

Principals' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of
Alternatively Certified and Traditionally Certified Teachers
In Hampton Roads Virginia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative certification instruction in a public education environment. In addition, the study compared traditional certification instruction to alternative certification instruction on the basis of educational quality. Due to increasing teacher shortages across the country, the search for an alternative route of certification has generated ideological debates revolving around the supply and demand of potential teachers, educational quality, and the potential of alternative means of teacher procurement.

There are myriad arguments in support of and against alternative certification programs. This study evaluated the perceived effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers in a public education environment by comparing principal's perceptions of traditional certification instruction to alternative certification instruction existent with their region, on the basis of educational quality.

Survey research was used to determine perceptions which Hampton Roads principals who have, or who have had, responsibility for supervision of alternatively and traditionally certified personnel. It focused on 40 statements comparing traditionally certified teachers and alternatively certified teachers. It included such factors as pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management and instruction, behavior management, attitude, life experience, professionalism, professional development and evaluation. A series of 40 independent t-tests and a factor analysis were accomplished utilizing the data derived from these surveys.

Results of this study indicated that the perceptions among Hampton Roads principals differ significantly regarding the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers from those of previous research. Demographic data found these perceptions exist with principals of all school levels and are not related to the principal's years of experience, formal education or student enrollment. Ninety five percent of the 40 comparative statements favor those teachers achieving certification through traditional certification programs. Areas that reflected particularly substantial differences were content knowledge, instructional planning, and classroom discipline.

Recommendations for practice include but are not limited to standardized supervision of alternative certification programs, quality screening of applicants, quality mentor programs, standardized and subsidized student teaching, competency testing, formalized state and district assessment and quality recruitment.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Paula, my wife of 27 years and my two extraordinary children who remain the inspiration of my life.

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My gratitude is beyond words for those who have been so fundamental in the completion of this effort. It is only due to the sacrifice, patience and understanding of all of those around me, family, friends, peers and all of my fellow educators that this effort was finished.

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