Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Educational Psychology

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Promoting Future Teachers’ Social and Emotional Competencies:
Design and Evaluation of a Teacher Education Course in Colombia

Date: October 31, 2017
Time: 9:00am – 12:00m
Place: Conference Room 1, E. Desmond Lee Technology and Learning Center

Abstract
Research has evidenced the importance of supporting future teachers so they are prepared to effectively model and foster prosocial attitudes and behaviors in their students. However, these aspects are often disregarded in teacher education programs. The purpose of this study was to address this gap by designing, implementing, and evaluating a course for future teachers in Colombia. The course intended to promote future teachers’ own social and emotional competencies (SEC) and well-being, as well as their classroom management knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs.

The curriculum was administered to undergraduate students who were enrolled in two types of teacher education programs: a university in an urban setting (UNIMINUTO) and a “normal school” in a rural area (ENSN). The final sample consisted of 50 students (20 from the intervention groups and 30 from wait-list comparison groups).

The research study was a mixed methods convergent evaluation. Classroom observation forms, research journal entries forms, an interview protocol, attendance forms, and pre-test and post-test surveys and questionnaires were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data measuring the level of participants' engagement, the perceptions of the quality, relevance, and applicability of the intervention, and the impact of the intervention.

In general, results indicated high levels of engagement with the course, especially at UNIMINUTO. Participants found the course relevant and applicable for their lives. Interviewed students highlighted positive aspects of the course, such as the positive classroom climate and the positive performance of the facilitator. Also, t-tests for paired samples showed a significant improvement in participants’ classroom management self-efficacy, knowledge, and beliefs. The comparison group did not present any significant changes in these variables. Information from other data sources suggested that, in general, the course had a positive impact on participants’ SEC, and classroom management knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Moreover, interviewed students from UNIMINUTO reported an improvement in their levels of well-being. Additional unexpected positive changes were reported by some interviewees, such as an increase in their self-confidence and personal growth. Implications of the study’s results for teacher education programs and the cycle of violence in Colombia are discussed.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Marvin W. Berkowitz, Ph.D. - Chairperson
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Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D.
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