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College of Education, Health and Human Services

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE

of

Natalie Bolino

For the degree of

Doctor of Education

Interprofessional Leadership

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTED AND  
NARROWED CURRICULA IMPACTS ON CURRICULUM  
AUTONOMY A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Thursday, March 21, 2024

11:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams

Natalie Bolino

Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction  
American College of Education

Bachelor of Science in Education  
Youngstown State University

Natalie has over 10 years of experience as a licensed professional educator in grades 7 through 12. She has teaching licenses in Ohio, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, where her family now resides.

As one of the first undergraduate classes to experience the EdTPA to then move into the Ohio Resident Educator Program, Natalie earned a Top 100 Score in the State of Ohio in 2015 in her completion of the Ohio Resident Educator Program. An Ohio native who spent her first 10 years teaching in Ohio public schools, she focused on continuing her growth and education by focusing on curriculum and instruction. Natalie continues to teach, now in Rhode Island, at the middle school level.

As the public education world continuously evolves, Natalie plans to continue practicing and researching to support the growth and progress of public educators. Natalie hopes to develop and refine her skills as an educational leader while maintaining the integrity of the teaching profession. She aspires to make a positive impact in the field of teacher education programs to contribute to the improvement and advancement of public education.

## Teachers' Understanding of Scripted and Narrowed Curricula Impacts on Curriculum Autonomy a Mixed Methods Study

This convergent mixed-methods study examined teachers' understanding of how scripted/narrowed curricula impact their curriculum autonomy. More specifically, it explored the impacts on the professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry of educators.

For this study, quantitative data was collected from K-12 public educators in Rhode Island using an adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey. Qualitative data was collected through interviews, which helped further address the research question. The Curriculum Autonomy Survey focused on questions related to pedagogical artistry and professional responsibility. Questions ranged from decision-making in curriculum content to instructional strategies in day-to-day practice. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. The interview questions were created to build on the survey questions so teachers could provide rich details of their stories and experiences with the curriculum. Questions asked teachers to reflect on situations like how the curriculum was implemented, who makes the curriculum choices, like content and assessments, and what accommodations and modifications they can make during the teaching process. Coding and thematic analysis were used to analyze the qualitative data.

The findings in this study were determined using thematic analysis. Multiple themes emerged after the data proved consistent between the survey and interview responses. Themes emerged within and across curriculum types. For example, scripted/narrowed program users experience a high level of district administration influence, teachers feel they lack a voice, and an adaption versus adoption approach is preferred to better serve students. Across curriculum types, educators are making modifications and accommodations to better serve their students and feeling the pressure of state standards and testing. The results can be used by districts and state boards of education to determine how and if scripted/narrowed curricula are the best choice for our students. The results can also be used to determine how the lack of curriculum autonomy may be affecting educators' choice to stay in the classroom. While full autonomy may be unrealistic, to have limited opportunities to use learned skills and knowledge to make educated decisions in content and pedagogy feels demeaning and deprofessionalizing. Despite the preparation, more and more teachers are being handed a script and being told to teach from it, often to fidelity, taking the joy, passion, and creativity out of the role of teaching.