Reflection on Content and Methodology Courses

Throughout my undergraduate studies, Manchester College has adequately prepared me to successfully enter the teaching profession. One aspect of my education that aided in my preparation was the content and methodology courses offered by the college. Although the elementary education program at Manchester can never be flawless and is constantly seeking ways to improve, the education department positively impacted me.

The main topic all of my methodology and content area courses have covered exceptionally well is the physical and psychological development of children. Gardner’s multiple intelligences, Bloom’s taxonomy, and other educational theories have aided in understanding the ways in which children learn. Although all of my education courses have discussed these topics, certain classes in particular are designed to devote much of their content to these issues. These courses include Introduction to Teaching, Introduction to Early Childhood, Foundations of Exceptional Learners, Child Development, and Educational Psychology. The content analyzed in these classes provided me with the foundation to implement teaching techniques, helping me to effectively develop my classroom.

Another area the education courses have heavily covered is early childhood. The upper grade levels can not be taught as efficiently if the educator is unaware of the development and foundations of learning for the young child, such as play. Specific courses that have given me insight into the young child are Introduction to Early Childhood, Child Development, and Early Childhood Curriculum and Methods. During
Literacy Block, I was also given the opportunity to work on emergent literacy with a small group of preschoolers. I appreciate the knowledge I have gained about early childhood and the foundations of learning. However, along with focusing on the young child, the education department needs to direct attention towards middle childhood as well. Upper elementary is often neglected in many of the education courses. Remediation methods and ways to correct negative learning habits need to be taught more thoroughly and in depth in the methodology courses.

One aspect of Manchester’s education department that sets the program above many other colleges’ programs is the amount of opportunities education majors have for field experience. Every year, I have participated in some form of field experience. The department has designed the program to ease education majors into teaching by establishing a progression within the experiences. During the introductory courses, such as Introduction to Teaching and Introduction to Early Childhood, I observed the instruction time in many classrooms. In courses like Educational Psychology and Corrective Reading I worked one-on-one with a child through tutoring. Experiences with small groups of children was obtained through classes such as Field Biology and Literacy Block. During my senior Methods Block, many of the opportunities in the classroom were focused on teaching to the entire class and taking on as many other teaching responsibilities as possible. The skills I acquired through being exposed to numerous, progressive experiences have enabled me to be more prepared to enter my student teaching placement.

Another area Manchester’s education department examines that many other programs fail to address is classroom management and behavioral issues. Conflict Resolution and Mediation in Elementary Schools is a class designed to prepare education
majors to handle difficult conflict situations, whether it be with parents, administrators, or among the students. In the Classroom Behavioral Management course, I designed my own classroom management plan based on many educational theorists’ discipline plans. Both of these courses have assisted in my preparation for challenging issues within the realm of education.

The main content area that the education department decided to cover thoroughly is literacy. During my junior spring semester, a total of eight credit hours was dedicated to Literacy Block. The following semester more time is devoted to literacy in Corrective Reading. These two courses gave me the background for effective literacy techniques and methods to use in elementary classrooms. Through the field experience in Literacy Block, I was able to practice the instruction taught about emergent literacy with preschoolers. During Corrective Reading, I was permitted to complete a project on writing workshop in place of tutoring a child in reading. For this project, I was trained in writer’s workshop and worked with first graders at Washington Elementary. Through conferencing with the students about their writing, I have gained a deeper understanding for the way writing should be instructed, which I will carry over into my classroom.

One area that needs to receive more attention from the education department in mathematics. Three sections of Math for Elementary Teachers is required for education majors. The first two sections are designed for the education majors to do mathematics themselves. The last section is devoted to studying the methodology of mathematics. More emphasis should be placed on understanding methods to teach math effectively. Many individuals, including teachers, do not feel competent in the subject area of mathematics. As a result of this problem, programs, such as Saxon Math, have been developed that
basically tell teachers word-for-word how to teach. I have also lacked the opportunities to practice teaching mathematics. Education majors would benefit more from the mathematics portion of the methodology courses if there was a field experience along with the class. One suggestion would be to have education majors tutor a student, who is struggling in math.

Other content areas that could be expounded upon further are science and social studies. The methodology of these two topics are basically crammed into one class, Natural Science/Social Science Methods. The concepts taught in this course have greatly impacted my outlook on these topics, but there was not enough time to cover all of the issues of these subjects, especially social studies. The education department has continually encouraged the education majors to incorporate science and social studies into classroom, since these are the subjects that many teachers cut out when there is not enough time in the day. However, the education department is exhibiting the same behavior as these teachers when there is only one class offered on the methodology of these subjects. Education majors would continue to grow in their preparation if there was a separate course for both science and social studies methods.

Just as teachers are constantly reflecting on their instruction and modifying their lesson plans, the education department at Manchester needs to analyze the education program and make necessary changes to prepare education majors with ability and conviction. Despite a few areas that need to be developed further, the education department at Manchester College has sufficiently prepared me to enter the teaching profession.