

CHAPTER 15

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

15.1 Introduction

In recent years, a growing concern has emerged over the questionable quality of the nation's teachers. Emerging from this concern has been a movement toward increased teacher certification scrutiny and requirements.

This chapter provides general background into teacher certification and then assesses teacher certification trends in Florida's juvenile justice education programs. The chapter is comprised of four subsequent sections. Section 15.2 provides a general background and an overview of teacher certification. Section 15.3 presents data on certified teachers in Florida's juvenile justice education programs. Section 15.4 describes how certification requirements are developed. Section 15.5 summarizes the chapter and closes with discussion of the importance of professional development plans in the ongoing effort to improve the quality of teachers.

15.2 Background and Overview

Teacher certification is the educational system's process for assuring that public school teachers possess, at a minimum, basic qualifications. Aspects of preservice learning and teaching (e.g., completion of teacher education program coursework or earned degree(s) beyond the baccalaureate and possession of particular certification or credentials) have traditionally been used to ensure teacher preparation and qualification. Consequently, a current and major component of educational reform involves preservice training and certification.

Increased mobility among teachers suggests that teacher candidates should have information about general requirements for certification and about where to locate particular state requirements. Certification requirements are established by state education agencies to ensure proper teacher preparations and continued professional development. Once teachers are hired, superintendents generally prefer that they remain in place for a sustained period of time. However, superintendents and administrators of small and rural schools often find recruitment and retention of qualified teachers to be a pressing problem. In California, for example, it is estimated that a third of all new teachers in the state will leave within three years. Consequently, the state will have to hire an estimated 250,000 teachers during the next decade (Bell, 2000). In Florida, educators and administrators state that teachers are leaving the field because many more problems are appearing at the doorstep of schools,

while society expects more from schools in solving their problems. In addition, the declining interest in education as a career is diminishing the supply of educators (Dunn, 2001).

Research has found that the attrition rates of new teachers are five times higher than those of their more experienced counterparts (Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1997). As a result, many states and school districts have implemented formal induction programs, which usually have two goals: to assist beginning and new teachers with instruction and to prepare them to meet certification requirements.

Mentoring is a key aspect of many of these programs, with new teachers paired with experienced teachers. Responsibilities of the mentor may include providing guidance on curriculum, classroom management, and assessment (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). Research has found that mentoring relationships can play a critical role in the support, training, and retention of new teachers (King & Bey, 1995). Specifically, by easing the transition into full-time teaching, formal induction programs provide new practitioners with skills and support structures to develop effective teaching practices.

Certification is a legal process wherein the state evaluates the credentials of prospective teachers to ensure that they meet the professional standards set by the state education agency. Certification ratifies the quality of teachers' competence in subject areas, educational methodology, teaching skills, and potential classroom management ability. In addition, criteria for certification have professional origins and the state department of education's teacher certification division carries out the process (Roth & Mastain, 1984). Research has shown that there is a distinction between certification and licensure. If certification validates a person's skills as a teacher and licensure provides for a process that permits teaching (Shulman & Sykes, 1986), then "licensing" appropriately describes the process in most states. This is because licensing is a review of a paper application to verify that teacher preparatory minimums have been met.

A state grants initial certification or licensing to signify that a candidate has achieved basic competence in a subject area, educational methodology, teaching skills, and classroom management (Compston, 1998). Typically, a new teacher receives certification by: (1) graduating from an institution that has been approved by the state or accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), or, (2) completing specific course work or, (3) successfully performing on a state required examination.

The duration of a state's initial license may be as short as one year or as long as ten years depending upon states rules. Certification renewal is often dependent upon completion of additional courses in specific content areas. However, because of chronic nationwide teacher shortages, most states will offer emergency credentials to a teacher who does not meet the minimum requirements.

Research has found that when granting certification, many states specify the grade levels and subject matter area in which an individual is authorized to teach. The intent of these specifications (at least in theory, though not always in practice) is to assure that a candidate

will be hired to teach only those grades and subjects for which he or she is qualified to teach (Compston, 1998).

According to the National Board of Professional Standards for Teachers established in 1987, advanced certification has been developed for teachers who can demonstrate a high level of achievement in terms of subject mastery and classroom performance. Although relatively few teachers have received national board certification, the program is new, and the requirements are both tough and time consuming. However, the standards set by this board are influencing new policies relating to accreditation and initial licensing across the country.

While certification requirements differ across states, most states require that teacher candidates have graduated from a regionally accredited higher education institution and provide automatic certification for a candidate who has completed an approved teacher education program. Some states require that the candidates achieve satisfactory scores in the state required tests for beginning teachers. In addition, some states award certificates to applicants who have completed teacher orientation programs approved by NCATE.

Studies report that most states issue emergency credentials to teachers who do not meet the states minimum requirements for a regular credential (Roth & Mastain, 1984). However, some states allow alternative teacher certification for people who have not completed college or university teacher education programs. For example, local school districts in California can prepare teacher trainees who receive credentials from the state just as do graduates from institutional programs (Educational Resources Information Center, 1986). Some states also offer professional or probationary certificates for teacher graduates who participate in sponsored induction or internship programs.

Establishing different certification requirements for teachers in small schools has faced opposition from several sources. Teacher organizations oppose different certification requirements as they may obstruct movement between teaching assignments in large and small school districts. A teacher who wants to move from a small school district to a large one (or vice versa) may need additional training and a different certificate. In addition, large districts that operate small schools may face new staffing problems since different certificates might be required of their teachers depending on the number of required skills in which they teach (Gardener & Edington, 1982). Small school districts themselves sometimes oppose differentiated certification, apparently from fear that a ‘rural’ certificate may be considered inferior to an ‘urban’ certificate.

15.3 Teacher Certification in Juvenile Justice Education Programs

The Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JEEP) reviewed 203 programs (detention and commitment) during the year 2000*. The data on instructional personnel qualifications collected from these programs during the reviews revealed that out of 877 teachers, 482 (55%) were professionally certified, 228 (26%) had either statements of

* For a complete list of programs and their teacher certification information, see Appendix E.

eligibility (SOE) or temporary certificates, 42 (5%) had vocational certifications, and 125 (14%) were non-certified.

Many factors prohibit 100% professional certification among teachers in juvenile justice education programs, including a lack of trained teachers to recruit from the university system, raised education standards and high expectations, lower salaries for teachers, and attrition because teachers ideals quickly collide with reality once teachers enter the classroom. These variables have also affected Florida’s juvenile justice education programs. While most programs strive to hire and maintain teachers with professional certificates, often the candidates are not available. As a result, teachers with alternative and temporary certificates are hired.

Another study of programs reviewed in Florida’s juvenile justice system in 2000 reveals that more teachers in public programs have professional certificates versus teachers teaching in private programs. Specifically, and as reported previously, 79% of the full-time teachers in public operated education programs were professionally certified, 33% of the teachers in not-for-profit operated programs were certified, and only 21% were certified in the for-profit operated education programs. In addition, as Table 15.3-1 indicates, the overall QA scores were significantly higher in programs where teachers had professional certificates. However, all programs both public and private are striving to recruit, hire, and maintain teachers with professional certificates.

Table 15.3-1: Overall QA Performance Ratings by Type of Provider

	Public	Private Not For Profit	Private For-Profit	Total for All Programs
Number of Non-Deemed Programs	113	80	10	203*
Number of Deemed Programs	16	20	1	37
Total Number of Teachers	445	360	72	877
Number of Teachers with Professional Certification	350	117	15	482
% of Teachers with Professional Certification	79%	33%	21%	55%
Transition	5.04	5.14	4.55	5.05
Service Delivery	5.71	5.50	4.93	5.59
Administration	5.58	5.15	4.67	5.38
Contract Management	5.21	4.73	4.44	5.00

*203 programs were reviewed but data collection forms from two (2) public-operated programs and one (1) private not for profit-operated program were not received to obtain these data.

15.4 How Certification Requirements Are Developed

Many under-prepared teachers are hired yearly. Studies report in 1994 that 27% of all new entrants to teaching had no license or a substandard license in the field they were hired to teach. Raising standards has highlighted shortcomings in teaching policies and practices. Therefore, meeting the standards requires a system change and reform in recruiting and teaching policies. However, rather than make these changes, some states, including Florida

create loopholes in the form of temporary or alternative routes that allow candidates to avoid meeting new standards (NCATE, 2000).

Studies have shown that accomplished teachers know that content knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient alone for effective teaching. Accomplished teaching also requires that instructors know their subject and know how to teach it. Consequently, effective strategies learned by applying the knowledge of teaching and learning in supervised practice settings are required.

The goal of NCATE and other teacher education organizations is to institute and develop teacher preparation programs in all states, which will produce nationally acceptable candidates for teacher certification. The United States Department of Education (USDOE) recognizes NCATE as the professional accrediting body for teacher preparations in the United States. Consequently, schools of education will have to meet rigorous new performance-based standards to be accredited by NCATE in the year 2001 and beyond (NCATE, 2000).

The new standards, which focus on candidate performance, represent a big change in teacher preparation. Teachers will be expected to produce student results and demonstrate that subject matter can be taught effectively in a classroom. In addition, institutions are expected to offer and show evidence that candidates for teaching positions can demonstrate in-depth knowledge of subject matter as they explain important principles and concepts in the classroom.

The six standards developed by NCATE to improve the quality of teacher certification requirements include: candidate knowledge, skills, and disposition; program assessment and unit evaluation; field experiences and clinical practices; diversity; faculty performance and development; and unit governance and resources. The standards have many of NCATE's expectations of education from the 1980s and 1990s woven into professional development schools that make teacher preparation a "real world" experience (NCATE, 2000).

With the growing number of juvenile justice education programs in the nation, especially in Florida, hiring teachers with professional certificates has had a major impact on all programs, both public and private, in Florida's juvenile justice education system. Studies have shown that when school districts cannot find enough qualified teachers at the price they are willing to pay, they resort to hiring anyone and insist on calling them "teachers" (NCATE, 2000).

As new standards are implemented across the nation and teaching requirements change, Florida's juvenile justice education programs will face the challenge of hiring and maintaining teachers with professional certificates. As regular schools and juvenile justice education programs continue to identify qualified teachers as those with little or no preparation, studies have found that the results will begin to speak for themselves. Parents whose children in juvenile justice programs are taught by "para teachers" will lobby hard for fully licensed teachers (NCATE, 2000).

To further assist programs in attracting qualified teachers, alternative certification is being used in many states. The alternative certification process includes obtaining a bachelor's

degree in the subject to be taught; achieving a passing score on a certification test; undergoing brief, intensive teacher training; and completing a supervised teaching internship after which certification is recommended by the employing school district. The process is generally designed to certify candidates who have subject matter competence without going through formal teacher preparation. Feistritzer and Chester (1991) identified 91 alternative routes to certification with varying programmatic characteristics. However, alternative certification programs are being experimented within 39 states, with the general goals of attracting talented people and career changers to the teaching profession and averting teacher shortages where they exist.

It has been found that there is a relationship between teacher knowledge and instructional practice. Teachers with more explicit and organized knowledge tend to provide instruction that has conceptual connections and appropriate and varied representations for active and meaningful student discussions. Stein, Baxter, and Leinhardt (1990) also found that poorly organized teacher knowledge often leads to less effective instruction. On the other hand, Shulman (1986, 1987) and McDiarmid and Wilson (1991) concluded in their separate studies that subject matter competence alone is inadequate for instruction because teaching requires the transformation of knowledge content into representations that enhance students' understanding and learning.

Alternative certification programs do attract talented and experienced individuals to the teaching profession, especially in critically needed areas of subject matter where shortages exist (Lutz & Hutton, 1989; Shulman, 1992). Feistritzer and Chester (1991) further indicate that more than 200,000 teachers have been licensed through alternative certification programs between 1985 and 1990. Alternative certification encourages diversity in the classroom, which encourages role modeling and promotes learning by drawing relevant experiences from the children's backgrounds to enhance their cognitive development (Buechler, 1992).

Educators and researchers differ in opinions on the universal effective measures of teacher ability and the quality of student learning. However, in many classrooms, the measure of alternative certification program effectiveness depends on the quality of teachers and of students taught by these teachers. There are mixed results in comparing the effectiveness of traditional and alternative certification. Lutz and Hutton (1989) evaluated the Dallas Independent School District's alternative certification program and found that alternative certificants scored high or higher by principals/mentors than did traditionally prepared teachers. On the other hand, Schram, Feiman-Nemser, and Ball (1990) did not find any significant difference between the two groups. Instead, Ball and Wilson (1990) found that subject-matter knowledge by new teachers, regardless of the method of their certification (i.e., traditional or alternative), was inadequate for effective instruction.

With different variables affecting Florida's juvenile justice education programs, alternative certification procedures are helpful to educating students in these programs. In addition, school districts are providing opportunities for additional teacher preparation and school district certification programs to accommodate teacher readiness for the classroom.

15.5 Summary

Continuous quality improvement is essential in education to meet the needs of students and the changing demands in the teaching field. According to research, the inclusion of a national and state goal for teacher professional development represents an increased focus on professional development as an important vehicle for school reform and educational excellence (Sprinthall, Reiman, & Theis-Sprinthall, 1996). Since high quality teachers are lifelong learners, professional development is a continuing process consisting of activities that enhance professional growth. These activities may include workshops, independent reading, and study consultation with peers and experts. Professional development should be planned and managed by the individual since the main purpose is to benefit the individual.

Research has found that creating a plan for professional development is essential because it encourages one to address his or her professional self-improvement activities in a proactive manner. It will also provide a framework for the discipline and commitment needed to achieve the planned changes inherent in any professional development program (Jones & Lowe, 1985).

Teachers across the country, especially in Florida, have used varying models to create individual professional development plans. However, four core elements, including initiating, planning, managing, and evaluating, are interwoven and reflective in most plans. The initiating and planning phases can help individuals commit to a plan of action, and the managing and evaluating phases can be used to describe the outcomes of an individual's professional development plan. According to research, individuals who used the core elements in developing their professional development plans accomplished more because the plans provided structure, emphasized responsibility for personal learning, and reduced procrastination (Jones & Lowe, 1985).

Education QA Indicator E3.03 Professional Development required all teachers to develop written professional development plans and participate in ongoing inservice training. Since professional development plans have proven to be helpful self-assessment and teacher planning tools, it will continue to be required that all programs use professional development plans.

The national literature has reported with unbroken frequency the importance of teacher certification. Florida's juvenile justice education programs in the past several years have been elevated through QA reviews, technical assistance, and research. However, the proportion of certified teachers in Florida's juvenile justice education programs continues to be uneven, particularly between public and private-operated education programs. As a result, recommendations to all programs, private and public, would be to expand teacher preparation programs in high-need fields, raise standards while raising salaries, create the financial ability to recruit the most qualified teachers, and streamline the hiring process.

