understanding of the nature of this research project. Chapter Three will discuss the design of the study, followed by a discussion of results in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Two

Part One of this chapter will discuss key research findings relevant to effective teaching practices. Specifically examined is the original research on the nature of the helping professional, as well as research in self-reflective practices, personality traits, and current implementations of the recently revised NCATE accreditation standards.

### Part One: Effective Teaching:

#### *The original research on helping professions:*

The current literature on the dispositions of effective teachers is largely reflective of the work of 1970s University of Florida professor, Arthur W. Combs. Combs' and others' original research examined the dispositions of helping professionals in general, and later included a specific focus on the profession of teaching. In one specific study, the ideal therapeutic relationship was investigated. Fiedler (1950) interviewed psychotherapists from varying schools of thought and asked them to describe the variables of an "ideal therapeutic relationship" (reported in Combs, 1974, p. 20). Fiedler found a positive correlation between years of experience and similarity in describing the ideal therapeutic relationship, indicating experience as perhaps a necessary element in consistent, and possibly a more accurate ability to understand the nature of the roles in this particular helping relationship.

To determine if expertise in a helping relationship was a necessary criterion, Fiedler also interviewed the everyday “man in the street,” (reported in Combs, 1974, p. 20) asking him/her to describe the elements of a *general* “good helping relationship.” Results from this study were somewhat surprising to researchers; interviews also showed a consistency in reported descriptions. The implications of these results indicate that a “good,” general helping relationship is something that is at least culturally identifiable from our own personal experiences. (reported in Combs, 1974).

To apply these findings to the field of teaching, Combs asked “superior” teachers and “expert” psychotherapists to define a good helping professional. As expected, descriptions were consistent across both groups. To further elaborate on these findings, Combs compared “very good” teachers with “very poor” teachers, as deemed by students and supervisors, hypothesizing that there would be a difference in descriptions of a helping professional, with those “very good” teachers’ ratings to be similar to the expert opinion. However, findings were similar to Fiedler’s “man in the street” experiment, with both groups of teachers able to report the nature of a helping relationship as would an expert in the field. Apparently, both good and poor teachers share the same concept of a good helper, yet, only good teachers are able to accurately demonstrate these characteristics. (Combs, 1974). This significant finding led Combs to investigate why, with a virtually identical definition of a helping professional, only some teachers were able to demonstrate and perform accordingly.

Combs extended his research in attempt to find a cause for the inconsistency in ability to define an effective relationship and performance ratings. Thus far, research efforts have been unable to discriminate between good and poor teaching on the basis of

behavior, noting a wide array of behaviors, with no apparent linkages between effective and ineffectiveness. However, there is some basis for an internal difference, as Combs found helpers and non helpers to differentiate in the areas of “attitudes, feelings, and purposes and their conceptions of themselves and others” (Combs, 1974, p. 21). These findings led Combs to ultimately hypothesize that “[w]hether an individual will be an effective teacher depends fundamentally on the nature of his private world of perceptions” (1974, p. 21). This view, taken from Perceptual Psychology, stresses the internal world of the perceiver to be the important aspect in understanding behavior.

Through a multitude of research studies, Combs has found five critical areas of perceptual organization for the effective instructor. Briefly, these areas are (1) “extensive” perceptions in subject field area (2) “accurate” perceptions about the nature of people (3) an adequate self-concept (4) true perceptions on the goals and methods of learning (5) and “personal” perceptions regarding the suitable methods for teaching. (Combs, 1974, p. 22).

Overall, Combs’ research is often summed up as “self-as-instrument” concept, as Combs believes teachers should not be only agents of knowledge, but be willing to self-discover and learn how to use his/her self as an agent in change.

#### *Ideas in self-reflection:*

Combs’ work in applying Perceptual Psychology to determining teacher effectiveness is seen today as researchers attempt to link self-reflection with effective teaching. Self-reflection, as defined by Newman (1991) is “...a spontaneous and deliberate reaction to a unique set of circumstances. It is thoughtful consideration of an

idea or event. Such thoughtful consideration or reflection is the careful analysis not only of actions or decisions but also of the processes followed in accomplishing them” (reported in Giovannelli, 2003, p. 2).

To discover if a relationship existed between self-reflective practices and classroom techniques, Giovannelli (2003) conducted a study examining student teachers’ use of self-reflection and classroom behavior, as rated by supervisors. Giovannelli ultimately sought to determine if student teachers with a reflective disposition would satisfy notions of effective teaching as defined by his/her superior evaluating the classroom techniques, hypothesizing that those using a reflective disposition in teaching would also be considered effective by his/her supervisor.

Giovannelli specified particular criteria in her definition of reflection, later measured via open-ended questionnaire prior to the start of student classroom teaching. Questions assessed whether the student teacher “(a) has long-term views; (b) differentiates between roles of teacher and learner; (c) acknowledges the need for feedback and triangulation; (d) is a strategic and imaginative thinker; and (e) demonstrates reasoning grounded in the knowledge of self, children, and subject matter” (2003, p. 5).

Results from Giovannelli’s study showed statistical significance in reflective disposition and effective teaching, suggesting a reflective disposition positively impacts the ability to engage in effective teaching (2003, p. 10). Further, results showed candidate’s ability to define effective teaching also positively impacted classroom performance, proposing that “the more teacher candidates reflect about what a teacher should know and be able to do and the more they reflect about what teaching is, the more

effective their teaching is" (2003, p. 10). Of additional interest, Giovannelli included demographic information, amongst which recorded was age of teacher candidate.

Giovannelli found a relationship between age and ability to understand the nature of the effective teacher.

Giovannelli's findings clearly support the notion of Combs' Perceptual Psychology and ability to internally reflect. Wenzlaff's (1998) examination in the relationship of effective teaching and the self-reflective disposition uses a different, yet popular, technique for determining self-reflection in teacher candidates: the portfolio. Wenzlaff stresses that student teachers need a "vehicle" to be able to self-reflect in an accurate and constructive manner, and teacher educators should provide the framework for which teacher candidates can come to understand their own personal beliefs and philosophies for later self-reflection. Evidence supporting the use of a portfolio for self-reflection comes from Zeichner, Tabachnick, and Densmore (1987) who found that teacher candidates' previous beliefs and philosophies tend to stabilize, rather than be re-evaluated and/or changed during the experience of student teaching, perhaps due to inadequate confrontation of such pre-existing beliefs (reported in Wenzlaff, 1998, p. 7). In a study by Johnson, data indicated that the review process of the portfolio requirement is beneficial not only to student authors, but to those faculty members involved in the review process, as well. Specifically, the faculty reported the review process allowed for beneficial professional development in self-reflection, while giving students the opportunity to solidify personal philosophies and develop "habitual" self-reflection (Johnson, 1999).

As indicated earlier, research studies in self-reflection show that many teacher candidates' beliefs regarding the effective teacher are relatively stable before the onset of student teaching, but it is with self-reflective practices that these beliefs are re-evaluated and adjusted. Minor, Onwuegbuzie, and Witcher found seven themed-beliefs concerning the nature of the effective instructor held by teaching students at the introductory level. The seven areas deemed most important for effective teachers to hold/demonstrate as defined by this group are: student centered, effective classroom and behavior manager, competent instructor, ethical, enthusiastic about teaching, knowledgeable about subject matter and professional (Minor, Onwuegbuzie & Witcher, 2002, p. 5). According to NCATE (2002), as a consequence of the combined research in pre-existing beliefs and validity of self-reflection, "teacher educators should hold themselves responsible for being aware of the entering beliefs of their teacher candidates and should help them develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to perform competently in the classroom" (reported in Minor et al, 2002, p. 2).

*Research in personality:*

Although more difficult to measure, researchers have posed very specific questions regarding the internal nature of the instructor. In attempt to understand the importance of varying traits held by teachers, Check (2001) asked the following questions: "Are there particular inherited traits that assure success for one, failure for another? Or does every candidate for teaching possess innate traits that can be developed to the extent that everyone can become an effective teacher?" (p. 326). Although Check's research does not directly attempt to pinpoint an answer to this difficult question,

he points out various areas students deem important to help educators' achieve some level of success in the field. Check notes that although students are relatively content over subject matter requirements, they tend to be judgmental to the context in which material is taught to them and to the personality traits of their instructor(s) (2001, p. 326). For example, sixty percent of combined college, twelfth grade and eighth grade students prefer their instructor to "move around" (Check, 2001, p. 327) during classroom instruction. Ninety-three percent of this same population viewed humor as a critical factor to teaching. The most prominent trait ranked by these eighth-grade, senior, and college students was an "[u]nderstanding of students and their problems;" least trait seen as important was "[b]eing well-organized and prepared" (Check, 2001, p. 331).

As Check has considered the opinions of students in their evaluations of effective teachers, Fries (2002) notes the importance of considering the general public's opinion on effective teaching, arguing that the public's held beliefs regarding the nature of the effective instructor are just as note-worthy as the beliefs of experts and policymakers (p. 2). Fries' study consisted of three pools of participants; each group used a different surveying measure. Fries interviewed the first group about their recollections of their own personal classroom experiences. The second group was instructed to draw two pictures; the instructions for the first picture were to illustrate an example of what a "good teacher looked like in action" (Fries, 2002, p. 3) and the second picture was drawn to reflect what an ineffective teacher "looked like in action" (Fries, 2002, p. 3). The third group was told to examine Group Two's pictures and indicate anything of significance. (Fries, 2002).



Results from Fries' study showed three differing themes: "emotional needs," use of "power" in the classroom, and "goodness of fit" between student and instructor.

Research has shown the "emotional needs" of students to be a very important factor in addressing the well-being of students in the classroom. A 1972 study by Rath showed learners show a need for "love," "achievement," "belonging," "self-respect," "free from deep feelings of fear," and "understanding" (reported in Fries, 2002, p. 4). Fries found a significant trend in reports of negative school experiences revolving around the teacher's use of power, causing her to wonder if this factor in and of itself could result in determining the effectiveness of an instructor. Finally, results showed that the match between personality between student and teacher later served as a motivating force for the participants pooled.

Fries' finding regarding "emotional needs" has been reproduced in numerous studies. Shelton (2003) asserts "[e]ffective teaching, leading, and learning require emotional awareness" (p. 1). More importantly, it has been found that without adequate emotional awareness, school performance is hindered, indicating it as a crucial aspect of effective teaching (Shelton, 2003). Goleman (1995) has coined the phrase "emotional intelligence," and states that emotional awareness leads to enhanced self-awareness and self-reflection (reported in Shelton, 2003, p. 2), traits already deemed to be of utmost importance for effective teaching. Those lacking an understanding of their own emotions have often been found to have problems in communicating, decision-making, and impulsivity (Elias, 1999, reported in Shelton, 2002). Shelton points out that with an increasing workload, higher curriculum standards and incredible range of student

abilities, emotional awareness is critical to a teacher's ability to remain composed (2002, p. 2).

With the knowledge of the previously presented research findings, researchers have speculated on a potential link between "successful" teaching and the personal attributes held by instructors. Ducharme and Ducharme (1996) urge researchers to examine personality traits of enrolled teacher's candidates, asserting that there may be a link that could lead to prediction of effective teaching (reported in Daugherty, Logan & Turner, 2003, p. 1). According to Butcher (1994), "Psychology tests like the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) have been used widely to assess personality characteristics and appraise potential mental health problems of individuals applying for responsible positions" (p. 31). Research using the MMPI has predicted success in such occupations as military flying training, airline pilot applicants, and government security personnel (Bartram, 1995; Butcher, 1994; and Inwald & Brockwell, 1991).

As self-reflective practices have already been found to increase teaching effectiveness, previous research has linked reflective thinking with certain personality styles (Scheirer & Cohen, 1998, reported in Daugherty et al, 2003). In a study by Daugherty, Logan and Turner (2003), the areas of personality style, motivation, and creative thought are examined amongst fifty-three preservice teachers, the researchers hypothesizing a possible relationship between these three areas and a tendency to engage in self-reflection. To determine if such a relationship existed, Daugherty et al used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to measure personality style, Rotter's locus of control to measure degree of motivation, and the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking to measure extent of creativity. Results indicated creativity, including the areas of originality,

fluency and flexibility were significantly correlated with classroom performance ratings ( $p = <.001$ ), but found no relationship using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in assessing personality or motivation. Although no significance was found in the relationship between personality traits and effective instruction, the researchers note that twenty percent of the preservice teachers were found to be the extroverted, intuitive, feeling, and perceiving (ENFP) personality type. (Daugherty et al, 2003).

*Current implementations:*

The new shift in NCATE accreditation standards includes the “use of performance evidence in accreditation and program review decisions, and away from an emphasis on processes or inputs-based evidence” (NCATE, 2002, p. 2). Institutions must meet NCATE revisions by the year 2005. Further, due to the complex nature of the profession of teaching, and the areas of knowledge, skills and dispositions to be evaluated, NCATE is requiring the use of multiple forms of assessment techniques to ensure candidates are being thoroughly reviewed (NCATE, 2002, p. 16).

Research on the Professional Standards and Teacher Education states that measuring candidates’ knowledge attainment can be pursued without difficulty; however, screening candidates’ dispositions and classroom skills offers more challenge (Yehl-Burke, 2002). One attempt to do so is occurring at St. Bonaventure University. St. Bonaventure is attempting to use a “yellow flag” monitoring process, in addition to usual procedures to identify candidates for potential classroom difficulties (Yehl-Burke, 2002). If candidates are flagged for potential problems, either in the academic forum or areas of “professional attitudes, demeanor, abilities, or preparation” (Yehl-Burke, 2002, p. 3).

they are required to meet with the professor or administrator to create a “contract” to put into effect specific steps to meet program goals. A candidate receiving three yellow flags will not be placed in student teaching, and career counseling is often suggested. The system has proven effective at St. Bonaventure as the conference and contract has alleviated concerns and shown to be beneficial to teacher candidates.

A large research pool on the dispositions of teacher candidates is at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). EKU has taken specific measures to include Combs’ work in perceptual psychology to address NCATE’s new accreditation policy. EKU has applied Combs’ researched perceptions to include “accurate perceptions of people,” “perceptions of self leading to adequacy,” and “accurate perceptions about purposes of education and the processes of learning” (Wasicsko, 2002, p. 8, 11, 12), and has included a thorough exploration of these areas in early introductory education classes. The University has specifically designed Human Resources Scenarios to illustrate the four perceptions, including rating scales and detailed explanations to assess teacher candidates’ abilities to self-reflect and understand the perceptual principles. A previous poll had indicated that although many of the teacher educators were aware of a “dispositional mismatch” of some students, they had no adequate means to address such problems (Wasicsko, 2002, p. 1). EKU’s goal is to provide teacher educators with a proper tool for screening potential trouble spots in candidates. Although the Human Resources pilot has only been in existence for a year, early results indicate it enables candidates to make “better decisions regarding their dispositions to be an educator” (Wasicsko, 2002, p. 2).

Because the NCATE revision is new to higher education, longitudinal research is not yet available, as many institutions are still examining the best way to approach their own University's program revisions.

*Summary of Part One:*

Comb's findings revealed the nature of a good helping relationship is easily defined in our culture, but is not consistently and accurately demonstrated amongst all helping professionals, including teachers. Combs noted a possible reason for this discrepancy could be a difference in internal reasoning and thought processing.

Building on Combs' work, researchers have explored the idea of self-reflection, finding a reflective disposition to positively impact effective teaching and classroom performance. Studies using the portfolio as a means to self-reflect have indicated its benefits and specifically note the role the portfolio (self-reflection) plays in teacher candidates' ability to confront and adjust personal teaching philosophies and self-reflect.

In attempt to understand the internal nature of a teacher, both students and adults have been polled, and results suggest the importance of having a disposition that can accurately meet the emotional needs of students. Studies show adequate emotional awareness leads to enhanced self-awareness and reflection, as well as serving as a critical factor in a teacher's ability to remain composed. Without such awareness, students' school performance can be hindered and problems in communication, decision-making and impulsivity can result. The personality traits of creativity, originality, fluency and flexibility are all positively correlated with effective performance in the classroom.

### *Part Two: Job Satisfaction and Teaching:*

Part Two of this chapter will examine research on job satisfaction in attempt to understand the high attrition rates of teachers and NCATE's goal for revising accreditation requirements. Specifically examined will be findings relating and comparing general and special educators and the variables of workplace, support and salary.

#### *General information:*

As mentioned in Chapter One, the need to identify effective instructors is important to understand the high attrition rates of teachers, and more recently satisfy NCATE accreditation requirements for teaching programs across the country. Although there is criticism in the programs that instruct and certify teachers, research in teacher job satisfaction offers other possibilities for the lack of effectiveness of some instructors, and in addition, the high turnover rates in the field.

A 1986 national published survey of 1000 teachers (Turner) indicated that sixty-seven percent knew an "incompetent" teacher, who "should be fired"(reported in Mertler, 2002, p. 44). When researchers followed up on this question, it was revealed that, on average, this group believed they knew three teachers who fit the profile of incompetency (Turner, 1986, reported in Mertler, 2002). In Mertler's 2002 study of job satisfaction, twenty-two percent of teachers reported working with up to ten teachers they considered to be "unmotivated" (p. 49). Upon analyzing these results, Mertler suggests that this group of "incompetent" teachers is more than likely able to teach with relative

effectiveness and perform quite well, however, he postulates that the underlying problem is due to lack of motivation (Mertler, 2002).

Mertler chose to examine 710 middle and high school teachers to gain a further understanding of teacher job satisfaction (2002). Interestingly, seventy-seven percent of the teachers responding to Mertler's job satisfaction survey indicated that they were satisfied with their jobs; however, age of the respondents had a statistically significant effect ( $p < .01$ ) on degree of satisfaction, with those most satisfied being teachers ages twenty-six to thirty (90%) and those ages thirty-six to forty (83%)(Mertler, 2002). With regards to teaching experience, there was also a statistically significant difference, with those teachers holding one to five years of experience (80%), twenty-one to twenty-five years of experience (86%), and thirty-one to thirty-five years of experience (93%) reporting the most satisfaction (Mertler, 2002). With Mertler's study finding twenty-three percent of teachers unsatisfied with their careers, he asserts "[i]t is probably safe to assume that the students of these classroom teachers are not receiving the highest quality education" (2002, p. 50).

*General education and special education finding:*

Special education teachers report satisfaction rates quite different from general education teachers. As Mertler found satisfaction greater in the early and latter parts of careers, special education researchers found those years to be the greatest for attrition (Billingsley, 2000).

In a study to investigate the varying aspects of general education and special education teachers' satisfaction, researchers Billingsley & Cross (1992) distributed

questionnaires to 558 special educators and 589 general educators. Researchers also wished to examine the degree commitment and job satisfaction impacted desire to stay in the field of teaching. Of interest to the researchers was Mowday et al.'s (1982) research which proposed the "'attitudinal' conceptualization of commitment includes at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's/profession's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization/profession; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization/profession" (reported in Billingsley & Cross, 1992, p. 2). Results from Billingsley & Cross (2002) indicate similar findings between special education and general education teachers. Specific findings suggest importance in work-related variables, attitude and behavior, and such factors as support for maintaining job satisfaction. Further, lower levels of role conflict and stress lead to an increase in satisfaction. The researchers note that special educators reported more role conflict and stress in their job than the general educators, and previous studies have linked these factors to attrition rates in special educators (Bensky et al., 1980, Crane & Iwanicki, 1986; Fimian & Blanton, 1986 reported in Billingsley & Cross, 2002).

Research from Stempien & Lobe (2002) produced slightly different results from Billingsley & Cross (2002), and research involving special education teachers of emotionally disturbed students indicates very different trends in satisfaction, with more than thirty-six percent of teachers wishing to leave the field after only one year (George, George, Gersten & Grosenick, 1995, reported in Stempien & Lobe, 2002). Stempien & Lobe investigated satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels amongst special education teachers of emotionally/behaviorally impaired students, teachers of general education



students, and teachers involved with both of the above groups. Results show that special education teachers of emotionally/behaviorally impaired students report fewer job rewards and more frustration than general education teachers. Further, special education teachers report more job challenges, noting the inaccuracy of their student's records, incorrect diagnoses, insufficient teaching materials, and more time needed to spend with parents (Stempien & Lobe, 2002). In their discussion, Stempien and Lobe address their research findings and point out that because of the nature of stresses special education teachers may face, teaching programs should use "careful consideration" (p. 6) in admitting such students, and further suggest career counseling to safeguard against possible stress. This concern is further addressed in Billingsley's 2000 report which states that "[o]ver half of those beginning teachers who serve primarily students with ED are not fully certified for their positions" (p. 2). When combining Stempien & Lobe's (2002) findings regarding emotionally/behaviorally disabled students and stress and Billingsley's (2000) findings regarding lack of teacher certification for this same group of students, the results are alarming.

Gersten, Keating & Yovanoff (2001) took a different approach in examining special education teacher satisfaction, by inspecting the variables that "enhance" (p.1) willingness to stay in the field of teaching. Findings show that it takes very little to enhance satisfaction in this population of teachers. Gersten et al. found special educators felt valued by the mere understanding of their role, despite inadequate resources. Further, researchers found reduction in stress levels and role ambiguity when special educators were able to partake in a "meaningful substantive conversation" (Gersten et al, 2001, p. 6) with administrators and other various staff members. The researchers concluded that

“[u]ltimately it is the combination of the values and actions of the principal and teaching staff as mediated by the overall school culture that influences the level of support felt by the special education teacher” (Gersten et al, 2001, p. 6). However, a 1999 USA Today pool of 885 teachers nominated for the ALL-USA Teacher Team found 57.5% of teachers to agree that “Administrators do not fully understand the needs of classroom teachers” (DeBarros & Briggs, 1999, p. 5).

*Workplace, support & salary:*

In attempt to understand the influence of workplace conditions on teacher job satisfaction, MacMillan & Robert (1999) examined 2,202 elementary school teachers. Researchers examined the level of teacher competence, degree of administrative control, and a third category of “organizational culture” (p. 2), with the premise that these three areas significantly impacted the overall work environment of the school. Previous research in regards to teacher competence linked sufficient mastery of subject-matter knowledge, effective teaching resources, and ability to apply knowledge to teaching tools as major contributions to satisfaction (Little, 1995; Little, 1982; Lortie, 1975; reported in MacMillan & Robert, 1999). Previous research regarding administrative control indicated that although the classroom itself serves as the primary focus for teachers, administrative leadership served as the “key factor” in determining how effective a school would be (Rosenholtz, 1989, reported in MacMillan & Robert, 1999, p. 2). Lastly, earlier findings regarding organizational culture showed the degree to which a teacher felt an intricate part of the overall school will also lead to higher degree of job satisfaction (Lortie, 1975, reported in MacMillan & Robert, 1999). Results from

MacMillan and Robert's updated 1999 study showed workplace conditions were statistically significant in predicting job satisfaction in the areas of competence, administrative control, and organizational culture of the school. Specifically, the results of the study showed a positive relationship between satisfaction and competence, satisfaction and administrative support, and satisfaction and ability to feel included within the school setting.

A related study looked particularly at principal support for job satisfaction. According to research by House (1981), there are four types of support to consider in relation to principals: "emotional," "instrumental," "informational," and "appraisal" (reported in Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). Briefly defined, "emotional support" is the ability of the principal to respect a teacher by maintaining communication, displaying appreciation, and allowing a teacher to be heard (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). "Instrumental support" requires a principal to allow teachers access to appropriate teaching materials, other resources, and adequate space and time to perform direct teaching and preparation activities (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). A principal displaying "informational support," provides ample time for professional growth, including workshops and other information to improve teacher performance (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). Lastly, "appraisal support" is shown in a principal's ability to provide means for a teacher's personal growth through constructive criticism and suggestions (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). Research has shown that not only do principals displaying the above levels of support increase job satisfaction amongst his/her teaching staff, but in addition, decreases stress and burn-out (Blasé, 1982; Dworkin, 1987; Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; reported in Littrell & Billingsley, 1994) and increases

the personal health of the educator (Cichon & Koff, 1980; Sales & House, 1971; Needle, Griffin, Svendesen & Berney, 1980; and Dworkin, Haney, Dworkin & Telschow, 1990; reported in Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). Littrell & Billingsley (1994) examined 613 special education teachers working with emotionally disturbed students, learning disabled students, and mentally retarded students and 613 general education teachers. Participants completed a job satisfaction questionnaire, which included forty items from House's four areas of principal support. Results showed principals providing more emotional and informational support had a more satisfied teaching staff, with statistical significance for both general and special education teachers (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). Further, as earlier studies had suggested, the researchers found higher levels of emotional support provided by principals led to few health problems amongst staff (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994).

Teacher salary also has implications in regard to teacher job satisfaction. A U.S. funded Office of Special Education Programs (2000) reports the average special education teacher holding a Master's degree and thirteen years of experience earned a total of \$38,774, with some beginning special education teachers holding a Bachelor's degree to bring home wages less than \$15,000 a year. Darling-Hammond (2003) states "teacher salaries are about 20 percent below the salaries of other professionals with comparable education and training," (p. 3). Research has indicated teacher attrition to be higher in districts offering lower salaries (Brewer, 1996; Mont & Rees, 1996; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; reported in Darling-Hammond, 2003). Ranked highest by 885 teachers as the "greatest motivation to leave teaching before retirement," (DeBarros & Briggs, 1999)

this is an area of concern. In addition, Billingsley (2000) found beginning teachers to work approximately fifty-five hours a week for their salaries.

*Summary of Part Two:*

Research has revealed that relative job satisfaction amongst general and special educators differs, with general educators reporting the most satisfaction in the early and later parts of careers and special educators reporting the least satisfaction at those same career points. However, both groups tend to agree that work-related variables, attitude, and behavior and less role conflict and stress are important factors for maintaining job satisfaction. Researchers have found special educators to report more role conflict and stress in their jobs as compared to general educators and this is clearly seen among special education teachers of emotionally disturbed students. This group of teachers specifically notes the challenge of the job, inaccuracy of their students' records and diagnoses, as well as insufficient teaching tools and contact time with parents.

Teachers report more job satisfaction when their roles are understood, however approximately 58% in one pool of teachers indicated that they did not feel administrators understood their needs. This statistic is alarming as another research study indicated administrative leadership to be the key factor in determining the effectiveness of a school. Specific support a principal can supply to a staff to increase job satisfaction (and decrease stress and burnout) are emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. The salary of a teacher also contributes to the overall satisfaction of a teacher, serving as the primary motivation to leave teaching, as ranked by 885 teachers.

### Chapter Three

#### *Sample:*

Participants in this study were fifteen special education students and fifteen special education teachers. Special education students attended Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey and were selected because they were enrolled in introductory level special education classes and had not yet begun student teaching. Special education teachers served in the Southern region of New Jersey and were chosen because they were seen as particularly effective instructors by their superiors. In an attempt to standardize the requirements for an “effective” teacher, the researcher also required special education teachers to meet the requirements for possessing a “target disposition” as outlined in Standard 1.6 of NCATE standards:

“Candidates work with students, families, and communities in ways that reflect the dispositions expected of professional educators as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. Candidates recognize when their own dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so” (2003, p. 4-5).

Participants were not discriminated against by gender.

*Measurement:*

The Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory (GPP-I) served as the main source of measurement in this study and was completed by the special education students and special education teachers. Thus, the two independent variables were the special education students and the special education teachers. The dependent variable was the personality scores obtained.

The GPP-I combines participants' responses on eight scales (Ascendancy, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, Sociability, Cautiousness, Original Thinking, Personal Relations, Vigor) to assess personality. Particularly of importance to this study are the Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor scales, which have previously been linked to effective teaching. Participants scoring highly in the Emotional Stability score tend to be "well-controlled," "free from worry," and have "low levels of anxiety," whereas low scorers are reportedly more anxious, "hypersensitive," "troubled," easily upset and "unable to tolerate frustration" (Dyer, 2000). "Intellectually oriented" and "curious" individuals tend to score highly in the Original Thinking scale and often enjoy the challenge of new tasks and exploring new ideas while low scorers tend to dislike complex problems and are not particularly fond of "thought-provoking" discussions (Dyer, 2000). The Vigor scale measures energy level and those scoring highly tend to be more energetic, "high achievers" (Dyer, 2000) and able to accomplish more than the average individual. Scoring low on the Vigor scale is correlated with individuals who have little energy and tend to accomplish little throughout the day. (Dyer, 2000).

Split-half reliability for the scales of Ascendancy, Responsibility, Emotional Stability, and Sociability were all high, ranging from .86 - .89. Split-half reliability for

the remaining four scales of Cautiousness, Original Thinking, Personal Relations, and Vigor, ranging from .80 - .83. Measurements in long-term stability, as measured with College students tested at the start of their studies and four years later, showed little mean difference with a median value of only half a point. Validity measures correlating participants' (N = 63 females; N = 55 males) responses on the GPP-I and peer ratings revealed significance at the .01 level for seven scales. The only remaining scale of Vigor had significance at the .05 level. To further assess validity, the GPP-I was correlated with a variety of personality tests, including those developed by the use of factor analysis, internal consistency (scale), and common group membership. Overall, relationships were shown to be consistent with the goal of the GPP-I, particularly so when the instrument of comparison used the method of factor analysis for its development. In addition to completing the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory, special education teachers only filled out a General Information Questionnaire (see Appendix B) requesting age, total teaching experience, total teaching experience in special education only, degree(s) obtained, and certification. Also included in this Questionnaire were five brief questions in which the participants was to indicate his/her relative satisfaction in the areas such as salary, working conditions, and relationships within the school. The General Information Questionnaire served as a means to obtain baseline information since the nature of this study was exploratory.



### *Hypotheses:*

*Null Hypothesis for the Emotional Stability scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Emotional Stability.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Emotional Stability scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Emotional Stability.

*Null Hypothesis for the Original Thinking scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Original Thinking.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Original Thinking scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Original Thinking.

*Null Hypothesis for the Vigor scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Vigor.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Vigor scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Vigor.

### *Design of the Study:*

This study consisted of two independent samples: the special education students (N = 15) and the special education teachers (N = 15). The researcher provided each

participant with a letter explaining the nature of the study, instructions to ensure anonymity, and an informed consent form. Special education students were given two weeks to complete and return the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory.

To identify the special education teachers who met the requirements for participation in this study, supervisors were first notified by letter (see Appendix A) regarding the nature of the study. Supervisors were asked to identify special education teachers who they felt were particularly effective in the classroom and met the “target dispositions” in Standard 1.6 of NCATE. Supervisors also agreed, upon receipt of materials, to distribute accordingly. Once receiving permission from supervisors, the researcher sent the supervisor the appropriate number of Gordon Personal-Profile Inventories, instructions to ensure anonymity, informed consent forms, General Questionnaire forms (see Appendix B), and lastly, a letter to each special education teacher explaining the nature of the project and their role. Special education teachers were given two weeks to complete and return the above materials.

#### *Analysis:*

This exploratory study examined the personality dispositions, as measured with the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory, of special education students and special education teachers that may contribute to the overall effectiveness of a teacher.

An independent t-test was used to analyze the data. The discussion of results will review the General Information Questionnaire to give insight into other factors which may contribute to the effectiveness of an instructor and provide an avenue for further exploration.

*Summary:*

Utilizing the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory, this study examines the personality traits of special education students enrolled at Rowan University and “effective” special education teachers to determine if a difference exists specifically regarding the areas of Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor, which have been implemented in the literature to contribute to the ability to self-reflect. An independent t-test was used to analyze the data. A brief General Questionnaire was used to establish baseline data for the population of “effective” special education teachers included in this study. Chapter Four will include an analysis and interpretation of the data and Chapter Five will discuss implications and further avenues of exploration in regards to this area.

## Chapter Four

The purpose of this study was to examine the personality dispositions of special education students prior to the onset of student teaching and “effective” special education teachers to determine if differences exist in the ability to self-reflect, as particularly measured by the Emotional Stability, Original Thinking, and Vigor scales of the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory. Independent t-Tests were used to determine the effect of the status (student or teacher) on the score or dependent variable.

### *Restatement of the Hypotheses:*

*Null Hypothesis for the Emotional Stability scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Emotional Stability.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Emotional Stability scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Emotional Stability.

*Null Hypothesis for the Original Thinking scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Original Thinking.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Original Thinking scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Original Thinking.

*Null Hypothesis for the Vigor scale:* There will be no significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Vigor.

*Alternate Hypothesis for the Vigor scale:* There will be a significant difference in the personality scores of special education students and special education teachers in the area of Vigor.

#### *Results:*

In respect to the Emotional Stability hypothesis, data indicated there was a significant difference in scores between students enrolled in special education classes and “effective” special education teachers,  $t(28) = 2.4$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $< .05$ , where “effective” special education teachers ( $M = 68.4$ ) scored significantly higher than special education students ( $M = 46.0$ ). (See Figure 4.1). Therefore, I reject the Null Hypothesis for the Emotional Stability scale. Although the “effective” special education teachers scored higher on those questions pertaining to the Original Thinking scale, data indicated there was no significant difference in scores between special education students ( $M = 47.0$ ) and “effective” special education teachers ( $M = 57.3$ ),  $t(28) = 1.2$ ,  $p = .24$ ,  $> .05$ ; therefore, I must accept the Null Hypothesis for the Original Thinking scale. (See Figure 4.2). In respect to the Vigor hypothesis, data indicated special education students ( $M = 49.9$ ) scored slightly higher than “effective” special education teachers ( $M = 45.9$ ) on this

scale, however, there was no significant difference in scores between students enrolled in introductory special education classes and “effective” special education teachers,  $t(28) = -.42$ ,  $p = .68$ ,  $> .05$ , indicating that I must fail to reject the Null Hypothesis for the Vigor scale. (See Figure 4.3).

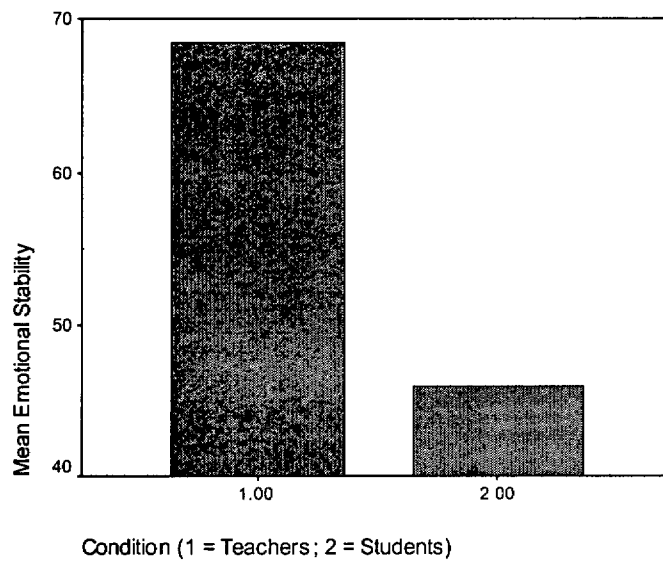


Figure 4.1: Mean scores for teachers and students for the Emotional Stability scale.

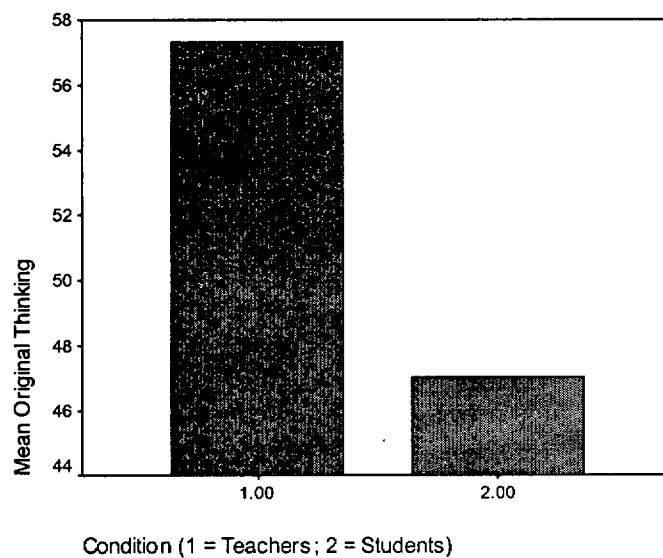


Figure 4.2: Mean scores for teachers and students for the Original Thinking scale.

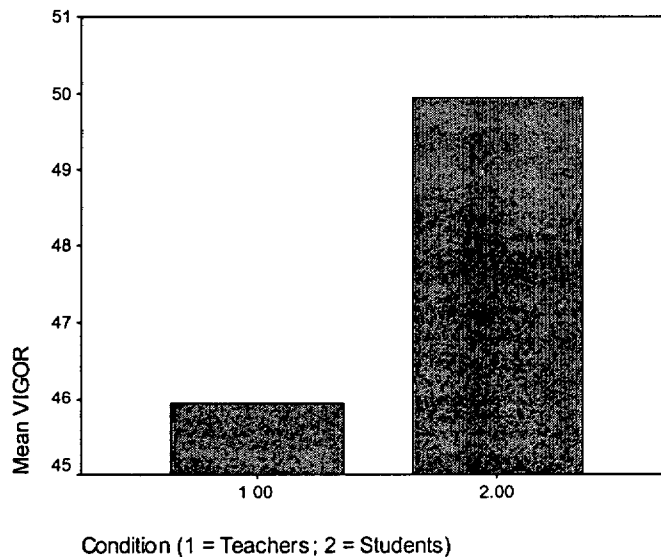


Figure 4.3: Mean scores for teachers and students for the Vigor Scale.

Although no specific hypotheses were made regarding the Ascendancy, Responsibility, Sociability, Self-Esteem, Cautiousness, and Personal Relations scales, they were also examined by Independent t-Tests and revealed special education students and “effective” special education teachers did not score significantly different from one another.

Upon analyzing the information provided by the “effective” special education teachers (General Information Questionnaire), it was found that many held dual certifications in the following areas: Reading Specialist, Elementary Education, Teacher of the Handicapped, Health and Learning Disability/Teacher Consultant. The mean age for this group was 45.6 years, ranging from thirty-five to fifty-eight years of age. The mean for total teaching experience was 16.2 years, ranging from five to thirty-four years of age. However, teaching experience in Special Education only ranged from two to twenty-six years of age, with a mean score of 10.4 years. The average reported scores for

the job satisfaction variables are listed in Table 4.1. The scale ranged from one to five, one representing poor satisfaction to five, which indicated extreme satisfaction.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Average Score (M)</u>
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.9
Satisfaction with Salary	3.2
Satisfaction with Working Conditions	3.0
Satisfaction with Administrative Relationships	3.9
Satisfaction with Colleagues	4.3

Table 4.1: Job Satisfaction as reported by “effective” special education teachers

*Summary:*

Fifteen students enrolled in introductory level special education classes and fifteen special education teachers, deemed as particularly “effective” by administrators participated in this study. The Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor scales of the Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory were analyzed via three Independent t-Tests to determine if students and teachers scored significantly differently from one another on these scales. These scales were chosen because previous research has indicated they are crucial in self-reflection, a process seen as necessary for teachers to be “effective.” Results indicated no significant difference between groups on the Original Thinking and Vigor scales; however, participants did score significantly differently on the Emotional Stability scale, with teachers scoring higher than students. The Ascendancy, Responsibility, Sociability, Self-Esteem, Cautiousness, and Personal Relations scales



were also analyzed by six Independent t-Tests, however, results indicated teachers and students did not score significantly different from one another on any of these scales.

## Chapter Five

### *Summary of Chapters One through Four:*

The challenge of selecting and educating prospective teachers to be particularly effective in the classroom is becoming clearer as the nation deals with the high rates of attrition occurring throughout school and seen especially in poor, urban districts. Because early research had indicated “good” and “poor” teaching was not determined by behavior (Combs, 1974), researchers have turned to assessing the dispositions of effective and ineffective teachers and have found the ability to “self-reflect” is linked to effective teaching (Combs, 1974; Giovannelli, 2003). Additional research has linked the personality traits of emotional awareness to an increase in self-reflective tendencies (Goleman, 1995, reported in Shelton, 2003) and motivation and creative thought to effective teaching (Daugherty, Logan and Turner, 2003). However, despite the findings that a self-reflective disposition is correlated with effective teachers, considerable questions still exist as to how best measure a “disposition” and implement a screening tool to determine if a prospective teacher will be effective in the field.

Fifteen special education students enrolled in introductory level special education classes, not yet enrolled in student teaching, and fifteen special education teachers seen as particularly “effective” in the classroom participated in this study. It was predicted that “effective” special education teachers would score significantly higher particularly in the areas of Emotional Stability, Vigor, and Original Thinking than special education

students. The Gordon Personal-Profile Inventory was distributed to both groups and a General Information Questionnaire, designed to gather additional background information was distributed to the teachers only.

Independent t-Tests revealed there was no statistically significant difference between the students and teacher in the areas of Original Thinking and Vigor; however, there was a statistically significant difference in participants' scores on the Emotional Stability scale, with teachers scoring higher than students in this area.

#### *Discussion:*

Specific predictions were made regarding the scales of Emotional Stability, Original Thinking and Vigor. Results revealed "effective" special education teachers scored significantly higher than special education students in regards to Emotional Stability. Upon comparing the special education teachers and special education students with percentile norms for a national sample of United States adults, findings reveal the students ( $M = 42.8$ ) scored similarly to the average United States adult ( $M = 47$ ), whereas the teachers scored higher ( $M = 64.3$ ), indicating that the special education teachers are somewhat better at emotionally regulating themselves compared to the average adult and specifically, to the special education student. The teachers' scores reflect that as a group they tend to be "well-controlled," "free from worry," and have "lower levels of anxiety" (Dyer, 2000) when compared to the average adult. Because previous literature has indicated that without the ability to effectively emotionally regulate, students' school performance can be hindered and a teacher is less likely to communicate effectively, make good decisions, and engage in less impulsive behaviors, as well as less able to

remain composed in the classroom (Shelton, 2003; Goleman, 1995, reported in Shelton, 2003; Elias, 1999, reported in Shelton, 2003; Fries, 2002), this is an important finding and supports previous findings that emotional stability may lead to an increased ability to self-reflect.

In regards to Original Thinking, in which students ( $M = 57.3$ ) and teachers ( $M = 46.5$ ) did not score significantly differently from one another, further analysis revealed they also did not score all that differently from the average United States adult ( $M = 49$ ). Findings were similar on the Vigor scale, in which students ( $M = 51.3$ ) and teachers ( $M = 45.9$ ) also did not score very differently from the average United States adult ( $M = 50$ ). These findings were surprising as previous literature had linked original thinkers and a more vigorous energy style to an enhanced ability to self-reflect (Daugherty, Logan and Turner, 2003); however, it is possible something such as original thinking varies according to grade level taught, perhaps being more important at the elementary level, or differs amongst general and special education teachers and the diversity of students taught and perhaps, even the availability of teaching materials. The Vigor finding perhaps is an indication of the seriousness at which teachers are overworked as one should note this study focused on “effective” special education teachers only and does not reflect the average teacher, who may score even lower regarding Vigor.

The data obtained from the General Information Questionnaire revealed this group of “effective” teachers to be generally satisfied overall and in the areas of salary and working conditions. In addition, this group of teachers is reportedly very satisfied with regards to administrative relationship and relationships with colleagues. Satisfaction with administrators has been previously linked as the most important factor regarding

overall job satisfaction (Rosenholtz, 1989, reported in MacMillan and Robert, 1999) and perhaps explains why this group of effective teachers, although scoring averagely with the adult population on the Vigor scale, still manages to be highly effective in the classroom. Further, the average teaching experience for this group was 16.2 years, which previous studies have indicated is the time period in which job satisfaction is highest for this group (Mertler, 2002).

### *Conclusions:*

The Emotional Stability finding of this study, which did not find effective special education teachers to score significantly higher than special education students is supported by the previous literature as well, indicating that self-reflective tendencies tend to be strengthened as a result of a “well-controlled,” “emotionally aware” personality. Although previous studies linked high motivation (measured in this study by the Vigor scale) and Original Thinking with effective teaching, those findings were not supported by this study.

Although the researcher attempted to make the criteria for an “effective” teacher as clear and specific as possible by citing recent NCATE requirements for such, NCATE’s definition is still widely open to individual interpretation, causing possible discrepancies. Further, the researcher did not attempt to screen any of the student participants, the only requirement for participation being enrollment in an introductory level special education class. Because much of Rowan University’s student population consists of returning students, it is possible that many student participants had related job experience, and is nevertheless an unknown factor.

Because the population size was very small with fifteen participants per group, no grand generalizations can be made at this point regarding this study's current findings or previous studies. Recommendations for future research will be provided in "Implications for future research."

*Implications for future research:*

By the year 2006 the NCATE Commission hopes to improve teacher retention by "fifty percent" (Wise, p. 5, 2003) and do so by motivating schools to establish committees to examine the current research regarding children and learning, by requiring higher standards for accreditation program and establishing "rewarding" (Wise, p. 5, 2003) career paths for teachers; however, research has not yet determined the most effective way to do so and the struggle to appropriately define what an "effective" disposition *is* remains unresolved. Further, despite considerable pressure on schools to re-evaluate current accreditation requirements, literature is relatively sparse on the best criteria for which to evaluate prospective teachers and implement programs that would create more "effective" educators.

There is no doubt that a screening tool designed to detect effective and ineffective teachers would be useful, however, this study does not support the notion that a self-reflective disposition clearly evolves through classroom experience, generally most significantly noted as student teaching begins. However, the sample of this study was very small and needs to be dramatically increased to more carefully consider this notion.

Interviewing special education students and "effective" teachers could be useful in identifying specific themes related to "effective" teaching and could also reveal further

information regarding the struggles and obstacles this population feels interferes with perhaps better effectiveness in teaching and generally, throughout schools. Further, a thorough analysis of current teacher accreditation programs should be reviewed and include administrators, instructors, students, curriculum, and on-site practicum experiences to determine specific attempts to enhance self-reflection and screen prospective teachers for any difficulties in engaging in the self-reflection process.

In addition, research should consider the notion that “effective” teaching to one student may not be “effective” to another and the question of whether or not compatible teacher/student personalities contribute to how effective a teacher is and is seen by superiors should be examined. A screening tool to determine ineffective or effective teaching may not be particularly fair if all angles of what makes a teacher effective to one student, and perhaps not another, are examined. Thus, a study that matches the personalities of students and teachers to determine the effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom should be performed.

As this exploratory study has indicated, the issue of quality and effective educators is extremely important and complex and no drastic changes in screening procedures and assessment of educators should be done without thoroughly exploring the subject from all angles.

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## Appendix A

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am requesting your assistance in completing a study currently being conducted by a student who is under my supervision. The results of the study will be reported in thesis form and are valuable both to teacher preparation programs and in personnel selection by administrators such as yourself.

Your role will be to distribute the enclosed materials to special education teachers who you feel are particularly effective in the classroom. Further, they must satisfy the "target" dispositional requirement as described in Standard 1.6 of NCATE standards: "Candidates work with students, families, and communities in ways that reflect the dispositions expected of professional educators as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. Candidates recognize when their own dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so" (NCATE, 2003, p. 4-5).

Enclosed is some additional information regarding the materials to be distributed and returned via self addressed stamped envelope. Participation by teachers who receive these materials is entirely voluntary.

If you feel this is the kind of project you can participate in, kindly return the enclosed permission attached below by \_\_\_\_\_, indicating the number of special education teachers you feel meet the above requirements and the materials will be promptly sent to you. Please do not hesitate to contact myself or my student, Ms. Laura Norton. The best phone number to reach either of us is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Stanley Urban, Ph.D  
Professor of Special Education

Enclosures

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To: Stan Urban, Thesis Supervisor and Ms. Laura Norton, M.A. Student in School Psychology Program

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am able to participate and will distribute to \_\_\_\_\_ special education teachers upon receiving materials.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I cannot participate.

## Appendix B

#

### General Information

*Directions: Please fill in all the information below, to the best of your abilities.*

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Total teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Total teaching experience in special education only: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your certification in? \_\_\_\_\_

*Directions: On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest, 5 being the highest), please indicate (by circle) how satisfied you are in the following areas:*

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job as a teacher?  
1      2      3      4      5
2. Overall, how satisfied are you with your salary?  
1      2      3      4      5
3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the working conditions of your school?  
1      2      3      4      5
4. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship to administrators?  
1      2      3      4      5
5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your colleagues?  
1      2      3      4      5



