

Investigating Changes of Early Childhood Teacher Candidates' Dispositions: Within One-Year Time Frame

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how candidates' experiences influence their dispositions as they pass through their junior year of an early childhood teacher education program. Thirty six teacher candidates participated in this study by self-evaluating their dispositions using an evaluation form developed by the researcher. Conclusions and implications drawn from the findings are as follows: First, it is important to plan and organize all professional courses in a way that will effectively help the teacher candidates to understand professional dispositions clearly. Second, in order to facilitate teacher candidates to develop professional dispositions, it is important to help them clearly understand the expected dispositions and the necessity of developing them, and to provide them with more opportunities to practice teaching in a real classroom. Providing the teacher candidates with opportunities to self-evaluate their dispositions also helps them reflect and develop their dispositions. Third, it is crucial to select field experience sites with qualified cooperating teachers and a sound early childhood education program, in order to provide the teacher candidates with quality field experiences. Finally, it is suggested to conduct a further study on the student teachers' thought processes in developing dispositions through student teaching experiences.

Key words: *teacher qualification, professional dispositions, teacher education*

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Introduction

The teacher, at the point of contact between children and the entire educational enterprise, must make a number of decisions of what to do in the classroom for the right child at the right time for the right reasons. According to Berliner (1985, p.5), “professional and complex decisions of teachers take place in environments where teachers have about 1,500 distinct interactions per day with different children on different issues, in classrooms where 30 students need to be supervised all the time, all day long.”

When teachers make decisions in the classroom, they need to translate theories into practice. This means that teachers do not apply theories to practice as they are, and what they do in practice is not exactly the same as what they learned from the theories. Reviewing a number of studies on teachers thought processes, Spodek & Saracho (1988) summarized that teachers generate legitimate practical knowledge in relation to the practice of teaching, and the practical knowledge guides teachers’ work and helps teachers generate consistent actions and behavior in teaching. They also explained that professional knowledge is knowledge shared by all practitioners with common philosophies, while practical knowledge is knowledge generated by the teacher by selecting, combining, and modifying theories he/she knows. Elbaz (1983) explained that generating practical knowledge is influenced by teachers’ own perspectives, encompassing not only their own intellectual beliefs but also perceptions, feelings, values, purposes, and commitment.

However, in recent years, there has been a new perspective emphasizing that generating practical knowledge is not a sufficient condition for teachers to be willing to act in certain ways in their practice. Katz (1985, 1999) proposed developing dispositions as another important qualification of teachers, which enables them to consistently behave and act in certain ways. She defined dispositions as tendencies to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a goal of teaching (Katz, 1999). In other words, teachers’ dispositions are frames of mind that determine patterns of a teacher’s actions and behaviors that are relevant to his/her practice (Wenzalff, 1998). According to this explanation of dispositions, it can

be conceptualized that dispositions are emotional aspects of teachers' qualifications, while generating practical knowledge is cognitive aspect of teachers' qualifications (See figure 1). Emotions are defined as a human being's inside feelings that are mostly manifested in overt behaviors and/or responses, and motivate and guide his/her thoughts and actions (Puckett & Black, 2005). Even though a person knows how to read, he/she would not read a lot if he/she does not want to read emotionally. As emotions guide human being's thoughts and actions like this, teachers' emotions, which are represented as dispositions, determine patterns of teachers' actions and behaviors in a classroom. For example, even though a teacher knows developing differentiated instructional strategies based on individual difference, he/she would not develop them for a child, if he/she does not have a professional disposition of respecting individual differences and valuing differentiated instruction. From this point of view, it can be concluded that both dispositions and practical knowledge play significant roles helping teachers to consistently act or behave in certain ways that are appropriate for their practice in classroom.

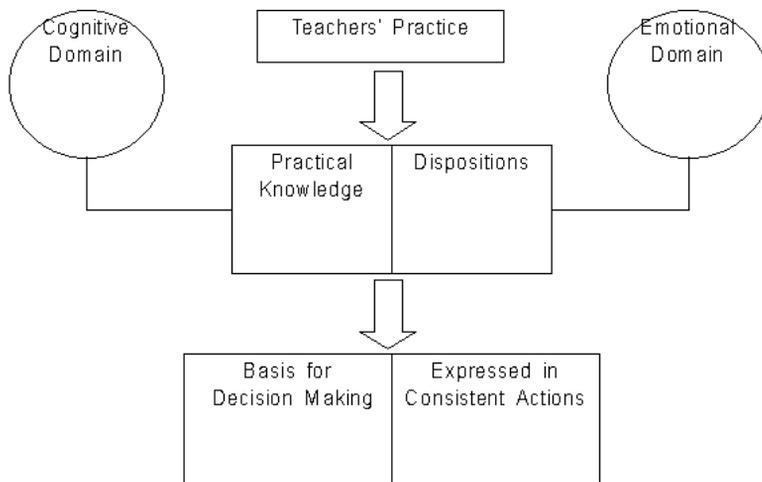


Figure 1. Disposition and teachers' practice

Since dispositions and practical knowledge explain why teachers do what they do in practice, teacher candidates must develop dispositions as well as knowledge and

skills through teacher education program. Teachers often do not follow procedures that they learned to be right and/or true from pre-service teacher education programs (Kitsantas & Baylor, 2001) due to lack of professional dispositions. Research on teachers' thoughts and teacher excellence emphasizes the importance of dispositions in teaching because effective teaching happens only when the teachers thoroughly know their content, have significant teaching skills, and possess professional dispositions that are relevant to the practice (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000, p.1).

As dispositions had been getting more attention from teacher educators, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) included teacher "dispositions" in its 2000 Standard. Other professional standards for teachers also emphasize dispositions as essential qualifications that teacher candidates must develop along with the core professional knowledge and skills. In addition, many studies have been conducted for defining and measuring the dispositions associated with teaching effectiveness and establishing a model for developing teacher candidates' dispositions (Collinson, 1999; Fallon & Ackley, 2003; Kitsantas & Baylor, 2001; Maylone, 2002; Nowak-Fabrykowski & Caldwell, 2002; Rath, 2001; Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000; Whaley, 1999; Wenzlaff, 1999).

Knowing something to be right and/or true doesn't mean always doing something as they know. Moreover, in the art of teaching, what a teacher does in a classroom is more important than what a teacher knows about teaching. Dispositions determine what a teacher does in a classroom. Therefore, it is not too much to emphasize that teacher candidates need to develop appropriate professional dispositions while they learn knowledge and skills as they pass through teacher education program. However, even though helping teacher candidates develop appropriate professional dispositions has been getting attention in the field of teacher education, it is still hard to find the consensus about how the specified professional dispositions might be used for educating teacher candidates. Since dispositions are close to emotional aspect of teacher's qualifications that are more likely to be developed through observing models who exhibit them (Katz, 1999), it is difficult to articulate dispositions in a standardized form. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on dispositions in the context of a certain teacher education program. From these points of view, in order to lay the solid

foundation of identifying ways to help teacher candidates to develop appropriate professional dispositions in this particular teacher education program, the purpose of this study was to investigate how candidates' experiences influence candidates' dispositions as they pass through their junior year of an early childhood teacher education program.

Research questions established for the purposes are as follows:

1. Did the teacher candidates' understanding of professional dispositions change by the end of junior year?
2. Did the teacher candidates' self-evaluation on their dispositions change at the end of junior year?
3. What factors influenced developing teacher candidates' dispositions for this time period?

Methods

Subjects

Thirty six early childhood teacher candidates from a rural university in the eastern part of the United States participated in this study. The demographic information about the subjects is summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information*

	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	1	2.8
	Female	35	97.2
	Total	36	100
Age	YT 20	2	5.6
	20-29	28	77.8
	30-39	4	11.0
	Over 40	2	5.6
	Total	36	100

Research Instrument

Two sets of evaluation forms for pretest and post test were developed by the researcher. The form for pretest consists of a total of 50 questions, including 2 demo-

graphic questions, 24 questions for identifying candidates' understanding dispositions, and 24 questions for evaluating candidates' dispositions. The form for post test consists of a total of 74 questions, including 2 demographic questions 24 questions for identifying candidates' understanding dispositions, 24 questions for evaluating candidates' dispositions, and 24 questions for identifying factors influencing candidates' development of dispositions.

Table 2. *Questions in Self Evaluation Forms*

Pretest	Post Test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demographic Questions •24 Questions for Identifying Candidates Understanding dispositions •24 Questions for Evaluating Candidates Dispositions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demographic Questions •24 Questions for Identifying Candidates Understanding dispositions •24 Questions for Evaluating Candidates Dispositions •24 Questions for Identifying Factors Influencing Candidates Development of Dispositions

Questions for identifying candidates' understanding dispositions and evaluating their dispositions were drawn from the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders which were adopted by the State Board of Education in December 2003 as part of the new licensing regulations. This standard consists of ten sub-standards: Subject knowledge; Subject Matter Knowledge; Human Growth and Development; Diverse Learners; Instructional Planning and Strategies; Assessment; Learning Environment; Special Needs; Communication; Collaboration and Partnership; and Professional Development. Each sub-standard includes a total of 64 corresponding dispositions and expected performance that are aligned to core knowledge and skills. The researcher elicited 24 dispositions from the 64 dispositions and expected performance of those 10 sub-standards, considering the principles of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education.

A pilot study with the two evaluation forms was conducted with 6 candidates, who were excluded from this study; as a result, the final version of the two forms was

constructed after minor modifications. The two forms of pretest and post test were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Procedures

Thirty six teacher candidates participated in pretest in September of 2006, answering questions for their understanding of dispositions and questions for self evaluating their dispositions. The same candidates participated in the post test in April of 2007, answering questions for their understanding of dispositions, questions for self evaluating their dispositions, and questions for factors influencing their dispositions. For each time, the researcher explained the forms to the participants and helped them understand questions. It took about 30 minutes to complete the form for the pretest and 40 minutes for the post test.

Data Analysis

Data from 36 participants were analyzed using SPSS PC program. Paired Sample T-Test was conducted to compare the mean scores between: ① Candidates' understanding on dispositions in the beginning of junior year and those at the end of junior year, and ② Candidates' self evaluation on their own dispositions in the beginning of the junior year and those at the end of junior year. Descriptive statistics were also conducted to identify frequencies and percentages of factors influencing on candidates' dispositions.

Program Context

The teacher education program, which the participants are undertaking is designed to prepare teacher candidates who can facilitate the learning of all children from age 3 to 8 years old. This program was developed on the basis of Professional Development Standards of New Jersey, Standards for Professional Preparation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and Professional Standards from the Council of Exceptional Children, Division of Early Childhood. Upon the graduation, teacher candidates are certified from the state of New Jersey as teachers of preschool through 3rd grade. Professional courses in this

teacher education program are listed in table 3.

Table 3. *Professional Courses, Major Assignments, and Field Experience Hours*

Year	Course	Major Assignments	Field Experience (Hours/Semester)
Sophomore	Inquiries into Teaching and Learning	Book Report, Self Reflection	25
	Family, Community, and School Relationship	Communication with Diverse Families, Self Reflection	25
Junior	Growth and Learning: 0 to 5	Child Study, Self Reflection	50
	Growth and Learning: K to 3rd Grade	Differentiate Instruction, Self Reflection	
	Language Development and Literacy	Case Study, Self Reflection	50
	Planning, Integrating, and Adapting Curriculum: Math and Science	Writing Lesson Plans, Self Reflection	
Senior	Planning, Integrating, and Adapting Curriculum: Across Content Area	Classroom Management Plan, Self Reflection	50
	Assessment, Observation and Evaluation of Diverse Learners	Assessment Portfolio, Self Reflection	
	Clinical Practice in Early Childhood Education	Unit Plan, Self Reflection	Student Teaching
	Clinical Practice Seminar in Early Childhood Education	Professional Portfolio	

Findings and Discussion

1. Did the teacher candidates' understanding of professional dispositions change at the end of junior year?

In order to answer this question, the mean scores of candidates' understanding on dispositions responded in September 2006 were compared to those responded at the end of April 2007.

As the Table 4 demonstrates, the mean scores of candidates' understanding on 20 out of 24 dispositions were increased at the end of junior year at a statistically

Table 4. *Candidates' Understanding on Professional Dispositions*

Professional Dispositions	September 2006		April 2007		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Enthusiasm in making connections between content knowledge and students' every day life	2.42	.65	2.78	.42	-2.71	35	.010
Valuing understanding of the content knowledge of each subject matter	2.25	.50	2.83	.38	-5.39	35	.000
Valuing multiple ways of teaching and students' learning	2.44	.50	2.89	.32	-4.39	35	.000
Respecting individual differences in child development	2.50	.61	2.94	.23	-4.09	35	.000
Respecting diversity in teaching	2.39	.64	2.75	.60	-2.85	35	.007
Valuing flexibility in implementing teaching plan	2.36	.54	2.81	.40	-4.09	35	.000
Respecting students' interests and perspectives in planning curriculum	2.47	.56	2.78	.42	-2.94	35	.006
Valuing students' own critical thinking & problem-solving	2.03	.61	2.58	.50	-4.32	35	.000
Emphasizing the importance of establishing students' dispositions	2.00	.76	2.58	.50	-4.16	35	.000
Valuing roles of assessment in early childhood education	2.22	.60	2.75	.44	-4.55	35	.000
Valuing students' errors as opportunities for learning	2.14	.49	2.72	.45	-5.80	35	.000
Teacher's valuing students' peer relationships in their learning	2.50	.51	2.83	.38	-3.16	35	.003
Respecting and applying democratic values in managing the classroom	1.58	.99	2.56	.56	-5.53	35	.000
Valuing potential of high achievement of students with special needs	2.25	.69	2.67	.48	-2.86	35	.007
Valuing effective communication methods	1.94	.89	2.83	.38	-5.15	35	.000
Valuing collaboration with colleagues	2.33	.63	2.89	.32	-4.80	35	.000
Considering all aspects of the student's well-being	2.33	.68	2.78	.42	-3.45	35	.001
Valuing working with parents/families with diverse backgrounds	2.61	.55	2.83	.38	-2.09	35	.044
Valuing teachers' life-long learning	1.97	.81	2.53	.56	-3.80	35	.001
Valuing teachers' self reflection on their practice	2.28	.66	2.67	.48	-2.79	35	.009

significant level. This result can be interpreted that teacher candidates' experiences in their junior year of this teacher education program did influence their understanding of professional dispositions. As summarized in the table 2, teacher candidates who participated in this study took four professional courses in junior year. Each course includes strong components of dispositions in its content. For each course, candidates must attend 15 classes of 3 credit hours for the whole semester. In addition, they must complete assignment(s) (See Table 3).

While teacher candidates are taking the professional courses, they have to complete a total of twenty five hours of field experiences for each course. Thus, juniors in this program spend at least fifty hours in P-3 classrooms in a public school setting for each semester. For this, they visit a field experience site once a week (7 hours a day), 8 to 9 times per semester. For each visit, candidates must complete observation guidelines provided by the instructor of each course while participating in ongoing classroom activities as a teacher's aide. Increasing the mean scores of teacher candidates' understanding on dispositions implies that all of these elements of this particular teacher education program seemed to facilitate their understanding of professional dispositions that they need to develop.

2. Did the teacher candidates' self-evaluation on their dispositions change at the end of junior year?

In order to answer this question, the mean scores of candidates' self evaluation on their dispositions administered in September 2006 were compared to those administered at the end of April 2007.

Table 5 shows that the mean scores of candidate's self evaluation on professional dispositions were slightly decreased in most items at the end of junior year. Even though most of the changes were not statistically significant, that of the four dispositions, 「enthusiasm in making connections between content knowledge and students' every day life」, 「valuing understanding of the content knowledge of each subject matter」, 「respecting and applying democratic values in managing the classroom」, and 「valuing effective communication methods」 showed statistically significant decrease.

Table 5. *Candidates' Self Evaluation of Professional Dispositions*

Professional Dispositions	September 2006		April 2007		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Enthusiasm in making connections between content knowledge and students' every day life	2.28	.85	2.39	.60			
Valuing understanding of the content knowledge of each subject matter	2.14	.80	2.39	.60			
Valuing multiple ways of teaching and students' learning	2.647	.53	2.44	.65			
Respecting individual differences in child development	2.69	.58	2.47	.74			
Valuing students' self confidence in their learning	2.69	.67	2.53	.60			
Valuing teachers' respect for diverse family backgrounds & cultural differences	2.67	.68	2.61	.64			
Respecting diversity in teaching	2.58	.61	2.44	.81			
Valuing flexibility in implementing teaching plan	2.39	.84	2.28	.74			
Respecting students' interests and perspectives in planning curriculum	2.72	.45	2.47	.61	2.17	35	.037
Valuing play in students' learning	2.97	.17	2.67	.53	3.18	35	.003
Valuing students' own critical thinking & problem-solving	2.64	.49	2.36	.59	2.25	35	.031
Emphasizing the importance of establishing students' dispositions	2.33	.96	2.28	.70			
Valuing roles of assessment in early childhood education	2.28	.81	2.31	.79			
Valuing students' errors as opportunities for learning	2.50	.74	2.22	.83			
Valuing effort in establishing/maintaining a positive classroom climate	2.81	.47	2.61	.55			
Teacher's valuing students' peer relationships in their learning	2.56	.81	2.47	.61			
Respecting and applying democratic values in managing the classroom	1.97	1.08	2.03	.97			
Valuing potential of high achievement of students with special needs	2.47	.84	2.44	.81			
Valuing effective communication methods	2.39	.77	2.50	.70			
Valuing collaboration with colleagues	2.58	.60	2.47	.84			
Considering all aspects of the student's well-being	2.67	.53	2.53	.65			
Valuing working with parents/families with diverse backgrounds	2.67	.68	2.39	.73	2.14	35	.039
Valuing teachers' life-long learning	2.31	.95	2.00	.89			
Valuing teachers' self reflection on their practice	2.28	.85	2.39	.60			

The fact that candidates' self evaluation scores on their dispositions were slightly decreased at the end of junior year can be interpreted that candidates seemed to get to

know level of their dispositions better as they learned more and understood better about dispositions throughout their junior year. In other words, as they learn more about dispositions, they began to clearly identify what they already possess and what they did not. When candidates did not understand functions and meanings of professional dispositions clearly, they must have roughly assumed that they possessed those dispositions. However, after acquiring better understanding of dispositions, they must have realized that they did not possess dispositions as much as they thought they did. For instance, teacher candidates in this program take 「Planning, Integrating, and Adapting Curriculum: Math and Science」 for the second semester of their junior year. While they are taking this course, they are required to plan lessons on various science topics. Needless to say, they are required to demonstrate clear and accurate understanding on a number of scientific concepts and principles before they develop lesson plans. This experience must have affected them to realize they did not value understanding of the content knowledge of each subject matter prior to taking course in junior year.

In addition, this result can also be interpreted that teacher candidates found themselves with lack of dispositions as they have more chances to actively participate in ongoing activities in a real classroom during the junior year. During the sophomore year, teacher candidates in this teacher education program are placed in a classroom for a total of 25 hours per semester. They visit the classroom once a week (3 hours a day), 8-9 times per semester. For these field experiences, teacher candidates observe children and the cooperating teachers teaching, rather than participate in ongoing classroom activities. They are not allowed to interact with children in classroom because they did not take any courses in pedagogy yet. Therefore, teacher candidates did not have enough opportunities to witness their own dispositions that are aligned with classroom practices in their sophomore year. However, in their junior year, teacher candidates spend more times (50 hours per semester) in the field, and they play more active roles in assisting the cooperating teachers in the classroom. Therefore, teacher candidates have more experiences of practicing teachers' responsibilities in a real classroom. Because dispositions are closely associated with teachers' actions and behaviors in classroom, they can better identify their own dispositions as they have more practice in a real classroom. Thus, teacher candidates must have identified their

lack of dispositions --such as enthusiasm in making connections between content knowledge and students' every day life, respecting and applying democratic values in managing the classroom, and valuing effective communication methods-- as they were more actively involved in classroom activities in their junior year.

Even though the mean scores of candidate's self evaluation on professional dispositions were slightly decreased in most indicators, this result can be seen as a possibility of further improvement of candidates' dispositions. According to meta-cognition theory, that learner's meta-cognition enhances the ability to understand and remember information by guiding his/her own learning processes (Flavell, 1976; Snowmen & Biehler, 2003; Trawick-Smith, 2004). Since teacher candidates figured out what dispositions they do not know/possess and what dispositions they need to know/develop more, they will be able to guide their learning and developing dispositions in their senior year. From this point of view, it can be suggested for teacher education programs to provide teacher candidates with opportunities of self evaluating their dispositions periodically. Through the experiences of evaluating their dispositions, teacher candidates will be able to have a strong ownership of developing their own dispositions.

3. What factors influenced developing teacher candidates' dispositions during this time period?

In order to answer this question, the frequencies and percentages of candidates' responses on factors influenced on developing their dispositions were calculated.

As demonstrated in the table 6, the most influential factor on developing candidates' dispositions was 'learning from the professional courses,' followed by 'learning from observing teachers from the field experiences.' Teacher candidates responded 'learning from the professional courses,' as the most influential factor for developing most of their professional dispositions. Especially, 100 percent of teacher candidates responded that they learned the disposition 'valuing teachers' self reflection on their practice,' from the courses they took for this period. This result can be explained that taking professional courses does affect developing dispositions in this

Table 6. *Factors Influencing Candidates' Developing Dispositions*

Professional Dispositions	Previous Schooling	Learning from Courses	Observing Teachers from Field Experiences	Work Experiences	Reading from Texts
Enthusiasm in making connections between content knowledge and students' every day life	1 (3)	19(53)	17(47)	3(8)	3(8)
Valuing understanding of the content knowledge of each subject matter	1(3)	27(75)	6(17)	2(5)	4(11)
Valuing multiple ways of teaching and students' learning	2(5)	21(58)	13(36)	2(5)	5(14)
Respecting individual differences in child development	1(3)	24(67)	10(27)	3(8)	3(8)
Valuing students' self confidence in their learning	1(3)	15(48)	20(56)	3(8)	1(3)
Valuing teachers' respect for diverse family backgrounds & cultural differences	1(3)	23(64)	8(22)	0(0)	9(25)
Respecting diversity in teaching	1(3)	24(67)	10(27)	2(5)	4(11)
Valuing flexibility in implementing teaching plan	1(3)	21(58)	13(36)	3(8)	4(11)
Respecting students' interests and perspectives in planning curriculum	0(0)	27(75)	7(19)	3(8)	5(14)
Valuing play in students' learning	1(3)	25(69)	11(31)	3(8)	5(14)
Valuing students' own critical thinking & problem-solving	1(3)	19(53)	18(50)	4(11)	4(11)
Emphasizing the importance of establishing students' dispositions	1(3)	23(64)	9(25)	2(5)	3(8)
Valuing roles of assessment in early childhood education	0(0)	27(75)	10(27)	1(3)	4(11)
Valuing students' errors as opportunities for learning	2(5)	17(47)	19(53)	3(8)	2(5)
Valuing effort in establishing/maintaining a positive classroom climate	1(3)	18(50)	21(58)	4(11)	2(5)
Valuing students' peer relationships in their learning	1(3)	9(25)	19(53)	4(11)	4(11)
Respecting and applying democratic values in managing the classroom	1(3)	18(50)	9(25)	2(5)	5(14)
Valuing potential of high achievement of students with special needs	1(3)	26(72)	9(25)	3(8)	4(11)
Valuing effective communication methods	0(0)	23(64)	11(31)	3(8)	6(17)
Valuing collaboration with colleagues	2(5)	18(50)	15(42)	3(8)	3(8)
Considering all aspects of the student's well-being	2(5)	22(61)	13(36)	3(8)	6(17)
Valuing working with parents/families with diverse backgrounds	1(3)	26(72)	8(22)	2(5)	5(14)
Valuing teachers' life-long learning	1(3)	23(64)	13(36)	3(8)	4(11)
Valuing teachers' self reflection on their practice	1(3)	30(100)	8(22)	2(5)	2(5)

particular teacher education program. As shown in the table 2, all professional courses in this program strongly emphasize teacher candidates' self reflection on their learning through professional courses by requiring them to write self reflection report on their learning. In addition, candidates are also required to reflect what they have learned from completing all assignments. Through these opportunities, teacher candidates must have been influenced developing their own dispositions of valuing self reflections.

「Observing from the cooperating teachers from field experiences」was another significant factor influencing developing dispositions. This factor was especially influential in developing the following four dispositions that are closely related to classroom practice: 「valuing students' self confidence in their learning」, 「valuing students errors as opportunities for learning」; 「valuing effort in establishing/maintaining a positive classroom climate」; and 「valuing students' peer relationships in their learning」. This result reassures that it is not too much to emphasize the importance of collaboration between a teacher education program and field experience sites. As Katz (1999) mentioned, dispositions are more likely to be developed through observing models who exhibit them. If teacher candidates observe models who demonstrate professional dispositions of developmentally appropriate practice, they would more likely develop appropriate professional dispositions because to see is very powerful to believe.

For this, however, it seems to be necessary to select field experience sites with qualified cooperating teachers and a sound early childhood education program. In addition, faculty members in the teacher education program need to effectively communicate and collaborate with cooperating teachers in the field experience sites. Before sending out teacher candidates to the sites, faculty members need to inform cooperating teachers about the goals of teacher education program and a list of appropriate professional dispositions, which are expected for teacher candidates to develop. They also need to provide cooperating teachers with clearly stated cooperating teachers' responsibilities such as modeling dispositions and monitoring teacher candidates' dispositions, etc. Collaboration between a teacher education program and a field experience site has long been emphasized in the field of teacher education.

However, more detailed plans of collaboration need to be emphasized and practiced for teacher candidates' developing dispositions. Finally, the cooperating teachers must clearly understand and agree to the professional dispositions emphasized by the teacher education program and take the initiatives in completing their responsibilities. They should provide teacher candidates with a wide variety of models of appropriate dispositions and opportunities of practicing dispositions. They also need to monitor and keep up to date the candidates' progress as well as problems. When all of these efforts are made, teacher candidates will be able to observe professional dispositions that are congruent with what they learned from the courses in the teacher education program, and will be able to ultimately develop professional dispositions more effectively.

Conclusions and Suggestion

In order to lay the solid foundation of identifying strategies to facilitate teacher candidates to develop appropriate professional dispositions in this particular teacher education program, the purpose of this study was investigating how candidates' experiences influence candidates' dispositions as they pass through their junior year in an early childhood teacher education program. Conclusions and suggestions drawn from findings and discussion of this study can be summarized as follows:

- Teacher candidates' experiences in their junior year, including learning from their courses, completing their assignments, and participating in field experiences did influence teacher candidates' understanding of dispositions. Thus, it is important to plan and organize all professional courses in a way that will effectively help the teacher candidates to understand professional dispositions clearly.
- Teacher candidates not only reflect, but also develop professional dispositions as they gain a better understanding about what dispositions are, and through more teaching practice in a real classroom by means of field experiences. Thus, in order to facilitate teacher candidates to develop professional disposi-

tions, it is important to help them clearly understand the expected dispositions and the necessity of developing them, and to provide them with more opportunities to practice teaching in a real classroom. Providing teacher candidates with opportunities to self-evaluate their dispositions also helps them reflect and develop their dispositions.

- In order to provide teacher candidates with quality field experiences, it is crucial to select field experience sites with qualified cooperating teachers and a sound early childhood education program. Faculty members in the teacher education program need to closely communicate and collaborate with cooperating teachers in the site.
- In order to identify the effective strategies to enhance the teacher candidates in developing appropriate professional dispositions, further study needs to be conducted to investigate their thought processes in developing dispositions in relation to a real classroom teaching experiences. This will provide more in-depth information of the teacher dispositions, because the dispositions can be identified more relevantly through actions/behaviors in a real classroom environment. Teacher candidates' thought processes on dispositions, which are identified through their own actions in classrooms, will also be able to suggest more practical ideas for creating effective strategies in a teacher education program.

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