

Chapter 3

Perceptions of Preparation of Online Alternative Licensure Teacher Candidates

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to investigate the perceived sense of preparation for the classroom that leads to teacher effectiveness. The focus of this chapter is an exploration of the increasing role of alternative licensure and distance education in the preparation of teachers and results of a recent study concerning perceptions of a sense of preparedness espoused by alternative licensure teacher candidates after their online program completion.

INTRODUCTION

As observed by Labaree, “teaching is an enormously difficult job that looks easy” (2004, p. 39). Perhaps the same could be applied to the preparation of teachers as well. Colleges of education are called upon to provide preparation programs that include meaningful experiences conducive to teacher candidates’ understanding of their future schools and students (Singer, Catapano, & Huis-

man, 2010). This call also applies to the current proliferation of more non-traditional avenues such as alternative licensure routes and distance learning. A crucial part of increasing teacher effectiveness is in the area of teacher preparation with the end result being, as United States Education Secretary Duncan has proposed, “to ensure that students exiting one level are prepared for success, without remediation, in the next” (US Department of Education, 2009, p. 207). This challenge

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entails exploring the means of providing teachers with an efficacious sense of preparedness in their overall teaching abilities including those teachers prepared through alternative licensure avenues as well as through distance learning program delivery.

The importance of an effective teacher is hardly a novelty. Teachers, and by inference schools themselves, have tremendous impact on student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Teachers possessing proper skills and demonstration of care for their students remain our best means of improvement (DiGiulio, 2004). What teachers actually do in the classroom makes a great difference (Wenglinsky, 2000). Daily they face a myriad of decisions that impact their students' futures and require a wide range of knowledge (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005). Teachers typically share a large portion of students' days for the majority of the year. What occurs in a shared year can impact students' educational foundation for ensuing instruction and solid grounding in basic educational knowledge. In educating students in our nation's classrooms to be capable in an increasingly competitive world, teachers must be able to deliver curriculum that is accurate, meaningful, and appropriate. Actions of such teachers encompass both what is taught and how it is taught (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005).

This chapter seeks to investigate the sense of preparation for the classroom that teachers require to become that effective entity. The focus of this chapter is an exploration of the increasing role of alternative licensure and distance education in the preparation of teachers and results of a recent study concerning perceptions of a sense of preparedness espoused by alternative licensure teacher candidates after their online program completion. Four themes for this chapter include:

- Growth and current role of alternative licensure
- Growth and current role of distance learning in schools of education

- A sense of preparedness and INTASC Standards
- Online alternative licensure teacher candidates' perceptions of preparedness

BACKGROUND

Growth and Current Role of Alternative Licensure

A few decades ago, the sole route to acquiring teaching licensure for public schools lay largely through a traditional on-campus undergraduate four-year program. Now the route to teaching is definitely multi-faceted. In fact, 35 percent of teachers responding to the most recent *Survey of the American Teacher* had experienced a previous career before entering the classroom (Met Life, 2010). During the 1980's, alternative programs serving as pathways to teacher licensure were created to a certain extent in answer to shortages in the teaching workforce (Richardson & Roosevelt, 2004). In 1983, fewer than nine states allowed alternative teacher education programs at American colleges or universities.

By 1993, however, there existed post-baccalaureate alternative teacher preparation programs in 40 states. With 80% of states offering alternative programs, it was believed that teacher shortages could be addressed (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). To illustrate the growing proportions of alternatively licensed teachers among the work force by the year 2000, 45 of the 50 states possessed alternative licensure enactments (Hess, Rotherham, & Walsh, 2004). By the spring of 2010, there existed 125 alternative pathways to teaching preparation across all states preparing 62,000 new teachers annually with approximately 600 program sources (AACTE, 2010). Of the total number of AACTE reporting institutions, 540 offered a master's program or post baccalaureate program, respectively in the form of a Master of Arts degree, or alternative licensure without a final

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