Title: Early childhood education profession: Pre-service teacher’s perception

Abstract

Rationale for the study

There is a significant movement to unify frame for the early childhood education profession by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). According to NAEYC it is time to invest and support in high-quality childcare and early learning in the U.S. However, the reality is that children do not receive a quality of care even though families pay high cost of childcare fee and early childhood educator is paid at an average of $10.60 per hour which is very low for early childhood educator (NAEYC, 2020). This action research is significant to support the NAEYC work and research regarding early childhood education workforce as a profession by examining pre-service teachers’ perception about early childhood education profession.

Purpose(s) and research question(s) of the study

The purpose of this research is to examine how pre-service teachers perceive early childhood profession in terms of their attitudes and belief as a profession by discussing a question "Is teaching a profession?". Pre-service teachers referred to the characteristics of profession (Powell, 2019, p.14) which is considerable agreement about defining the features of a profession and professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators from NAEYC to support their perception about teaching as a profession.

Brief description

This action research was conducted by online discussion format and data was collected in 2021 and 2022. The participants were pre-service teachers who study early childhood or elementary education major. Participants used online discussion tool to exchange their belief about “Is teaching a profession?” and they responded to each other’s posts. The discussion posts were collected and analyzed by counting how many pre-service teachers considered “teaching is a profession.”
Summary

The results indicate that pre-service teachers perceive that teaching is a profession by considering the characteristics of profession and NAEYC professional standards. Early childhood education major pre-service teachers discussed that one professional characteristic does not meet and that is a profession should be paid well based on the characteristics of profession. Even though early childhood education major pre-service teachers acknowledge that early childhood educator does not get paid well, they still consider that teaching is a profession.

To provide a high-quality early childhood education to children, early childhood educator should be considered as a trained profession and should be well-compensated so that early childhood educators remain at their field for a long time. NAEYC research in 2015 results showed that 83% of respondents agree that current and future early childhood educators need to meet a set of qualification to receive higher salary and benefits. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, preschool or kindergarten teacher who teaches at a public school receive almost a double amount of salary compared to private childcare workers or Head Start (Occupational employment and wages, 2015, as cited in NPR, 2016).

Pre-service teachers perceived teaching is a profession even though teacher's salary is low compared to other profession such as nurse or speech pathologists that take the same path to be recognized as a profession. A high-quality early learning experience is very significant for one's development. The results of this action research support NAEYC's effort to unify framework for the early childhood education profession including professional preparation pathway, professional standards, and professional compensation.

References


