

HAVE WE DONE A GOOD JOB?
WHAT DO TEACHERS THINK ABOUT THEIR TRAINING TO TEACH
MATHEMATICS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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What should preservice teachers study during their college years in order to become good mathematics teachers in elementary school? Should we emphasize subject matter knowledge since “without adequate content knowledge student teachers spend much of their limited time learning content, rather than planning how to present the content.. (Brown and Borko, 1992).

Should we emphasize pedagogical content knowledge, since as we know, “..pedagogical content knowledge is unique to the profession of teaching [and] we expect it to be relatively undeveloped in novice teachers, and thus be a primary focus of their educational experiences” (Brown and Borko, 1992).

Should we emphasize field experience, since “this is the real practice” and “if novice teachers get too little practice or if they receive inconsistent feedback from their university teacher educators and classroom supervisor, their expertise may not be adequately developed” (Vacc and Bright, 1994).

Can we emphasize all three aspects, and if so to what extent? What, however, do teachers think about the way they were prepared to teach mathematics in the elementary school?

275 teachers (from three different colleges) in their first years of teaching, answered an open-ended questionnaire aiming to reveal their opinions about their preparation in college from the point of view of beginning teachers. The questions asked about: relevant and irrelevant courses that teachers studied, subjects that should have been but were not included in their preparation, difficulties and dilemmas of teachers in their first years of teaching mathematics, sources of help, participation in inservice courses and the involvement that should or should not have taken place to guide them in their first years in school. In addition they were asked to describe a good math teacher in elementary school.

Findings add valuable information from the teachers' points of view, and should be taken into consideration when revising preservice programs.

- Brown, C. A. and Borko, H. (1992). Becoming a mathematics teacher. In D. A.Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Mathematics Teaching and Learning*, pp. 209-242, New York: Macmillan.
- Vacc, N. N. and Bright, G. W. (1994). Changing preservice teacher-education programs. In D. B. Aichele and A. F. Coxford (Eds.), *Professional Development for Teachers of Mathematics*, 1994 Yearbook of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, pp. 116-127.