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Alternative Teacher Certification: The Politics, the Preparation, and the Promise of a Quality Education

YaSheka Adams

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION: THE POLITICS, THE
PREPARATION, AND THE PROMISE OF A QUALITY EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education
and Workforce Development

by

YaSheka C. Adams

B.S., Southern University, 2001

M.S., University of Phoenix, 2007

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This work is dedicated to my wonderful support team and all the people who believed in me through this process.

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ABSTRACT

Alternative routes to teacher certification have increasingly gained popularity since the early 1980s. This increased attention is due to added focus on teacher quality and quantity. By participating in an alternative certification program, candidates are afforded the opportunity to obtain full teacher certification in an abbreviated time period. Completers of alternative certification programs are tasked with the same responsibilities as traditionally certified teachers.

A substantial number of adults are making the decision to transition into the dynamic world of teaching. There are numerous debates regarding the efficacy of alternative pathways. There is a growing body of evidence supporting the belief that alternative teacher certification aids in creating a diversified workforce. However, limited research exists on the level of preparation participants perceive they acquire upon completion of an alternative certification program.

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge.

This case study used qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis. Interviews were conducted with each study participant. The interview questions were based on Shulman's (1987) *Model of Teacher Knowledge* and Connelly and Clandinin's *Theory of Personal Practical Knowledge*. The interview protocol was divided into the following sections: (1) content knowledge, (2) curricular knowledge, (3) pedagogical knowledge, (4) pedagogical content knowledge, and (5) personal practical knowledge.

The study findings indicated alternatively certified teachers upon completion of their respective certification program felt very prepared to face the challenges of teaching any student who entered their classrooms. Although the alternatively certified teachers perceived their level of preparedness to be high, they were only marginally prepared to handle classroom management and building a connection with students in an urban school district. Although this study is based on completers' self-perceptions, the findings from the study provide data on the effectiveness of alternative certification programs and offer a foundation for future research that extends to other regions, states, or geographical areas.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Everyone has the right to receive an education (United Nations, 1948). The quality of the education received is a core component of a student's ability to compete within the national and global job marketplace. President Barack Obama stated, "A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs but whether America can out-compete countries around the world" (White House Record, 2011). To stay competitive as a nation, it is important that every student obtains a quality education. To this end, education has been a major political issue throughout the years (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In response to growing teacher shortages, alternative teacher certification was initiated in the early eighties. Additionally, the added focus on K-12 education and teacher quality, has presented a need for research regarding the effectiveness of alternative teacher certification programs and their ability to prepare teachers to provide a quality education to all students. Although education has remained a key political issue through the years, the policies regarding educational reform and how to provide a high quality education to every student have differed with each incumbent president. There is a growing need to continuously evaluate national educational reform policies and programs including routes to teacher certification to ensure each student is receiving the quality education which is their fundamental right.

The Politics of a Quality Education

For nearly 30 years, educational reform has been at the forefront of presidential initiatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2009; 2008; 2001; 1996; 1995; 1983). Generally, regardless of political party affiliation, presidential initiatives have included some form of incentive or stimulus plan targeting teacher recruitment, training, and retention. Under the leadership of

former President Ronald Reagan, the Reagan Administration published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, a report intended to be an open letter to the American people on the importance and urgent need for educational reform (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). Former President George H. W. Bush's policies also continued the trend towards educational reform in during his presidency.

In September of 1989, President George H. W. Bush held a National Education Summit in Charlottesville, VA with the nation's governors. The summit was convened to establish national goals for education. Upon conclusion of the summit, the governors agreed to adopt the national K-12 performance goals for the year 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). A key contributor and attendee during the educational summit was then Arkansas governor and later U.S. President William "Bill" Clinton.

On March 31, 1994, President William "Bill" Clinton signed the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (Goals 2000) into law. *Goals 2000* provided direct support to state and local school improvement efforts that were deemed necessary at the time. The *Goals 2000 Act* asserted that education is a state and local responsibility as emphasized in former President George H. W. Bush's educational reform plan, but took that plan a step further by stating that it must also be considered a national priority. The *Goals 2000 Act* provided funds to states and school districts for better teacher training and professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). During President Clinton's presidency, Congress also passed the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*. This Act required state academic content standards and standardized tests while calling for strategies to hold both schools and school districts accountable for improved student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Continuing the trend of presidential

involvement in educational reform, the next President, George W. Bush introduced his educational plan.

President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* into law on January 8, 2002. The Act reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA). The *No Child Left Behind Act* incorporated several key principles and strategies including accountability for states, school districts and schools. The Act also allowed more flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of federal education dollars. The Act combined the Eisenhower Professional Development and Class Size Reduction programs into the new Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Following President Bush's terms as president, education remained a key political issue with the United States.

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA) into law. The ARRA provides 4.35 billion dollars for the Race to the Top Fund (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The Race to the Top Fund is a grant program that makes funds available for education to states. These states compete for the funds by enhancing or creating challenging and rigorous standards along with improved assessments. It is also the responsibility of the state to adopt better data systems and to help teachers become more effective (White House Record, 2011). The Race to the Top Fund is designed to encourage and reward states that create conditions that enhance student achievement. Included amongst the four core educational reform areas within the Race to the Top Fund is a need for recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The creation of this fund demonstrates the continued efforts towards educational reform within the United States.

The politics of a quality education are deeply sewn into the tapestry that is the American educational system. Although the political thread meanders in various directions, each stitch ultimately leads to the same goal; all students have a fundamental right to receive a quality education (UNESCO, 2000; UN, 1948). It is a national responsibility to ensure this fundamental right is attainable. If all students do not have this ability, there is a tear in the educational tapestry that needs mending. For several decades, each American President has attempted to prevent any potential tears in the educational fabric through various educational reform policies. It is important to continuously evaluate national educational reform policies and programs including routes to teacher certification to ensure each student's fundamental rights are preserved.

The Polarization of a Quality Education: Traditional Versus Alternative Certification

There are only two routes to achieve teacher certification within the United States. These routes are traditional teacher certification or alternative teacher certification. Both methods are tasked with providing the pool of educators responsible for providing a quality education to America's kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grade students. Traditional teacher certification has been in existence for hundreds of years while alternative teacher certification is a relatively new phenomenon within the field of education. The first state-sponsored programs appeared in the early 1980s (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001).

Currently, the majority of America's teachers are certified through traditional teacher certification, but alternative teacher certification is growing in popularity (Evans, 2011; Feistritzer, Haar, Hobar, & Scullion, 2005; NCES, 2005). Traditional teacher certification occurs at accredited colleges and universities. Teaching candidates complete extensive coursework followed by a teaching apprenticeship under the tutelage of a certified teacher. Generally, traditional teaching certification takes approximately four to five years to complete

(Turley & Nakai, 2000). The time it takes to complete traditional teacher certification programs has been a point of contention in recent years because it could limit entry into the profession.

In contrast to traditional certification routes, alternative routes to teacher certification provide an expedited path to certification and licensure (Zumwalt, 1996). These alternative programs were created for multiple reasons including the elimination of teacher shortages and to provide accessibility into the teaching profession (Turley & Nakai, 2000; Feistritzer & Chester 1998). Although it is reasonably clear why certifying alternatives were needed within education, it is also important to define the meaning of alternative teacher certification.

Alternative teacher certification can have multiple translations or meanings within an educational context in the United States. This occurs because the term alternative certification can potentially relate to certification routes, program duration, and licensure. For example, one important distinction is teacher certification versus licensure. Cronin (1983) differentiates certification from licensing: “Certification is the process of deciding that an individual meets the minimum standards of competence in a profession. Licensing is the legal process of permitting a person to practice a trade or profession once he or she has met certification standards” (p. 175). Turley and Nakai (2000) contend that alternatively certified teachers are “...teachers with little or no professional preparation prior to assuming teaching responsibilities” (p. 122). Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) wrote, “alternative routes to teacher certification often prepare teachers in unconventional ways and provide individuals with no traditional pre-service teacher preparation, entry into the education profession” (p. 118). Zeichner and Schulte (2001) define an alternative teacher certification program as “any alternative to the 4-year or 5-year undergraduate teacher education program including both those programs that have reduced standards and those that hold teachers to the same standards as college and university based undergraduate teacher

education” (p. 266). For the purposes of this study, *alternative teacher certification* will be defined as an unconventional plan or method to officially approve those whose occupation is to instruct, particularly in the kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grade context.

The Pressures of a Quality Education: Alternative Teacher Certification

Wealthy, suburban communities have little difficulty recruiting and maintaining highly qualified teachers (Evans, 2011). These schools or school systems have the means and support of both the families and businesses of the communities in which they serve. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many poverty stricken urban and rural schools. These schools lack the funding, parental support, and community support needed to entice highly qualified teachers to those locations. In addition to the aforementioned pressures, many of these urban or rural schools suffer from teacher shortages in key subject content areas (Kee, 2011; Junor Clarke & Thomas, 2009). These teacher shortages, coupled with the lack of support, inhibit the students of those schools from receiving a quality education.

There are various reasons why teacher shortages exist including the retirement of teachers, increased school enrollment, and legislated class size limits (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). Alternative routes to teacher certification were initially introduced to help reduce the severity of some of these shortages in content areas and to expedite the certification process. Due to the vast shortage of special education teachers, the U.S. Department of Education (2002) encouraged the development of alternative routes to teacher certification to “...streamline the process of certification to move candidates into the classroom on a fast-track basis” (p.15). Accelerated certification methods were needed to reduce the shortages that were hindering students from receiving a quality education.

Roth and Swail (2000) emphasized, “...severe teacher shortages affect almost every high-poverty urban and rural community throughout the mainland U.S. and the Pacific” (p. 3).

Regardless of the school or the community in which it is located, when there are not enough teachers to fulfill the needs of the school, students will be negatively impacted. The teacher shortages hamper the students' ability to attain a high quality education (Roth & Swail, 2000). Alternative routes to teacher certification help to alleviate these shortages by providing a workforce of qualified candidates to meet the demand (Kee, 2011; Zumwalt, 1996). In addition to reducing teacher shortages, alternative teacher certification assists in diversifying the workforce and supplying teachers with a strong base in key content areas.

Research findings suggest that alternative routes to teacher certification assist in providing a diversified and geographically dispersed teaching workforce (Shen, 1997; Zumwalt, 1996). Students within the United States are more racially and ethnically diverse than in years past. This change in the student population has produced a greater need for a diverse teaching workforce that can meet the needs and challenges of this dynamic environment.

Additionally, alternative teacher certification programs provide teachers with a strong foundation in their content area. This differs from traditional teacher certification because the completers of an alternative program generally will have an extensive background in the content area in which they are seeking certification due to their prior work experience. Alternative teacher certification options have made becoming a teacher as a second career a viable option for many adults with extensive content backgrounds (Evans, 2011; Zumwalt, 1996). Participants in these programs have varied backgrounds, wide-ranging experiences, and an all-encompassing educational foundation that could lend them to develop into high quality content focused teachers (Zumwalt, 1996). Alternative teacher certification programs generally seek teachers in specific content areas, mathematics, science, foreign languages, social studies, and special education (Evans, 2011). By allowing a more flexible and expedited approach to teacher

certification and licensure, alternative programs may be better suited to attract candidates and fulfill the demand in content areas and geographical areas where traditional certification routes lack the resources to fulfill the high demand (Kee, 2011). By creating a supply of teachers to meet the demands of schools, there is a greater likelihood that all students within the United States will be able to receive a quality education.

The Alternative Teacher Certification Program of Study

The alternative teacher certification program utilized for this study is loosely based on the Teach for America (TFA) alternative certification program structure. The program provides rigorous and experiential training for its program members. It was started in 2001 by the governing body of the school system. It is located in the southern region of the United States.

The mission of the program is to provide a new stream of talented teachers from varied backgrounds who will individually and collectively make a positive impact on student achievement in the schools where they are needed most. In pursuit of this goal, the program works to place new teachers as equitably as possible in under-performing schools with the greatest need for teachers. This priority on meeting the needs of the school means that accepted program members are not always assigned to teach in the geographic area, subject or grade level that they would most prefer. The program actively works to support its members throughout their first year of teaching, and assists them as they pursue alternative certification.

Statement of the Problem

In reference to teaching, teacher certification and effectiveness, Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) contend more research is needed on the relationship between perceptions, program pathways, and teaching effectiveness. After conducting extensive research, Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) concluded it may be more useful to analyze a subgroup of individuals with similar backgrounds, school placements, and learning opportunities. Presently,

research on alternative certification reveals a hodgepodge of results (Ng, 2003; Turley & Nakai, 2000; Shen, 1997; Ashton, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Dill, 1996). This study provides research regarding completer perceptions, program pathway, and perceived preparation for teaching effectiveness.

Because alternative routes to teacher certification are filling teaching positions in low income schools with limited resources, it is important to research the perceived preparedness of the program completers upon completion of those programs. The Committee on the Study on Teacher Preparation Programs concluded there was a great need for research regarding the pathways to teacher certification (National Research Council, 2010). These newly hired teachers are being tasked with delivering a high-quality education to America's students. Because students have the fundamental right to receive a high-quality education, it is necessary to gauge the perceived preparedness of these teachers (Junor Clarke & Thomas, 2009). This study provides information regarding perceived preparedness following the completion of an alternative certification program.

Questions have arisen regarding whether alternative teacher certification provides effective teachers (Evans, 2011). Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) stated, "clearly, much more needs to be known about alternative certification participants and programs and about how alternative certification can best prepare highly effective teachers" (p. 512). A need exists to determine the true effectiveness of alternative teacher certification programs and participant perceptions can serve as a part of the evidence of effectiveness (Kee, 2011). This study focused on participant perceptions and it helps to eliminate a potential void in the literature.

Many educators believe teacher education, as a field, is in crisis. Gatlin (2009) believes it is a crisis emblemized by the challenges to creating genuine alternatives to traditional teacher

education and a crisis epitomized by the lack of vitality in teacher education. Walsh and Jacobs (2007) believe the opening of alternate routes to teacher certification since the early 1980s represents a significant but failed attempt to revitalize teacher education. Some research has addressed the alternative teacher certification effectiveness question, but existing research has not provided definitive answers. Regarding the efficacy of these alternative approaches and the teachers certified through these programs, it appears that research on the effects of teacher preparation programs with reduced requirements prior to teaching is scarce (Quigley, 2010; Zumwalt, 1996). This study was designed to contribute valuable information regarding alternative certification.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration will be focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Alternative certification programs are tasked with transforming individuals with a high level of content knowledge into teachers who transform content for students. To be a successful teacher, candidates must learn how to make complex concepts comprehensible for all students. These teachers must be able to reinvent their acquired knowledge by using various pedagogical methods. Shulman (1987) introduced his *Model of Teacher Knowledge* as a way of describing the knowledge that expert teachers have that contrasts with expert content knowledge.

Further, Shulman (1987) suggested seven categories of knowledge that underlie the teacher understanding needed to promote comprehension among students. These categories are

content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values. For the purposes of this study and its theoretical framework, content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge were examined.

In addition to examining the teacher knowledge bases theorized by Shulman (1987), Connelly and Clandinin (1988) hypothesized the need for teachers to have personal practical knowledge. They believed, "...knowledge is not something objective and independent of the teacher to be learned and transmitted but, rather, is the sum total of the teacher's experiences" (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997, p. 666). For the purposes of this research, personal practical knowledge was also examined.

Research Question

The following research question served as the basis for this study:

Upon completion of the alternative certification program, how prepared to teach did program completers feel as it relates to (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge, and (e) personal practical knowledge?

Significance of the Study

Because alternative teacher certification fills the nation's classrooms with teachers, especially in traditionally under resourced schools, it is important to research if these teaching candidates perceive to be prepared to supply a quality education to all students. In recent years, statistics show four out of ten teaching new hires were certified through alternative certification pathways (Feistritzer, 2011). The growing teaching shortages due to retirement, retention, and other factors within classrooms across the United States have provided new opportunities for individuals seeking to enter the education profession or those seeking to change careers.

Upon completion of an alternative route to certification, the completers are expected to be able to meet all of the requirements of a traditionally certified teacher. There is a need to capture whether the participants perceive they are prepared for their new teaching career upon completion of an alternative route to teaching certification (Junor Clarke & Thomas, 2009). Kee (2011) stated, “the differences between the training experiences of teachers in traditional certification programs versus alternative certification programs could have implications for teachers’ feeling of preparedness, their persistence in the profession, and ultimately student outcomes” (p. 23). Also, Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002) found that researching teacher feelings and perceptions could help with the issue of retention. This research contributed to a growing body of research on alternative certification and specifically target completer perceptions.

By providing the self-perceived preparedness levels of alternatively certified teachers, greater insight can be obtained regarding their perceived teaching confidence. Akerlof (1970) found that in markets where the job seeker or the seller knows more about success potential than their employers or the buyer, the quality deteriorates (Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey & Rosenberg, 2007). “Many teacher candidates know more about their own talent and potential for effective teaching than do teacher education programs or districts” (Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey & Rosenberg, 2007, p. 427). Haberman and Post (1998) identified the characteristics of teachers who are predisposed to offering multicultural programs as a part of their teaching. Among these characteristics were self-knowledge, self-acceptance/self-esteem, empathy, and relevant curriculum. Of the elements named, all stem from the individual’s perceptions. A self-perception case study provided insight that only the participant could provide.

This is an important case study because it captures the perceptions of participants following completion of an alternate certification program and ranks these perceptions according to the teaching knowledge base established by Shulman, Connelly and Clandinin. Kee (2011) wrote that “research on 1st-year teachers, in particular, can illuminate the effects of program features” (p. 24). By examining the perceptions of the programs completers, valuable information was acquired regarding how the participants perceive they are prepared for their new career and the challenges that lie ahead.

This information can be used when evaluating alternative certification programs’ effectiveness, and when developing recruitment materials to garner new candidates. Powell (1996) believed “...understanding how prior experiences influence teacher development can inform teacher educators, preservice teachers, and beginning teachers about the kind of teacher-education curriculum that can facilitate the transition from teacher-education to second-career classroom teacher” (p.148). By obtaining the self-perceived preparedness among these alternatively certified teachers, additional research can be garnered about the role that program confidence and personal experiences play in teaching success and effectiveness. This research can also be used to help form the foundation for future performance-based studies on the impact of alternatively certified teachers on student learning.

Alternative teacher certification programs must evaluate the established curricula to determine if they are providing participants with the tools required to teach students in lower income schools (Mason, 1997). Teachers being placed in these types of unconventional situations, face a different set of challenges that their traditionally certified counterparts (Junor Clarke & Thomas, 2009). Many of the students these teachers will serve could potentially be grade levels behind more affluent students for suburban areas. Teachers will need to not only

know how to teach and engage these students, but also have the confidence in their abilities and training to meet the demands of this seeming infinite mountain they must climb (Mason, 1997). Although this study is based on completers' self-perceptions, the findings from this study provided data on the effectiveness of alternative teacher certification programs and offer a foundation for future research that extends to other regions, states or geographical areas.

Limitations

The sampling procedure of this study limits the generalization of the findings. The case study will be limited to teachers who completed an alternative certification program in 2013. The teachers must also have been assigned to a school, and accepted the assignment received from the alternative certification program. This study is not intended to be a generalization of all teachers who have completed alternative teacher certification programs. Additionally, the alternative certification program that was utilized in this study is located in the Southern United States and certain limitations may apply to this research due to geography and program criterion.

Delimitations

The study was delimited by focusing on only the 2013 program completers. Although transferability is not the goal of the researcher, the findings add to the growing knowledge bank of teacher perceptions of preparedness and alternative teacher certification. Additionally, the study could be replicated and conducted utilizing alternatively certified program completers in other locations over a different period of time. The findings are not expected to be generalizable to any population of alternatively certified teachers, but using the theoretical framework of Shulman's (1987) and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) work, the study sought to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge,

curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge within the boundaries of the program studied.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were defined:

- **Alternative Certification:** “any alternative to the 4-year or 5-year undergraduate teacher education program including both those programs that have reduced standards and those that hold teachers to the same standards as college and university based undergraduate teacher education” (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001, p. 266).
- **Assessment:** “the productive process of monitoring, measuring, evaluating, documenting, reflecting on, and adjusting teaching and learning to ensure students reach high levels of achievement” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 20)
- **Case:** “the unit of study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21)
- **Case Study:** “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21)
- **Content Knowledge:** “includes not only a particular set of information, but also the framework for organizing information and processes for working with it” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 20)
- **Pedagogical Content Knowledge:** “a model posited by Shulman that identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8)
- **Personal Practical Knowledge:** “is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

- **Syntactic structure:** “the set of ways in which truth or falsehood, validity or invalidity are established” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9)

Summary and Organization of the Report

This chapter provided information on a brief history of the politics related to the provision of a quality education. Educational reform has been a major political concern for nearly 30 years. The chapter presented information on the educational initiatives for past Presidents starting with President George H. W. Bush through to current President Barack Obama. Additionally, traditional and alternative teacher certification routes are discussed while examining the polarization and pressures of a quality education. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge. In the next Chapter, the literature related to alternative certification and traditional teacher certification will be discussed to provide a broad foundation for the study. Additionally, Chapter II covers the theoretical framework in relation to the purpose of the study.

Chapter III describes the methodological perspectives and procedures. It outlines the process in a clear and succinct way from data collection, management, to analysis. Chapter IV details the findings of the case study. It discusses the emergent themes and their relation to the literature and theoretical framework. Chapter V, the final chapter discusses implications for theory, practice, and research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alternative Teacher Certification

Alternative teacher certification emerged nearly thirty years ago in the early 1980's to address growing teacher shortages. Those shortages were driven by the attrition of new teachers, retiring teachers and growth in student enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Also contributing to the shortages were the modest salaries of teachers as compared with other professions (Key, 2011). Because there was a need for expediting the process of teacher certification, alternative routes to teacher certification were created. Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) noted decades of shortages coupled with limited production from institutions of higher education have prompted increased consideration of flexible certification programs that attract promising individuals and consider varying life experiences. These shortages presented an unprecedented opportunity for entry into the teaching profession.

The number of alternative certification programs substantially increased after its inception. In 1983, there were only eight states in the United States that had implemented alternative certification programs. By 2005, that number had grown to 49 including the District of Columbia (Evans, 2011; Feistritzer, Haar, Hobar, & Scullion 2005). Approximately 56% of nontraditional teachers enter the teaching field less than five years after college graduation as reported by the National Center of Education Statistics (2005). Those numbers indicate a growing trend towards alternative teacher certification across the United States.

Alternative routes to teacher certification can contrast greatly across the various states, but the programs also have similarities. Although each alternative teacher certification program has its own standards and methods for teacher preparation, the base requirements for teacher candidates usually fall within an established set of guidelines. Roth and Swail (2000) wrote:

Despite the differences, most authorities agree that teacher candidates should:

1. Have at least a bachelor's degree; some states require a fifth year or master's degree;
2. Complete an approved, accredited education program;
3. Have a major or minor in education (for elementary education);
4. Have a major in the subject area in which they plan to teach (for middle- or high-school teaching);
5. Have a strong liberal-arts foundation;
6. Pass either a state test, the widely used PRAXIS exam, or another exam. (p. 9)

Generally, alternative teacher certification programs provide a reduced number of required certification courses followed by a rigorous and exhaustive summer preparatory program.

Typically, participants are expected to acquire a pre-determined number of observation hours prior to classroom entry. This aids in expediting the process of teacher certification and licensure (Kee, 2011; Roth & Swail, 2000). This reduction in process time has helped recruit new candidates into the teaching profession.

With the growth in popularity of alternative certification, a substantial number of adults who meet the requirements are selecting alternative routes for certification. The shift towards the educational arena could occur for multiple reasons including the fluctuating economy, the desire for change, and even the shifting workforce (Evans, 2011). In addition to meeting the demand for teachers, alternative program requirements are becoming more stringent to ensure highly qualified teachers in specific content areas are being produced.

These alternative teacher certification routes gained momentum and additional consideration for a variety of reasons including accessibility to the teaching workforce for nontraditional candidates, attracting teachers to underserved geographical areas, recruiting teachers for difficult to fill content areas such as math and science, and attracting high potential individuals who might otherwise pursue different careers (Turley & Nakai, 2000; Feistritzer & Chester, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996).

Forty-seven states in addition to the District of Columbia reported 122 alternative routes to teacher certification programs being implemented by 619 providers of individual programs around the country in 2005 (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). In the past five years, the number of new hires from alternative certification programs has steadily increased with four out of ten new hires coming from these routes (Feistritzer, 2011). Alternative teacher certification has definitely gained momentum and efforts are needed to ensure qualified candidates are entering the profession fully prepared to teach any child who enters their classroom.

Alternative Teacher Certification Effectiveness

The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) established criteria which determine the effectiveness of an alternative teacher certification program. To be an “exemplary program,” the following conditions must exist:

The program has been specifically designed to recruit, prepare, and license for teaching those talented individuals who already have at least a bachelor’s degree. Candidates for these programs pass a rigorous screening process, such as passing entry tests, interviews, and demonstrating mastery of content. The programs are field-based. The programs include coursework or equivalent experiences in professional education studies before and while teaching. Candidates for teaching work closely with trained mentor teachers. Candidates must meet high performance standards for completion of the programs. (Feistritzer & Chester, 1998)

These requirements were established to help ensure teachers certified through alternative pathways are prepared to teach all students who enter their classrooms. Regardless of the certification pathway, all teachers responsible for providing a high quality education to all students.

Hawk and Schmidt (1989) examined the differences between two groups of teachers, one prepared through a traditional teacher preparation curriculum and the second prepared through an alternative teacher certification program. They found that alternative certification participants are as competent in the classroom and as successful on National Teachers Exam (NTE) as

traditionally prepared students. Tournaki, Lyublinskaya, and Carolan (2009) found teacher candidates regardless of their certification pathway demonstrated the same levels of teacher effectiveness and efficacy.

In contrast to Hawk and Schmidt's (1989) findings, Allen (2003) discovered, "overall, the research provides limited support for the conclusion that there are indeed alternative programs that produce cohorts of teachers who are ultimately as effective as traditionally trained teachers" (p. 3). These mixed findings have contributed to the debate regarding the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers.

Alternative Teacher Certification and Ethnicity

Students within the United States are more racially and ethnically diverse than in years past. This change in the student population has produced a greater need for a diverse teaching workforce equipped to meet the needs and challenges of this dynamic environment. The student population has racially and ethnically changed rising from 22% in the 1970s designated as minorities or culturally diverse to 39% in 2003, with 64% designated as minorities in urban schools, (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006). Hollins and Guzman (2005) noted that student demographics are not the problem as it relates to student achievement. Teacher quality and preparedness to educate all students is the task facing educators. The challenge is providing a quality education for all students.

Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) noted, "The transition for African American and Latino young adults in to the workforce can be substantially influenced by internal and external contexts including education experiences" (p. 19). Culturally marginalized students such as African American and Hispanic students face expectations of failure. This can lead to angst and fear amongst these students. The students become fearful of breaking traditional

stereotypes. Without positive reaffirmation, diverse students could fear discrimination and racism. Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg wrote:

Additional challenges that Hispanic adolescents may face include psychosocial factors, such as acculturation stress, language barriers, incongruity between cultural values and the values of educational institutions, academic isolation, and socioeconomic inequities...Exposure to positive racial messages and possessing high cultural self-esteem can influence perceived barriers and career-related outcomes. (p. 19)

It is important for students to have the opportunity to experience teachers from multiple cultures or who are well equipped to facilitate multicultural learning. This contributes to building a culture of diversity and inclusion and to the enhancement of the quality of students' total educational experience. To this end, Chin and Young (2007) wrote the following regarding alternative certification (AC) programs:

Diversifying the teacher labor force has been one of the most pressing goals in the preparation of new teachers and a major impetus behind the drive to create AC programs. To recruit people of color for teaching, policy makers and teacher educators will need to look beyond simple demographics that often mask a more complex set of factors guiding people's decision making. By doing so, they may be more successful in designing AC programs that recruit and serve the populations that are most needed as teachers in our schools. (p. 82)

Teachers completing alternative certification will be placed in high need schools overflowing with underserved students. These schools may be in urban or rural areas.

It is a fundamental right that all students should receive a quality education. Research has shown that providing students in urban settings with quality teachers is important for student achievement (Evans, 2011). Teacher shortages are a major problem within urban schools (Ng, 2003). Researchers have noted that graduates from university-based teacher education programs often choose not to teach in high-demand fields or in urban or rural school districts (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005; Ng, 2003). Because traditionally certified teachers often choose not to teach in urban or rural districts, schools in those locales face teacher shortages.

Zeichner and Schulte (2001) researched peer reviewed data on alternative certification programs in Dallas, Houston, New Jersey and other locations. “In New Jersey, alternatively certified teachers in elementary mathematics and English taught in higher proportions than traditionally certified teachers in the 56 school districts designated as urban by the state education department” (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001, p. 273). These findings indicate alternative certification completers were hired at greater rates to staff teaching positions in urban school districts. Grant and Gillette (2006) stated, “regardless of the geographic area where candidates end up teaching, there is a moral mandate to prepare a diverse teaching corps of culturally relevant teachers” (p. 293). It is imperative for students in urban and rural locations to have the ability to receive a high quality education from highly qualified teachers regardless of their ethnicity or the teachers’ certification pathway.

Additionally, it is also important to consider what urban means to teachers. The distinction has significant impacts as it relates to diversity. During research conducted by Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul, and Gordon (2006), a group of novice teachers were asked “would you characterize your school as urban?” and they were provided with various definitions of urban (p. 398). Some of the participants deemed a school as urban by location or poverty, while the majority of the participants used the race of students to determine whether or not the school was urban. Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul, and Gordon, noted:

In categorizing a school as urban or not urban based on students’ skin color, most of the participants used words or phrases such as “students of color” or “diverse students” or noted that there is, for example, an “incredible” (Janet)² amount of diversity in urban schools. These descriptions contrasted with phrases such as “few racial minorities,” “majority White,” or “almost entirely White,” leading us to believe that even phrases such as diversity are code words for students of color. Implicit in most responses was the notion that urban primarily means students of color. (2006, p. 398)

It is important for teachers to be aware of their personal definitions of diversity and urban because these definitions could impact how they impart knowledge the students in their classrooms. The awareness of these personalized definitions could help to eliminate unconscious bias among teachers staffed in urban locales.

When working in urban or ethnically diverse areas, it is important to recognize one's own predispositions as a teacher. Unconscious bias can have dire unintended consequences. Bias can ruin the learning experiences of students. A new racial ideology has been proposed. This ideology poses a direct threat to students' fundamental right to a quality education. These theorists believe that for the past few decades, blatant and open displays of racism has been on the decline replaced with discreet racism. This subtle form of racism is marked by people asserting that they do not see color or stating that race does not matter (Pollock, 2004). Forman (2004) contends this new, discreet form of colorblindness promotes a distorted view that racial inequality, such as the racial achievement gap or school segregation, is not a result of impeded opportunity but personal choice. If the teachers tasked with providing a quality education believe diverse students refuse to achieve based on choice and not circumstance, then their ability to relate to the student population will be limited. This hinders the educator's ability to serve their student population.

In contrast to the changing and evolving student demographics, teacher demographics have not drastically changed over the past 20 years. Furthermore, the demographics of traditional teacher certification programs have also not changed throughout the years. The majority of teachers teaching grades kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grade are predominately White (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Howey, 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) in 2005 found that 32% of entrants into

teaching through alternate routes are persons of color compared to only 11% of the overall teaching workforce (Feistritzer, 2005). Due to this distinction, traditional teacher certification programs are limited in their ability to provide insights on diversity and culture to the vast array of multi-cultural students who encompass the American educational system. Hollins and Guzman (2005) found a large number of teaching candidates do not want to teach students who are different from them and White teachers tend not to remain in schools with higher percentages of African American and Hispanic students (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Urban locales tend to have higher populations of underserved students with significant teacher shortages.

Because teachers certified through alternative routes are typically placed in culturally diverse, low-performing schools, studies show that deliberate efforts to prepare teachers to teach in urban, low-performing schools can be beneficial (Allen, 2003). Due to this distinction, alternative routes to teaching certification contribute to the diversification of the teacher workforce. Zumwalt (1996) noted how alternative teacher certification is steadily changing the face of teacher certification. Because alternative certification programs could help to diversify the teaching workforce, this distinction could appeal to school districts seeking to diversify their teacher workforce and enhance educational opportunity for all students regardless of culture or ethnicity (Allen, 2003). This could lead to the recruitment of more individuals with underrepresented ethnicities into the teaching profession. Zeichner and Schulte (2001) stated one of the major goals of alternative routes to teacher certification is to recruit more minority teachers especially in urban areas. Underrepresented, diverse candidates are entering teaching through alternative certification pathways at higher rates than Caucasian teachers. Fifty-three percent of Hispanic teachers, 39% of African-American teachers and 24% of teachers from all

other ethnicities entered teaching through alternative routes to university-based teacher programs (Feistritzer, 2011). With the increase in popularity of alternative certification pathways, urban schools may be able to reduce teacher shortages and augment educational opportunities for marginalized students.

In *Grutter versus Bollinger* (2003), a landmark Supreme Court case, the Court stated, “Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our nation is essential if the dream of one Nation, indivisible, is to be realized” (p. 19). Based on the ruling of the Supreme Court, a culturally diverse teaching workforce is needed to not only continuously educate children within the United States, but ensure the continued progression of democracy and competitiveness within the nation. Milner (2009) noted the following, “Whether through traditional or alternative teacher education programs, preparing teachers for diversity, equity, and social justice are perhaps the most challenging and daunting tasks facing the field” (p. 119). Teachers entering classrooms across the United States, regardless of how they were certified to teach, will face a diverse population of students.

Additionally, it has been noted that the teaching profession is highly localized. Teachers will generally work within 40 miles of where they graduated high school or attended college (Mitchell & Romero, 2010; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). This localization restricts diversity, competition for teaching jobs, and it creates a shortage of qualified teachers in some lower income or urban districts while other districts never experience these difficulties (Mitchell & Romero, 2010). There is a need to reduce the localization so all children can receive a high quality education.

Alternative Teacher Certification and Gender

Within a historical context, teaching was traditionally regarded as women’s work. Women are considered to be more nurturing and caring (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005). The steady

evolution of student demographics has placed a growing importance on diversity and gender equality within the teaching profession. Males and females must be provided with a fair, equitable and high quality education. The teaching profession needs to be reinvented to reflect the changes within the student population.

The demographics of teachers have not changed in recent years. Presently, the bulk of today's teaching candidates are middle class, female, White, reared in suburbs or small towns and have limited contact with people who are culturally different from themselves (Howey, 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Beauboeuf-LaFontant (2005) wrote, "although an important focus has drawn attention to the existence of racism in schools and the experience of unacknowledged privilege among teachers, this work has largely downplayed the significance of gender" (p. 436). Gender bias, as referred to by Sadker and Sadker (1995) is "...a syntax of sexism so elusive that most teachers and students were completely unaware of its influence" (p. 2). The teaching profession may be unintentionally biased in favor of females. These gendered norms work against or are in direct opposition to teacher responsiveness that is needed within multicultural and mixed gendered classrooms. Beauboeuf-LaFontant (2005) wrote:

Accounts on Black females' pedagogy suggests that many of these teachers embody a womanhood that contradicts or is in opposition to the compliance expected of "good" women and teachers...Furthermore, although contemporary descriptions may be less dramatic...they similarly point to the distinctiveness of what exemplary Black women do – "politicized mothering" (Beauboeuf, 1997), acting as "dream keepers", and "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994), self-consciously operating as "gate openers", and working with a "parental urgency" (Jervis, 1996) – in service to children marginalized within both schools and the larger society. It is my contention that if these women are in fact exemplary in the literature of change and possibility in education, then attention should be placed on how their womanhood may offer a critical redefinition of what it is to be a good teacher in a field defined as women's work. (p. 437)

Beauboeuf-LaFontant (2005) conducted an exploratory study using purposeful sampling of the life histories of African American women committed to encouraging social justice within their

educational practice. The research focused on women's perspectives and motivations to teach and highlighted three key qualities within female educators. The teachers were recruited from the Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) an organization that believes education requires a moral compass to make a difference. First, the women found themselves meaning they discovered their reason for existing and learned from tradition. Next, the female educators embraced caring as an attribute to be advocates for minority and oppressed groups. Finally, they viewed development as a key human activity (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005). These qualities could be beneficial to classrooms across the United States. This research was only focused on African American female teachers. Male teachers were excluded. American classrooms across the country are filled with not only female students but also male students. Male students may require different teaching qualities of educators than female students. With the majority of teachers being female regardless of their ethnicity, a major portion of the student population, males, are being underrepresented by the teaching workforce.

Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) revealed alternative teacher certification programs "...tend to attract proportionally more males; persons over 25; minorities; individuals who have had business or military experience; and math, science, and foreign language majors" (p. 118). In the *Profile of Teachers U.S. Report 2011*, The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) found that even with extensive recruitment efforts to attract males, 86% of teachers are female. Men only constitute 16% of all public school teachers, but one-third of in contrast to only 22% of women entered teaching through an alternative route to teaching certification (Feistritzer, 2011). These numbers indicate males are underrepresented in the teaching profession.

Contrary to Rosenberg and Sindelar's (2005) findings, Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) suggests alternative certification programs do not aid in the recruitment of male teachers. Their research described in detail seven programs with the expectations of understanding who participates in alternative certification programs and the learning opportunities alternative certification programs provide to their participants. They tested both supporter and detractor assumptions regarding alternative certification against national data and data from the seven programs. In the seven alternative programs examined, approximately 75% of the participants were female which is consistent with the national average for all teachers, but the number of male participants varied by program (p. 494). For example, males contributed to 43% of the participant population for the New Jersey Provisional Teacher Program, but only 34% of those in single subject placements in the Texas Region XII were men (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007). Based upon the research, only a slightly higher percentage of males are attracted into the teaching profession via alternative certification routes.

Conversely, the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) (2005) found 37% of individuals entering teaching through alternative certification were male. This number compares to only 25% of the total teaching workforce being male. It also compares to only 25% of new teachers being male in the 2000-2001 school year (Feistritzer, 2005). If the rate of teachers certifying through alternative routes continues to increase, the lack of male representation within the teaching profession may no longer be a factor.

Alternative Teacher Certification and Age

In 2005, the average age of a new teacher was 29 (NCES, 2005). In 2007, the average age of an alternatively certified teacher is 36 (Evans, 2011; Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007). NCEI researched the age when participants began an alternative route program. They discovered 17% began between ages 18-24. Twenty percent started their programs between ages 25-29.

Twenty-four percent began between ages 30-39. Twenty-eight percent started the alternative route program between the ages of 40-49, and 11% began between the ages of 50-65 (Feistritzer, 2005). This data indicates the majority of alternative certification participants are between the ages of 30 and 49.

Chambers (2002) interviewed ten pre-service and in-service secondary teachers who were working in suburban locations outside of Chicago. The study sought to uncover additional information regarding the reasons career changers are drawn into teaching. It also explored how previous success within the participants' prior careers impacted their development as teachers. The study found, adults, both male and female over the age of 30 are entering the teaching profession at noticeable rates. The NCEI after conducting a survey designed to uncover data regarding teachers including who they are and what they think about a variety of teaching related issues found 40% of those entering teaching alternate certification routes in their 30s were persons of color (Feistritzer, 2005). These percentages change depending on the age group of the entrants. For example, only 33% of new teachers aged 18 to 29 were considered persons of color, only 28% of new teachers in their 40s were considered persons of color and only 22% of new teachers in their 50s were persons of color (Feistritzer, 2005). This data indicates additional research may be needed to determine the relationship between gender, age, and ethnicity in relation to alternative certification pathways.

These career changers are breaking convention and altering the course of teacher certification and licensure. It has been noted that alternative certification programs are more effective at attracting mature adults into teaching, but Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) discovered it does not necessarily mean that participants in alternative certification programs are

older adults. Additionally, age may contribute to the candidates' success or failure rates upon completion of an alternative certification program.

Alternative Teacher Certification and Prior Occupation

Generally, individuals who decide to participate in an alternative certification program bring a wealth of prior occupational experience with them into the classroom. Specific groups of potential career changers have even been specifically targeted for the teaching profession. These professions include military personnel, retiring scientists, engineers, and mathematicians (Chambers, 2002).

Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) research described in detail seven programs with the expectations of understanding who participates in alternative certification programs and the learning opportunities alternative certification programs provide to their participants. They tested both supporter and detractor assumptions regarding alternative certification against national data and data from the seven programs. Their findings suggest the majority of candidates attracted to alternative programs were individuals who had most recently been full time students or had been employed in some education-related field. Few of the participants switched from careers in mathematics and science to teaching.

These findings contradict the 2005 NCEI survey results which found that 47% of individuals entering teaching through alternative certification routes were working in a non-education job the year before they began an alternative certification program (Feistritzer, 2005). The NCEI findings also report 40% of the individuals were working in a professional occupation outside of the field of education. Only 12% were students and 9% of the NCEI sample had been in the military, 2% were caring for family members, 2% were unemployed and seeking work, and 1% were retired the year prior to starting an alternative certification program (Feistritzer,

2005). The findings indicate alternative certification routes attract individuals from various prior career paths.

Evans (2011) found that the “life stages” of beginning teachers, i.e. their age and previous work experiences are linked to the teachers’ motivations to enter the field, selection of a certification path, and commitment to the occupation. Some alternative certification participants may have become dissatisfied with their previous occupation and decided to transition into teaching as a career. Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) conducted an ethnographic study with graduate students leaving their prior careers to enter the field of teaching. They sought to discover the meanings of the career change for the graduate students making the transition to teaching. Crow et al (1990) deemed these alternative certification participants “the unconverted” (p. 212). The unconverted are individuals who have achieved a high status in other occupations. For their research, all of “the unconverted” had acquired advanced degrees in their field and had risen to high level positions prior to deciding to embark upon a teaching career (p. 212). Prior occupation could be a key factor in the program completers’ feelings of preparedness.

Alternative Teacher Certification and Perceptions of Preparedness

Kee (2011) underscored that the differences among alternative certification programs highlight two issues central to current debates in teacher education. Those two issues are the timing of when initial teacher preparation should occur and the content of the preparation. Interestingly, alternatively certified teachers tend to leave the profession earlier than traditionally certified teachers and often feel less prepared upon completion of their programs (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). These feelings of preparedness are a key component of this research.

Kee (2011) found after analyzing the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of more than 40,000 teachers, alternatively certified first

year teachers feel somewhat less well prepared than traditionally certified first year teachers. This analysis also revealed the types of coursework teachers received had a positive and meaningful relationship with the teachers' feelings of preparedness for both traditional and alternatively certified teachers. Additionally, the research showed "teachers who have longer field experiences as part of their preparation program will feel better prepared in their first year than teachers who do not have an opportunity to practice" (p. 32). Based on the findings of Kee (2011), feelings of preparedness were contingent upon the features of the program and duration of field experience.

Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) researched feelings of preparedness of traditionally and alternatively certified teachers. Their research suggests the teacher ratings of graduates of traditional teacher education programs were significantly higher than the teacher ratings of teachers from alternative pathways. The greatest ratings differences were on the items related to curriculum knowledge and teaching strategies. "These items included core tasks of teaching such as designing curriculum and instruction, teaching subject matter content, using instructional strategies, and understanding the needs of learners" (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow, 2002, p. 290). Teach for America (TFA) recruits were utilized in the study. TFA recruits rated their preparation lower than the average completer of a traditional teacher certification program on 39 of 40 items, and 19 of the responses were significantly lower. The TFA completers also felt unprepared for the core tasks of teaching as compared to traditional program completers (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow, 2002). As a national alternative certifying body, the TFA data could be representative of the general population of alternatively certified teachers.

Many researchers support traditional teacher certification, but there is also other research exists to refute claims regarding alternatively certified teachers' feelings of preparedness. The researchers who refute those claims found there to be little difference regarding the feelings of preparedness and self-efficacy for traditionally certified teachers and those certified through alternative routes (Kee, 2011; Tournaki, Lyublinskaya, & Carolan, 2009; Cohen-Vogel & Smith, 2007). There are cohorts of researchers who have found supportive data backing alternative routes teacher certification. Nonetheless, Zeichner and Schulte (2001) believe the research is limited thus making it difficult to draw sustainable conclusions.

Limitations in Literature

There appears to be a significant gap in both the research conducted and the scholarly articles published in the area of the perceptions of the adults who complete alternative teaching certification. Limited research exists on the effectiveness of these individual certification programs. Additionally, research on the backgrounds of teachers who were certified via alternative certification is limited. Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) found both sides of the alternative certification debate failed to capture the variation in participants' characteristics and their experience in the programs. Zeichner (2006) believed it is more important to focus on the quality of the program and the program characteristics rather than who sponsors the alternative certification program. Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) wrote:

The research that is available consists of limited evaluations of programs and of teacher perceptions and tends to compare alternative with traditional certification, rather than examine the direct contributions of alternative certification programs. Further much of the research on alternative certification programs fails to describe the programs being studied adequately. (p. 485)

Sixty-three teachers during their last year in the certification program in the New York City Teaching Fellows Program completed a survey to gauge their overall experiences in their

classroom teaching and in their college courses (Bisland, O'Connor, & Malow-Iroff, 2009). This study included a survey along with group and individual interviews. The main concentration of the study was questions concerning different types of classroom instructional practices in social studies. The second part of the study consisted of interviews. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups were to clarify and develop the teachers' understanding of the constructivist pedagogy questions on the survey (Bisland, O'Connor, & Malow-Iroff, 2009). Although this data will enhance the knowledge base regarding alternative teacher certification, it does not address how the completers perceive the certification prepared them for teaching success.

While there may be some common characteristics among alternative certification programming options, much of the description of alternative certification is generic and lends itself to multiple interpretations (Quigney, 2010). This research area has limited content. The limited content stems from the various differences and components of the various alternative teacher certification programs within the United States. Programs may have similarities, but each of the programs varies in terms of content, guidelines, and duration. It is a virtually undiscovered area with numerous research opportunities.

A discussion of the merits of the approaches to teacher certification has also been compounded by issues relating to legal mandates such as the "highly qualified teachers" provision of the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) and job market realities, including teacher shortages in key instructional areas (Quigney, 2010). Because of their limited pre-service training, alternative route participants may experience more difficulties than traditionally prepared graduates at the beginning of their teaching assignment (Allen, 2003). Darling-Hammond (1991) referenced several studies showcasing the problems alternatively certified

teachers have with curriculum development. She also cited research studies showing alternatively certified teachers struggle with pedagogical knowledge. In addition to alternatively certified teachers, Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009) reported new teachers with considerable content area knowledge in English from a university master's degree program also had difficulties with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) if they had not completed a formal teacher education. In contrast, Ng (2003) believes each approach has its own merit and obstacles to overcome to fully achieve teaching success.

Zeichner and Schulte (2001) found most of the studies unearthed during their research did not report comparative data on the age and gender of teacher education program students. This leaves an opening for research focused on the characteristics of alternative certification program completers as it relates to gender. Zeichner and Schulte (2001) also researched where alternatively and traditionally educated teachers choose to teach. Again, there was limited or conflicting data. In this case, it was due to the accessible population.

Recent studies of the relationship between pathways for teacher preparation and student achievement have resulted in similar statistics but contradictory conclusions (Marszalek, Odom, LaNasa, & Adler, 2009). Using statewide data from the 2004-2005 school year, Marszalek, Odom, LaNasa, and Adler examined the relationships between school-level indicators of student achievement on nationally-normed tests and proportions of alternatively certified teachers, while controlling for building type and other relevant covariates (Marszalek, Odom, LaNasa, & Adler, 2009). The researchers discovered the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement at the school level depends on whether the building mixes multiple grade levels such as elementary and middle (Marszalek, Odom, LaNasa, & Adler, 2009). The survey did not

entirely build a case for a positive relationship between alternative teacher preparation and student achievement leaving the door open for additional research.

Theoretical Framework

The frameworks that guided this research are Shulman's (1987) *Model of Teacher Knowledge* and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) *Theory of Personal Practical Knowledge*. These bodies of literature present the lenses through which the study was conducted from data collection through to analysis.

Alternative certification programs are tasked with transforming individuals with a high level of content knowledge into teachers who transform content for students. To be a successful teacher, candidates must learn how to make complex concepts comprehensible for all students. These teachers must be able to reinvent their acquired knowledge by using various pedagogical methods. How the teachers transforms this information is based on their prior experiences. Shulman (1987) introduced his *Model of Teacher Knowledge* to the educational arena as a way of describing the knowledge expert teachers have that contrasts with expert content knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) theorized personal practical knowledge as a way of describing the knowledge that reflects a teacher's prior personal experiences. These two frameworks are complimentary because both of the frameworks present components of a teacher's knowledge base. Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) proposed personal practical knowledge would be utilized in addition to the knowledge bases modeled by Shulman (1987). Personal practical knowledge adds the teacher's prior experiences to the teacher knowledge base.

Shulman's Model of Teacher Knowledge Base.

Shulman (1987) proposed seven categories of knowledge that underlie the teacher understanding needed to promote comprehension among students. These categories are content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum

knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values. For the purposes of this theoretical framework, content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge will be examined because they provide a base of knowledge that all teachers need to possess to be effective.

Content Knowledge

Shulman (1986) describes content knowledge as “the amount and organization of knowledge per se in the mind of the teacher” (p. 9). It is the knowledge teachers have of the content area they teach. Content knowledge (CK) is comprised of more than simple facts. The complexity of content knowledge extends to the structure of the subject matter. Shulman (1986) contends that content knowledge encompasses both substantive and syntactic structures. Substantive structures include the organization of basic principles, laws, and concepts within a discipline. Syntactic structures are the process through which new knowledge is generated and validated (Lankford, 2010; Shulman, 1986; Schwab, 1978). Shulman (1986) wrote:

The substantive structures are the variety of ways in which the basic concepts and principles of the discipline are organized to incorporate its facts. The syntactic structure of a discipline is the set of ways in which truth or falsehood, validity or invalidity, are established. (p. 9)

To fully execute content knowledge, teachers must be able to explain or provide a rationale for content; they must also be able to show why a “particular proposition is deemed warranted” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). Content knowledge affects planning, feedback, questioning and assessment (Shulman, 1987). Content knowledge is fundamental for teacher success, but teachers also need to have pedagogical knowledge.

Pedagogical Knowledge

Pedagogical knowledge (PK) is the knowledge of how to teach within a content area. It encompasses the broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter (Shulman, 1987). PK goes beyond knowledge of subject matter to the dimension of subject matter for teaching (Shulman, 1986). The act of teaching encompasses many aspects of pedagogy including classroom management, lesson planning, and questioning. By having knowledge of pedagogy, teachers will be better suited to deliver a quality education to all students.

Curricular Knowledge

Curricular knowledge is the knowledge of what should be taught to a particular group of students. Contained within curricular knowledge is the knowledge of the full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level, knowledge of the variety of instructional material available in relation to those programs, and knowledge of the set of characteristics that determine the use of particular curriculum or program materials in particular circumstances (Shulman, 1986). Curricular knowledge requires an awareness of the level of the students being taught and an understanding of the learning potential of the students being taught. Teachers must recognize the learning potential of students to fully provide a quality learning experience.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Shulman (1986) described the process of how teachers reinvent teaching content and transform student learning (level of teaching expertise) as the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Shulman (1987) wrote:

Pedagogical content knowledge identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the

diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue. (p. 8)

Howey and Grossman (1989) theorize PCK encompasses the conceptions of what it means to teach a subject, knowledge of curricular materials and curriculum for that subject, knowledge of students' understanding and potential misunderstandings of a content area, and knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching subject matter topics.

One fundamental principle of PCK is the differentiation of expert teachers in a subject area from content or subject area experts (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993). The manner in which teachers recount their content knowledge is the primary focus of PCK. PCK is concerned with "how subject matter is transformed from the knowledge of the teacher into the content of instruction" (Shulman, 1986 p. 6). It provides the linkage or bridge between having knowledge (PK) and teaching (CK). PCK demonstrates that teacher knowledge requires not only content knowledge but also general pedagogical knowledge. The merger of PK and CK in addition to curricular knowledge leads to a successful teacher. Shulman (1987) considered PCK to be the best knowledge base of teaching:

The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background present by the students. (p. 15)

As demonstrated by Shulman's Model of Teacher Knowledge, it is important for alternative certification programs to not only consider content knowledge but also pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge when training teaching candidates. The Model of Teacher Knowledge provides a vehicle to describe the knowledge held by expert teachers. The convergence of these four components will help to ensure that alternatively certified teachers are better suited to transition from content experts to highly qualified teaching experts. In addition

to possessing theoretical and content knowledge, teachers need to have a teacher knowledge base of their personal experiences. These experiences help them to transform the teacher knowledge bases proposed by Shulman (1987).

Connelly and Clandinin's Theory of Personal Practical Knowledge

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) believe the personal experiences of teachers also contribute to their knowledge of teaching. They describe personal practical knowledge as:

...a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

The merger of content knowledge and diverse life experiences has the potential to enhance the classroom and learning experiences of students (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997; Powell, 1996). Personal practical knowledge encompasses the prior experiences of each teacher. This knowledge provides the building blocks through which each teacher constructs their view their classrooms and students.

Summary

This chapter presented an in-depth review of relevant literature that builds on the premise of this case study. This chapter provided a review of the literature related to alternative teacher certification and its effectiveness. More specifically, the pros and cons of both alternative teacher certification and traditional certification are discussed. The literature supports the case study because it reflects for research on feelings of preparedness among alternatively certified teachers. Additionally, the literature supports the need for additional insight into what is needed to provide a quality education to all students. Also presented in the chapter was Shulman's Model of Teacher Knowledge and Connelly and Clandinin's theory of personal practical

knowledge. These models served as the theoretical framework and guide for the study. The next chapter, Chapter III, provides the details regarding the research design, data collection, management, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and personal practical knowledge.

This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means of data collection and data analysis because the qualitative methods were the better fit for the study. Creswell (2007) wrote, “we also use qualitative research because quantitative measures and statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem” (p. 48). Robson, Shannon, Goldenhar, & Hale (2001) posited, “...qualitative methods can yield information with a breadth and depth not possible with quantitative approaches” (p. 68). Creswell (2007) wrote, “we conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored” (p. 47). This research explored participant perceptions and feelings of preparedness. Rossman and Rallis (2012) believed the “ultimate purpose” of qualitative research is to learn (p. 3). Qualitative methods suited the needs of this study because the researcher’s primary purpose was to learn how the program completers felt regarding their teaching preparation through open-ended interviews.

Research Question

The following research question served as the basis for this study:

Upon completion of the alternative certification program, how prepared to teach diverse populations did program completers feel as it related to (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge and (e) personal practical knowledge?

Research Design

As proposed by Merriam (1998), the decision to focus on a qualitative case study stemmed from the fact that the researcher was interested in discovery, insight and interpretation rather than testing a hypothesis. By utilizing the case study method, it was easier to concentrate on a single phenomenon facilitating the uncovering of the interaction of significant elements that are characteristic of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). For the purposes of this study, an embedded single-case study design was utilized to cultivate a thick narrative that details the perceived preparedness of an alternative certification program in the southern region of the United States. Yin (2009) posited:

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 18)

The case study design afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore the teachers' perceptions of readiness to teach students in under-resourced schools from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, by utilizing a case study, boundaries were established. Merriam (1998) noted that case studies provide for bounded systems. The bounded system in this study referred to 2013 program completers of an alternative teacher certification program within the southern region of the United States. Those teachers were interviewed using the general interview guide approach. The interview protocol was designed as a guide that allowed flexibility within the study. Six program completers within the case study were selected to provide insight regarding completer perceptions and backgrounds.

Within the context of alternative teacher certification programs, the study participants served as the multiple units of analysis selected from within a single case which is the alternative certification program located within the southern states of the United States. The alternative

certification program recruits candidates from non-traditional backgrounds looking to have a positive effect on student achievement in the schools where they are needed most, and the program works to place new teachers as in underperforming schools with the greatest need for teachers.

Data Collection

The researcher in this qualitative study was the primary instrument utilized for collecting data for this study. Creswell (2007) described utilizing the researcher as the primary gathered data through open-ended interviews and by reviewing program evaluation documents provided by the alternative certification program.

Merriam (1998) believed that when the researcher is unable to observe emotions, feelings and behavior that an interview is essential. For this research, open-ended, person-to-person interviews with six participants were conducted. Creswell (2007) posited, “The up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (p. 37). The intent of the researcher was to create a relaxed environment that allows for topic elaboration.

The first step in preparing for data collection was to create an interview protocol (Appendix A) based on the review of the literature and theoretical frameworks. Research questions were also used as a guide for conducting the open-ended interviews. The interviews began with introductions and casual conversation to build rapport and develop comfort with each study participant. Each participant was provided a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. This assisted in gaining the trust of the participants. Upon receiving signed consent and after preliminary introductions, the participant interviews were recorded. Following each open-ended interview, each interview was transcribed verbatim. Additionally, the 2013 program evaluations that were supplied by the alternative certification program were reviewed. Throughout the data

collection process, the data was simultaneously analyzed searching for emergent themes. Emergent design is a common characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) purports, "...you can be doing some rudimentary analysis while you are in the process of collecting data, as well as between data collection activities (p 162). Field notes were made throughout the interview and upon completion of the interview. Those notes included any observations or behavioral cues.

Site Selection.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify the program used for the case study. The program was selected because it has a vast amount of data available for research (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research occurs in natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Because this study sought to explore the perceptions of preparedness of alternative teacher certification completers who instruct students, specifically, those traditionally marginalized students from urban areas in under-resourced schools, a program that matched the criterion was selected. The chosen alternative certification program seeks talent from non-traditional backgrounds looking to have a positive effect on student achievement in the schools where they are need most. In pursuit of this goal, the program works to place new teachers in underperforming schools with the greatest need for teachers. Additionally, the program goals assert it provides rigorous and experiential training for its program members.

The program selected for this study is an alternative teacher certification program in the South started in 2001 by its governing body to meet the demand for qualified teachers in high demand content areas. A program located in the South was selected due to a past history of discrimination within the region. Another rationale for site selection was due to the school system supported by the program; the school system has a diverse population of students and

multiple under-resourced schools. Additionally, there was ease of access to the selected program.

Participant Selection.

Criterion sampling was utilized for the purposes of selecting participants for the study. Patton (2002) states, “criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p. 238). For the purposes of this study, participants were selected based on select criterion. First, participants must have completed the alternative certification program in 2013. Second, participants must have been assigned by the alternative certification program to teach within a school system. Finally, participants must have accepted the teaching assignment from the alternative certification program. Criterion sampling was ideal for this study because the study produced vast amounts of data. The criterion sampling method is advantageous when researchers are interested in pinpointing and comprehending data-intensive cases (Patton, 1990). Criterion sampling was optimal for this study.

The sampling criterion was emailed to the Director of the alternative certification program. After receiving the names of the program completers who met the requirements, six participants were randomly selected from the accessible population of program completers. The number of participants was chosen based on data saturation. Data saturation occurs when the researcher is no longer uncovering new information from the data (Saumure & Given, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Because the data was simultaneously collected and analyzed, the saturation point was discovered during the data collection phase of the study. Following the participant selection process, the selected candidates were contacted via email (Appendix B) the selected candidates via email (Appendix B) to solicit their participation in the study. A follow-up email was sent two weeks after the initial email to all selected participants who did not respond to the initial email request.

Data Analysis

Rossmann and Rallis (2012) described thick description as the foundation of analysis and interpretation. “Thick description details physical surroundings, time and place, actions, events, words, people and interactions on the scene”(p. 269). According to Denzin (1989),

A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, and emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. The thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 83)

It was imperative for this case study to accurately describe the alternative teacher certification program context in which the study participants received their certification. The principal focus of this study was the 2013 alternative certification program completers certified within a program in the southern region of the United States. Therefore, thick description of the program’s climate and environment was provided during the collection and analysis of the data.

Simultaneous data collection and analysis was conducted with the intention of gathering emergent themes throughout the data collection and analysis process. Merriam (1998) believes, “data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (p.162). During this case study, the researcher analyzed the collected data using applied thematic analysis. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) explained, applied thematic analysis identifies key themes in text and transforms those themes into codes that are aggregated in a codebook. Additionally, Boyatzis (1998) noted how thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use various sources of information in a systematic manner that increases researcher ability to accurately understand and interpret observations about people, events, situations, and organizations. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) noted that because ensuring the credibility of findings within qualitative research is of the utmost importance,

applied thematic analysis uses systematicity and visibility of methods and procedures to achieve a credible outcome. The data was analyzed by reviewing the transcribed interviews of each participant and the 2013 program evaluation summary. Each interview was decoded to decipher the meanings of each statement. Then encoding was done determining the appropriate code. Because of the extensive amount of data, the same codes were repeated throughout the analysis process helping the themes and patterns to emerge.

For the purposes of this study, Shulman's (1987) Model of Teacher Knowledge Base served as the categories for this study in addition to Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) theory of personal practical knowledge. Merriam (1998) posits when creating categories, each category should be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent. The data was inductively analyzed allowing patterns and themes to emerge. Once emergent themes appeared, the data was categorized based on Shulman's (1987) and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) frameworks for teacher knowledge base to illuminate the information. Merriam (1998) believes when creating categories, each category should be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent. After categorizing the themes, the raw data supplied by study participants during interviews was coded along with the program evaluation documents.

Trustworthiness

Rossmann and Rallis (2012) posit there are three interrelated sets of standards that underlie the trustworthiness of a research project:

First, was the study conducted according to norms for acceptable and competent research practice? Second, was the study conducted in ways that honor participants – was conducted ethically? Third, was the researcher sensitive to the politics of the topic and setting? (p. 60)

This study met the standards of acceptable and competent research as provided by the National Research Council. A significant research question was researched which was how

prepared to teach did program completers feel as it relates to content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and personal practical knowledge. An empirical investigation was directly conducted of the research question the study explored utilizing qualitative methodology. Rossman and Rallis state, “as a form of systematic inquiry that is deliberate, intentional and transparent, qualitative research meets these standards” (p. 61). The study had a connection to the categories provided in Shulman’s (1987) Model of Teacher Knowledge in addition to Connelly and Clandinin’s (1988) personal practical knowledge. These five categories were selected because they are the building blocks of numerous theoretical models including: Banks (1999) Model of Subject Knowledge and Cox (2003) Model of Teacher Knowledge. Additionally, the Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) (2011) created a *Model of Core Teaching Standards* which utilizes the first four categories within Shulman’s (1987) *Model of Teacher Knowledge*. The InTASC (2011) Standards are supported by 19 national education organizations including Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

The research question was directly investigated through qualitative methods including a semi-structured interview, and the study can be replicated. The aforementioned study characteristics provide confirmation of the rigor of the study. Merriam (1998) posited for studies to have an impact on either educational practice or theory, the study must be conducted rigorously. To enhance the rigor of this study, member checks were utilized, triangulation and a peer debriefer. Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated, “as a form of systematic inquiry that is deliberate, intentional and transparent, qualitative research meets these standards” (p. 61). To

ensure ethical research, an empirical investigation was directly conducted of the research question the study explored utilizing qualitative methodology.

Member Checks.

To ensure participant validation, emerging discoveries were taken back to the study participants. The participants were emailed the completed transcripts from their interviews. Member checks were conducted to give the participants the opportunity to elaborate, correct, extend or dispute their responses (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The member checks augmented the credibility and internal validity of the study. Member checks were conducted via email and the interview contents were confirmed by the study participants to be accurate.

Triangulation.

To enhance the credibility and rigor of the study, triangulation was utilized. To achieve triangulation, various sources of data were used. By utilizing multiple sources of data, the researcher was better suited to build the big picture of the topic being investigated (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). For the purposes of this study, triangulation was achieved through a semi-structured interview, member checks, and program evaluation data provided by all 2013 program completers. The interview protocol was composed of open-ended questions based on the findings presented in the literature (Appendix A). Interviews were conducted with the study participants until data saturation is achieved and no new emerging themes appear. Member checks were conducted by delivering emerging findings to study participants via transcripts to gather additional data from the study participants. Finally, the completed program evaluation survey data completed by 2013 program completers was data mined. The emerging findings from the data mine were compared to the emerging themes uncovered from study participant interviews for the purposes of triangulation.

Peer Debriefing.

To enhance the rigorousness of the study, a peer debriefer was utilized (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The peer debriefer served as the intellectual overseer. The peer debriefing sessions were held weekly during the data collection and analyzing portions of the study. Because the researcher simultaneously collected data and analyzed the data, the peer debriefing sessions were concurrent with the data collection process. The peer debriefer provided an impartial critique of the data provided by the researcher.

The researcher and peer debriefer met to determine when data saturation was achieved. The peer debriefer reviewed the final report and general methodology for the case study. Throughout the peer debriefing process, the peer debriefer met with the researcher to detect if there were any biases or assumptions being made by the researcher. Additionally, the peer debriefer tried to detect any general errors in the data being analyzed by the researcher. The study committee chair served as the peer debriefer for this case study.

Role of the Researcher

As a former program participant within an alternative certification program, I was personally vested in this research. As a young child in Kindergarten, I can recall being in an underserved school being taught by a Caucasian teacher because my mother was an avid volunteer in the school. She wanted me to get the experience of being in an urban school. I remember being accused of stealing a notepad from the classroom, when actually it was a Caucasian student who took the notepad. That incident clouded the remainder of my kindergarten year. By first grade, I transferred schools and had an African American teacher. It was a turning point in my educational lifecycle. She understood me, and pushed me to do more and excel. I was so motivated and inspired by her that I actually wanted to grow up and be just like her. I wanted to become a teacher. I never again had another African American teacher

during my elementary school years. Although my favorite teacher was my fourth grade teacher, a Caucasian woman with a heart of gold, my first grade experience forever changed my perception of what it meant to teach and who could teach in classrooms.

Additionally, as an African American female and mother of an African American adolescent, I was deeply invested in the quality of the education that all students receive especially diverse students. I no longer have aspirations to become a teacher. My interest in this research is grounded in the philosophy of and need for equity of the educational process and the quality of teachers being placed in America's classrooms, particularly those who participated in an alternative teacher certification program.

Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board Approval

Permission for the study was requested and received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University. The approved application can be found in Appendix D.

Summary

This chapter outlined the systematic methods utilized to conduct this qualitative case study. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. The overarching research question for the study was presented which is how prepared to teach did program completers feel as it related to content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge. Additionally, data collection and analysis procedures were discussed.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This case study was designed to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge. The research question addressed was upon completion of the alternative teacher certification program, how prepared to teach did program completers feel as it relates to (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge, and (e) personal practical knowledge? This research question served as the basis for the case study.

Interviews were the primary instrument of investigation. Six alternatively certified teachers were interviewed. These participants reflected on the process of becoming a certified teacher. The program completers provided insights into their preparation and the certification program they chose to provide their training. These insights provided crucial data regarding their feelings of preparedness to teach all students who enter into their classrooms.

Participant Demographic Profiles

This section details the demographic profiles of the case study participants. It provides background information for each of the case study participants. These study participants (Table 4.1) had differing demographic profiles. Three study participants were African American and three were Caucasian. Five of the participants were female and one was a male. Two of the participants taught third grade. The other participants taught Special Education, kindergarten, second grade or fifth grade. Four of the program completers had at least one Master's degree, and two of the completers had Bachelor's degrees. Two of the participants were previously in the military, while the other participants came from varied prior occupations.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profiles

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	Marital Status	Highest Level of Education Achieved	Prior Occupation	Grade Level Taught
Kelsey	Caucasian	Female	Single	Bachelor's	Para-professional	Special Education
Katie	African American	Female	Single	Master's	AmeriCorp	Kindergarten
Katrina	African American	Female	Married	Two Master's	Computer operator, Marine	Fifth Grade
Keith	Caucasian	Male	Single	Master's	Computer Operator, Marine	Third Grade
Kimberly	Caucasian	Female	Married	Bachelor's	Army, Federal Probations	Second Grade
Khloe	African American	Female	Married	Master's	Finance for State Government	Third Grade

The demographic profile of each of the participants was important to acquire because it provides important background information for each participant. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2005) found female educators embraced caring as an attribute to be advocates for minority and oppressed groups and viewed development as a key human activity. Five of the six study participants were female. Rosenberg and Sindelar found that alternative teacher certification programs tend to attract more males, minorities, and individuals who have had business or

military experience. One of the study participants was male meaning approximately 17% of the study participants were male and 83% were female. Two of the study participants (33%) had military backgrounds. This background information directly related to the literature regarding the backgrounds of alternative certification program completers. This information is significant because it provides firsthand data regarding alternative certification program completers.

Participant Motivations

This section details the participant motivations. It provides the participants reasoning for becoming a teacher and for entering the alternative certification program (Table 4.2). Each participant provided their motivations for becoming a teacher and for entering the program. The participant responses varied. There were similarities and differences in the responses. Two of the six participants (33%) indicated a desire to help students and to have a greater impact on the next generation as their primary motivation. The participant rationales for entering the alternative certification program ranged from the cost of certification to the duration of the program. Four of the six (67%) study participants indicated not having to return to college or university and the timeframe of the program as their primary motivations for entering the alternative certification program.

Table 4.2 Participant Motivations

Pseudonym	Reasons for Becoming a Teacher	Reasons for Entering the Program
Kelsey	After being a Para, realized the desire to work with children	Single mother who couldn't attend a university without receiving a paycheck, financially it worked better
Katie	The need for teachers in public schools, wanted to have a bigger impact	Didn't want to go back to a university and take the required courses, expedited the process to certification
Keith	Always interested in teaching, wanted to teach at collegiate level but required too much additional schooling, in heart was always a teacher	Need a job, seemed like the easiest way, didn't want wait years to become a teacher
Katrina	Job stability, wanting to help students acquire fundamental skills before it's too late	No desire to return to college, ability to teach locally, sister went through alternative certification with another program
Kimberly	It was a good fit for my needs, went to school for child and family sciences	Design of program, fit schedule, location, guaranteed placement, no upfront money
Khloe	To help students achieve their goals To help this generation of students	Cheaper, didn't have to enroll in college, certification time

Participant District, School and Program Descriptions

This section details the participant descriptions of the school district, school, and alternative certification program. Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul and Gordon (2006) found the categorization teachers utilize such as “urban” to describe students of color may indicate their unconscious bias towards students they teach.

Each participant provided their personal descriptions of their school district, school and of the alternative certification program they completed. Five of the six (83%) study participants described both their school district and school as urban. Additionally, all six participants stated both their school district and schools were over 95% African American. This description directly correlates to the literature because the teachers who utilized urban as a description of their school and school district also described the school as predominantly African American.

In addition to the depictions of the school and school district, a common description of the alternative certification program was intense and exhaustive (Table 4.3). All of the study participants mentioned the shortened duration of the training. The study participants also pointed out how the shortened timeframe intensified instruction and training from the alternative certification program. All of the participants mentioned a prior awareness of both the duration and intense nature of the program because the alternative program’s staff provided a realistic program overview to help prepare the participants for the challenges they would face during the program.

Table 4.3 Participant District, School, and Program Descriptions

Pseudonym	School District Description	School Description	Description of Certification Program
Kelsey	Urban school district	100% African American, only 4 White teachers in the school, different from what I was used to	The people who run the program are great, good for regular education teachers
Katie	The majority of the school population are minorities such as Blacks, Latinos, Hispanics, and students of other ethnicities	We have a mix of students, the majority of the students are Black, caring school, teachers care about the students, family environment	Wonderful, gave opportunity to shadow other teachers or have teachers mentor us, let us teach while getting certification, gave Level 1 certification for teaching, didn't incur expenses to become teacher
Keith	The major school district in the area, suffered since integration, a lot of the White population send their students to private schools, it's pretty much inner city type of school district, it has it's hard times	Really great school, new, 7 computers in my room, receives Federal funds, we never really want for anything, there's 1 White student, only have White students if there's an interracial marriage	Fantastic, throws a lot at you, intensive, but you get a lot of attention and support
Katrina	Urban school district, about 44,000 students in the district, majority minority, majority of White students in private schools, or systems that broke off from district	Pre-K through 5 th , majority African American, 2% Asian population because of self-contained gifted classes, overall a good school	Intense, very intense, we were taught educational theory, observed teachers, then had a period to teach alone
Kimberly	Urban school district, lots of Title 1 students	Low socio-economic status, not a lot of parental support	Great, you got to practice and learn simultaneously
Khloe	For the most part it's urban	Grades 1-5, 99.9% African American, 1 Hispanic	Good quality program, shows all aspects of teaching, difficult due to duration, worth the 6 weeks because it prepares you

Presentation of Findings

The following section presents the emergent themes associated with the interviews and 2013 program evaluation data. The first section is divided according to emergent themes based on participant interviews. The second section presents an analysis of the program evaluation survey results provided by the program.

The study participants were asked to reflect on their pathway to teacher certification as it relates to (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge, and (e) personal practical knowledge. The themes that emerged from the study were (a) classroom management, (b) differentiation, (c) building a connection, (d) a realistic teaching and learning environment for the program, and (e) modeling for the students. These themes directly reflected the five categories of teacher knowledge base used as the theoretical framework for this case study. Classroom management skills are encompassed within pedagogical knowledge. Differentiation is related to curricular knowledge. Building the connection is encompassed in pedagogical content knowledge. The realistic teaching and learning environment presented by the alternative certification program is encompassed in personal practical knowledge. Modeling is related to content knowledge. The case study participants were asked questions from an interview protocol divided into the five teacher knowledge bases described in the theoretical framework. This may have been the rationale for why the emergent themes fit into those pre-determined categories. The first emergent theme was classroom management skills.

Theme 1: Pedagogical Knowledge - Classroom Management Skills

It became clear as the teachers were interviewed that how they managed their classrooms was a major concern during the early days of their teaching. Classroom management was a recurring topic of discussion and emerged as a key theme within the research. For the teachers

who had difficulty with their classroom management skills, their perception of preparedness and teaching confidence was reduced. Conversely, the teachers who felt confident in their classroom management skills described being better suited to make adjustments as necessary for the growth and development of their students.

Kelsey is a single, Caucasian, female teacher. She taught Special Education students at a school she characterized as urban and predominantly African American students. Because of the autistic and special needs nature of her students, she considered a classroom of three to be a relatively large classroom. She said:

I thought I was prepared, but that was because I started off with one student. A great student! A great parent, all I had to do was just pick up the phone and there was support. Then I had a student move in my classroom from another autistic classroom. He was very aggressive physically, and like would tear up my room. I was not prepared for that. That was when I almost quit. Then I got another student and had no help. They were like you don't need a Para. You only have two kids! Then on top of that, they moved in another student who was also deaf and was a runner. So, like I had this child running out of the classroom. I have to run and chase and the whole time, hoping, oh I hope the aggressive one doesn't beat up the other student. I don't know if anything would have prepared me for that.

She described why classroom management is important yet difficult to acquire during alternative certification. She stated:

For my classroom, I feel like behavior is something you really have to have under control because if your children can't sit down and work, they can't learn. And so with Autism, there are so many characteristics of that from the lights are too bright, to too much noise. If somebody has a certain chair and somebody else sits in that chair, the student can't continue because it's out of the norm. So really, just the behavior is so important and knowing what ritualistic behavior you have to adhere to when you have to push them to do different. You know to get them out of their box, and that's not just something you can learn in six weeks.

Keith is a single, Caucasian, male teacher. He is a former US Marine and computer operator. Keith expressed the need for additional preparation regarding classroom management skills because of the large class he was tasked with teaching. In contrast to Kelsey whose

classroom had three Special Education students during her first year of teaching, Keith had nearly 30 students during his first year of teaching including two Special Education students who would come to his class for an hour of inclusion. When discussing one of the special needs students he experienced, Keith reminisced:

But I remember particularly I had a student who was a challenge. At one point, I didn't know about medication and all that sort of stuff. Obviously he had problems. I can remember he would always run around the room. My very second day as a teacher, as he's running around the room in circles, he stops and looks up at me and just says 'F you' but he didn't say 'F,' and that was sort of an eye-opening experience. I came to like him, but it was very trying. I went back and told the program that they need to tell teachers what they are going to experience. I didn't tell them that story, but the teachers need to know to go in with your eyes open. It will be very challenging but also very rewarding.

Regarding classroom management, he said:

Where it took more preparation was in classroom management. That summer of training, you do teach summer school, but that's a different animal than a regular classroom. I had a big classroom my first year, with the addition of Special Ed, I had almost 30 students and that's a big class! Of course I had an assistant in there, so there were two of us. The classroom management techniques took me a while to get a grip on.

Katrina is a married, African American, female teacher. She has two Master's degrees and prior to entering the program served in the Army and worked for Federal Probations. Kelsey had a somewhat different experience regarding classroom management. She remembered crying her upon completion of her first day of teaching. She recalled:

You may feel like you bring a wealth of experience from your prior job and these are kids, and I'm an adult, but I know my first day of teaching, I came home, and I cried. I told my husband, I don't think I want to do this. They always tell you read Harry Wong. Listen to what Harry Wong said, but I'm like, Harry Wong is not where I am!

Additionally, she exclaimed:

Classroom management was the biggest thing for me my first year! With my military background and having a degree in criminal justice, it wasn't that tough! For me, it wasn't, but there were a lot of teachers in my cohort, who couldn't. We lost like 2 or 3 teachers because they were not good with classroom management. They would spend all night making these wonderful lesson plans, but they did not have the classroom management skills. I think that had a lot to do with where you were placed in the

summer. If you were placed at a pretty good school, that didn't have management problems, then you went in with a false sense of security like "Oh yeah, I have this! I know what I'm doing!" A lot of times you come up with these little cute rules or consequences and those kids are looking at you like WHATEVER!

Khloe is a married, African American, female teacher. She was a substitute teacher prior to entering the program. She stressed the emphasis the alternative certification program placed on classroom management. She said:

They taught me multiple strategies to use in the classroom as far as classroom management. As far as classroom management, I use my pocket chart. I try not to embarrass a child, so not just always calling a student out because they tend to shut down when you do that.

Pedagogical Knowledge: Classroom Management Summary.

Classroom management skills emerged as a key skill classroom teachers must acquire. If the classroom is not managed properly, the students will suffer academically. Overall, the study participants believed the program attempted to equip them with tools to successfully manage their classrooms. Even with the support of the program, the majority of the teachers found classroom management to be a challenge in which they had to learn to overcome with time and experience.

Pedagogical knowledge which incorporates classroom management is the knowledge of how to teach within a content area. It encompasses the broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter (Shulman, 1987). Shulman (1986) believes pedagogical knowledge goes beyond knowledge of subject matter to the dimension of subject matter teaching. The study findings indicate the alternative certification participants lacked sufficient pedagogical knowledge related to classroom management. Although the findings did indicate the teachers felt excessively prepared in relation to lesson planning. By not being adequately prepared to manage their classrooms, the teachers could have faced added pressures related to implementing their lesson plans. Because

pedagogical knowledge extends beyond subject matter for teaching, it is important for teachers to understand how to successfully manage their classrooms to ensure they are able to impart knowledge to all students who enter their classrooms.

Theme 2: Curricular Knowledge - Differentiation of Students and Instruction

When describing their self-perceived preparedness to teach, differentiation of students and instruction emerged as a theme. Many of the teachers felt to fully be feel prepared they need to know more regarding differentiating students and instruction. They quickly learned that not all of their students were on the same level and their instruction would need to be modified to meet the needs of the students.

Katie is a single, African American teacher. She has a Master's degree and previously worked for AmeriCorp. She felt very prepared to teach with the exception of differentiation.

She explained:

I felt very prepared to teach except I needed to know about differentiation. How to group the kids with small groupings, but as far as the content knowledge, I wasn't aware of how to do that at that time because I practice taught in another grade.

Keith also had issues regarding differentiation and added, "Well, I felt adequate. I know there's a lot of differentiation involved. I'm more prepared now than I was then because I've had more time. At the time I felt adequate. I give myself a "B" minus." Katrina provided additional insight into her struggle with differentiation. She detailed the challenges she faced:

So with those 26 boys I taught, I had like five to six out of the group who were two years behind. So, going into a 5th grade classroom, I had a couple of 12 year olds. These boys, they gave me...! They were a handful! Two to three weeks into school, they had already removed them out of the classroom. They took like two or three of them out and sent them to an alternative school. I also had two or three students who were only in the class 20% of the time and in the resource class 80% of the time. At that point, I didn't feel like I was experienced enough to help them or to be able to differentiate. School was hard! I felt like I was just trying to keep my head up above water. I wasn't experienced enough, and I didn't have enough knowledge to be able to differentiate and take the high to higher or raise the low. My main target was actually just the middle group. Differentiation was

the hardest thing for me! I signed up for so many professional development classes to be able to differentiate instruction.

Additionally, Khloe learned how to differentiate instruction through the alternative certification program. She believed the program equipped her with the tools needed for differentiation. She stated, “I think I was very prepared because the program teaches you that you have to teach at different levels. You have to differentiate your instruction. It’s not just based on those high students. You also have to implement something for low, and we had to dig deep into data. It really prepared me to teach a variety of different students.”

Curricular Knowledge: Differentiation of Students and Instruction Summary.

The next theme to emerge within the case study was the differentiation of students and instruction. Although the study participants agreed the program attempted to enhance their skills within this area, five of the six of the participants struggled with differentiation. Based on the findings, differentiation is the ability to group students by their current levels of understanding of subject matter. This can be a difficult task because a student could fully grasp one concept while simultaneously not comprehending another concept. The majority of the teachers agreed that the skill is enhanced with time and trial and error.

Curricular knowledge which incorporates differentiation of students and instruction is the knowledge of what should be taught to a particular group of students. It encompasses the knowledge of the full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics. Additionally, it is knowledge of the variety of instructional material available in relation to those programs (Shulman, 1986). The study findings indicate the alternative certification participants lacked adequate curricular knowledge as it relates to differentiation of students and instructions upon completion of the alternative certification program. Although the program attempted to enhance these skills within their program participants, the participants were not

confident in their abilities with this skill initially following the completion of the program. To have sufficient curricular knowledge, the teachers need an awareness of the level of the students being taught and an understanding of the learning potential of the students being taught. Because the alternatively certified teachers were lacking in curricular knowledge upon completion of the program, they were not fully prepared to provide a quality learning experience to their students. The teachers were not fully aware of the levels of their students or of the potential of their newly acquired students.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Content Knowledge - Building the Connection

While conducting the interviews with the teachers, it became apparent that building a connection with students is an important component within the educational process. Khloe described the importance of building the connection:

I felt like it was very important because in my classroom, you have to connect your lesson so they can connect to it. If I'm speaking over their heads, they're like, 'What are you talking about?' You have to connect it to their lifestyles or just make it relate to them or their culture. If you have a lot of boys you can talk about sports or dance. It's important to just implement things they know about.

Similarly, Kimberly, a married, Caucasian, female teacher expressed the importance of building a connection with students. Kimberly has an undergraduate degree in Child and Family Science. She said:

It was different for me because I had never been in a public school setting, and I went to a private school that was predominantly White. It was more of a challenge for me to help some of the students. I'll never forget one day in class we were talking about it must have been Martin Luther King Day, and we were talking about how he was a wonderful person and did all these great things. Then some who didn't appreciate what they were doing and the movement killed him. And the students really focused on well a White person shot him, and that's sad and didn't a White person shoot him that's terrible! And I'll never forget one of the little girls goes but Ms. Kimberly you're White, and we love you! It was just sort of like that moment where they're like well, okay, yeah. We are not different. It doesn't matter. To me that was so telling like I'm here with you and for you and I'm not different, I just look different.

Additionally, Katrina added insight into building a connection for the students. She believed the diversity of the students impacted how the connection was built with lessons. She detailed:

I think that was where a lot of our problems came. The children didn't understand. They were like I don't understand the terminology you're using. The stories we're reading were above their level. So that was where a lot of the problems came in. And then I did have a population of kids that had already failed. Some had already failed 4th grade twice. Once you fail 4th grade twice, you're actually just socially promoted to the 5th grade. In the school district, if you fail the LEAP test four times, you also socially promoted.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Building the Connection Summary.

Building the connection was another theme that emerged from the case study. During the interviews, it elicited the most passion from the participants. All of the teachers believed and stressed the importance of building a connection with the students. It helps the students to comprehend the lesson and also assist in providing a context for the student to grasp key concepts. While each teacher had varying forms or methods for building the connection, they all believed it is an important part of teaching.

Pedagogical content knowledge which incorporates building the connection is how teachers reinvent teaching content and transform student learning. Shulman believed, "it represents the blending of pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). The study findings indicate the alternative certification participants possessed adequate pedagogical content knowledge related to building the connection. Because the teachers have the ability to transform their teaching knowledge into the contents of their instruction, they are better suited to build a connection with their students and to link the instructional content presented to the student's personal experiences.

Theme 4: Personal Practical Knowledge - Realistic Teaching/Learning Environment

The learning and teaching environment created by the alternative program leaders was a key theme that emerged from the participant interviews. All of the teachers while describing the program and their preparedness to teach students mentioned the learning environment of the program. The teachers believe there was a need for a realistic preview whether through practice teaching or observation of what they would face in the classroom.

Kelsey reasoned:

Teaching your first year is hard, like just mentally hard! I think the program was trying to make us tough. They really do target on diversity and the achievement gap. That's what you're dealing with. You're going to have parents who don't care if their kids go to college. They don't care if they do their homework. They care about, and I'm not trying to, well, I don't want to say it like I'm better because I've been there and I've done that. Let me tell you! You're just trying to make it day by day. We had a whole thing about race, and the thing about it is the people who went through the program, the majority of them were White people, and they like to tiptoe. They don't like to say anything because they don't want to appear racist or offend anybody, and I'm just like you better get real because this is what you're going into! People aren't going to like you because you're White. That's just life! The program beat it into our heads the difference in what we were going into.

Katie felt the program provided a realistic overview and practice teaching. She discussed how the program prepared her for teaching in a diverse environment. Katie stated:

I felt very prepared to teach after finishing up the certification program because of my practice teaching. We taught all types of students from different backgrounds. We dealt with difficult students as well as the students that listened as well as the really low students academically. So, I felt very prepared having been thrown in there for the couple of months that I had. I felt very prepared to teach any type of student.

Katrina detailed how she believes the program should realistically prepare their program candidates for teaching. She believed:

Alternative certification can be a double-edged sword. I think because you have a limited time to get prepared. If it were me, I would only have them observe inner city schools. You really need to go to the grunt schools to observe what you will actually face. A lot of the teachers observe where they would like to be placed instead of where they will likely be placed. It's fine to go to a magnet school or to gifted, but you will not be placed there. You need to go and get the real experience.

Personal Practical Knowledge: Realistic Teaching/Learning Environment Summary.

The study participants were overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the alternative certification program they completed. All of the participants agreed the program tried to provide them with a realistic representation of the teaching environment they would face. By providing a realistic overview and practice experience, the program helped to equip the teachers with the tools necessary to successfully facilitate student learning and achievement.

Personal practical knowledge is the merger of content knowledge and diverse life experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) found that this intersection has the ability to enhance the classroom and learning experiences of students. The study findings indicate the alternative certification participants possessed personal practical knowledge. This self-awareness helped the beginner teachers to process and transform the lessons taught to them during their participation in the alternative certification program. Because the teachers came from various backgrounds and had differing experiences, it was important that the alternative certification program provided a realistic overview and teaching practice so that each teacher could transform their personal experiences to fully provide a quality education to each student who enters their classrooms.

Theme 5: Content Knowledge - Modeling for Students

The final theme to emerge from the case study research was modeling for students. The “I do, we do, you do” concept was prevalent during multiple participant interviews. The participants discussed the importance of modeling for students and the tools they used to assist in this key teaching concept. In addition to the “I do, we do, you,” the SLANT method was also explained. Kelsey elaborated how she utilizes the concept of modeling within the confines of her classroom:

Then I do like the ‘I do’ where I’m teaching you. I’m modeling how to do it. Then ‘we do’ because it’s hard to get my children to work two on two. It’s basically me helping you and then ‘you do’ but by yourself. And then I use that, them doing it by themselves to judge how well they are with understanding the concept. That’s the model I follow for the students.

Kimberly uses the same model as Kelsey and was taught the technique by the program. She discussed how she utilizes the same model within her classroom:

The hook really gets them motivated and excited to learn about it. Then you model it, and you try different engagement strategies like the ‘I do, you do, we do’ type of thing. So you do model, then you practice and hopefully you’re able to send them on their way to do it by themselves. Then you have to have your backup plan in case they didn’t get it like that.

In addition to discussing the actual models used within teaching, Khloe discussed how the program’s seminars helped her with modeling for her students. She explained:

I use SLANT in my classroom. It’s where they have to sit up straight, listen, ask and answer questions, nod their heads, and track the speaker. And that really works! We attended weekend seminars. The weekend seminars were based on a book called *Teach Like a Champion*.

Content Knowledge: Modeling for Students Summary.

The final theme that emerged from the case study was modeling for students. Modeling for students encompasses showing students how to apply or approach a lesson. All of the teachers stated the program provided them with tools to model instruction for children. The book, *Teach Like a Champion* was mentioned by three of the six participants. Modeling helped to ensure that all students are provided with tools to enable them to grasp necessary concepts.

Content knowledge which could incorporate modeling for students is the knowledge teachers have of the content area they teach. It encompasses both substantive and syntactic structures. Substantive structures include the organization of basic principles, laws, and concepts within a discipline, while syntactic structures are the process through which new knowledge is generated (Shulman, 1986). Shulman (1986) believed, “the syntactic structure of a discipline is

the set of ways in which truth or falsehood, validity or invalidity, are established” (p.9).

Additionally, Shulman (1986) suggested to fully execute content knowledge, teachers must be able to explain or provide a rationale for content. The study findings indicate the alternative certification participants possessed adequate content knowledge related to modeling lesson content for students. Because the alternative certification completers possessed content knowledge as novice teachers, they were better suited to help the students generate new knowledge of the subject matter being presented.

Program Evaluation Analysis

The following section presents an analysis of the 2013 program evaluation results supplied by the alternative certification program. There were five domains identified by the program for the end of year survey (1) overall satisfaction, (2) support, (3) professional development, and (4) participants’ perceived teaching progress. Items from the survey were assigned to each domain.

The first domain, overall satisfaction, consisted of seven statements. This domain focused on the participants’ overall satisfaction with the alternative certification program. Overall, sixty-seven percent (67%) of the respondents were favorable towards the program indicating positive attitudes toward the program and a high likelihood of recommending the program. These findings were harmonious with the findings of the participant interview which indicated positive feelings toward the alternative certification program.

The second domain, support, consisted of four statements. This domain concentrated on the perceived support received from the program. One hundred percent (100%) of the respondents felt they received sufficient support from their seminar leader. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the respondents believed they received sufficient support from the faculty and staff of the program. These results were supportive of the findings of the case study. All participants

interviewed felt supported by the alternative certification program leaders and staff. This support aided in their perceived teaching confidence.

The third domain, professional development, consisted of four statements. This domain focused on the perceived professional development received from the program. This domain's results were not as favorable as other domains. These results support the findings of the case study in which the participants did not feel sufficiently prepared regarding classroom management and differentiation of students and instruction. Only fifty percent (50%) of the respondents felt they received sufficient professional development from the program. Only thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents felt the professional development offered through the program were high quality. Additionally, only seventeen percent (17%) of the respondents felt the professional development activities offered by the program addressed their needs as a new teacher. The case study findings revealed a need for additional support regarding pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge from the alternative certification program.

The fourth domain, participants' perceived teaching progress, consisted of eleven statements. This domain focused on the perceived teaching progress as a result of participating in the program. The results were not as favorable within this domain. Only twenty percent (20%) of the respondents felt highly favorable regarding being able to establish clear, measurable academic goals for students. Thirty-three percent (33%) felt highly favorable regarding planning an instructional program around academic goals, setting goals based on high expectations for students, and investing and motivating students to work hard to achieve goals. These results supported the findings of the case study where participants did not feel prepared to differentiate student learning. There was a need for additional preparation regarding grouping students and advancing the learning of all students within the classroom. The case study findings revealed a

need for additional support regarding pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge from the alternative certification program.

Overall, the program evaluation lacked sufficient content to fully measure the true effectiveness of the program. Kirkpatrick (2006) believed there were four levels of program evaluation, reaction, learning, behavior and results. None of the levels should be circumvented because each level provides significant information related to the program being evaluated. The data provided by the program only supports the initial level of evaluation proposed by Kirkpatrick (2006). The data supplied the reactions of the program completers upon completion of the alternative certification program. It did not provide information regarding how the knowledge of the participants increased (Level 2) which could have been accomplished through the usage of a pre and post assessment. Additionally, it did not provide information regarding changes in behavior (Level 3) or the results (Level 4) achieved by participating in the program. The additional information relating to levels three and four would require information from the schools and possibly the district where the teachers were placed.

Summary

This chapter included an analysis of the data collected during the case study. It detailed the findings of the research conducted. The demographic profiles using the chosen pseudonym of study participants were presented along with their motivations for teaching and entering the program. The chapter also details the study participants' descriptions of their school district, school, and alternative certification program. Additionally, the five emergent themes that developed through the data were discussed. Supporting statements from the participants' narratives were utilized to best explain each theme.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the case study and to present discussions and conclusions drawn from the findings in Chapter IV. Additionally, recommendations for further study are made and a discussion of the implications of alternative teacher certification for practice and policy are presented.

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration focused on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and personal practical knowledge.

With the rapidly growing number of teachers entering the teaching profession through alternative certification routes, this research sought to explore feelings of preparedness of program completers. In recent years, the number of new hires from alternative certification programs has steadily increased with four out of ten new hires coming from these routes (Feistritzer, 2011). As described in Chapter 1, this study focused on the following research question: Upon completion of the alternative certification program, how prepared to teach did program completers feel as it relates to (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge, and (e) personal practical knowledge?

Based on the inquiry and analysis from the research question, the following conclusions were drawn by the researcher. First, although most participants felt very prepared to teach upon completion of the program, the duration of the program limited the teachers' ability to acquire important classroom management skills needed to teach all students who enter the classroom. Specifically, it hindered the teachers' ability to meet the challenges of managing a classroom filled with marginalized students who may be grade levels behind in their education. Second, the

teachers utilized pedagogical theories and instructional practices, although they did not know the specific names for the theories being utilized. This lack of specific theoretical knowledge did not hamper their ability to effectively utilize the theories within a real-world context. Finally, teachers face a different set of challenges when dealing with students from urban schools. To be successful, teachers must be exposed to a realistic preview of what to expect within those classrooms.

Relation to Theoretical Framework

Shulman (1987) theorized that teachers must be able to reinvent their acquired knowledge by using various pedagogical methods. He introduced the Model of Teacher Knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) added personal practical knowledge to the teacher knowledge base. This knowledge takes into account a teacher's prior experiences which filters how the teachers transform knowledge. The protocol questions utilized to interview case study participants was based on the framework of Shulman (1987), Connelly and Clandinin (1988). As a result, the themes that emerged during the findings were based on Shulman's Model of Teacher Knowledge and Connelly and Clandinin's theory of Personal Practical Knowledge.

Implications

This study has several implications for the advancement of teachers within the teaching profession. Additionally, it has implications for the students who receive instruction from teachers certified through alternative pathways. It also has implications for the alternative certification programs that prepare the teachers, the candidates who will follow them into the profession, and the researchers who will choose to study those teachers. This study provides a useful contribution to the understanding of both how to prepare teachers to teach in diverse and urban classrooms and provides insight into the unique challenges faced when teaching marginalized students.

Implication for Theory.

Based on the findings of the case study, there is need for a theory that merges both pedagogical knowledge and personal practical knowledge. Teachers need to have an awareness of how to transition their content, pedagogical knowledge and personal practical knowledge into actual student knowledge. This theory would be the merger of Shulman (1987) and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) teacher knowledge bases. Shulman's (1987) *Model of Teacher Knowledge Bases* does not take into account the teacher's prior experiences and how those experiences help the teacher to transform knowledge. Additionally, Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) *Theory of Personal Practical Knowledge* considers the prior experiences of the teacher and how those prior experiences impact the present and future for the teacher. By bridging the two frameworks, the quality of teacher preparation within alternative certification programs could be enhanced.

Implication for Practice.

Implications that can be drawn from this case study relate to the need for extensive cultural awareness training and teaching practice prior to entering low-performing, urban schools filled with diverse, marginalized students. Specifically, this training should be geared towards African American students because the finding from this case study indicate that more than 90% of the students being taught within the urban, southern region are African American. It is important that teachers are aware and trained regarding how to work with African American students. The findings presented in this case study along with related literature could be used to revamp curricula within alternative certification programs. This could be accomplished by ensuring the program curriculum is built with sufficient time dedicated to experiential and hands on practice within environmental settings consistent with the settings where the participants will be placed upon completion of the program. In addition to the traditional pedagogical content

included within alternative certification programs, it is important to factor in how a teacher's personal experiences help to construct how they build, receive and transform knowledge. Alternative certification program leaders should be encouraged to provide candidates with realistic narratives of prior program completers. By providing the narratives to candidates, teaching candidates will be provided with realistic overviews of the classroom and are better suited to meet the expectation of providing a quality education to all students regardless of what school they are placed.

Another implication of this study concerns under-represented students. To improve the performance of these marginalized students, studies should be completed to determine the best methods to build a connection with under-represented students. Alternatively certified teachers are being tasked with teaching marginalized students. Additional research is needed to determine how alternatively certified teachers can be better equipped to build a connection with marginalized students to augment their performance.

Implication for Research.

A research implication drawn from this study is the need for additional research regarding the merger of theory and experiential knowledge as it relates to alternative teacher certification. Because of the brief duration of the program, deliberate efforts must be made to ensure candidates are sufficiently prepared to merge theoretical and experiential knowledge and transform the knowledge to provide all students with a quality education. Researchers should consider studying African American students within the educational context. Qualitative studies related to bridging cultural gaps when Caucasian teachers teach diverse students could assist in enhancing the quality of education that students receive in urban environments. Studies could also be performed to investigate the relationship between alternative certification and minority student achievement. Additionally, this research can also be used to help form the foundation for

future performance-based studies on the impact of alternatively certified teachers on student learning. In conclusion, future research is needed on the effect of cultural awareness and teaching efficacy on student learning.

Summary

This chapter included conclusions and implications for future research and practice. This case study focused on exploring the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. The exploration focused on the participants' perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and personal practical knowledge. The case study findings indicate a need for additional preparation regarding pedagogical and curricular knowledge for alternative certification completers within the program. The findings indicate participants need added training regarding how to differentiate student learning and instruction in addition to classroom management skills.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name of Study: Alternative Teacher Certification: The Politics, the Preparation, and the Promise of a Quality Education

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived teaching preparation of six completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

I. Background

1. How do you identify yourself ethnically?
2. How do you identify yourself as it relates to gender?
3. Describe your marital status.
4. Describe the highest level of education you completed.
5. Describe the college or university you attended.
6. Describe your previous occupation prior to entering the program.
7. Tell me some of the reasons you were motivated to become a teacher.
8. Describe your primary reasons for entering the program.
9. Tell me about the grade level(s) you teach.
10. Tell me about your school district.
11. Describe the school where you teach.
12. How would you describe the certification program you completed?

II. Content Knowledge

13. Tell me about your primary teaching content area.
14. Describe your motivation to pursue your content area.
15. Tell me how prepared you felt to teach in your content area after completing the alternative certification program.

16. Describe the preparation you received from the program regarding your content area.
17. Describe the most important concepts in your content area that students must understand to become successful.
18. After completing the alternative certification program, describe how prepared you felt to teach every student who enters your classroom.

III. Pedagogical Knowledge

19. Describe how prepared you felt to utilize multiple teaching strategies within the classroom following your completion of the program.
20. Describe the teaching strategies you learned from the program that you feel most confident using.
21. Describe how prepared you felt to make your content culturally relevant for your students after completing the program.
22. Tell me how you make your content culturally relevant for your students.

IV. Curricular Knowledge

23. Describe how prepared you felt to create lesson plans after completing the program.
24. Describe the components of your lesson plans.
25. Describe the models of instruction the program taught you to utilize.
26. Describe how prepared you felt to utilize those instructional models within the classroom after you completed the program.
27. Describe the instructional model(s) you currently utilize in the classroom.

V. Pedagogical Content Knowledge

28. Describe how prepared you felt to facilitate student learning after completing the program.
29. Describe how prepared you felt to transform your content area knowledge into actual student learning after completing the program.

30. Describe the training tools provided by the program that assisted in your ability to transform content knowledge into actual student learning.
31. Tell me how prepared you felt to impart knowledge to every student who enters your classroom.
32. Describe the methods utilized by the program to enhance your perceived teaching confidence.
33. Describe the methods you feel most prepared you to teach your students.
34. Describe how prepared you felt to teach students upon completion of the program.
35. Describe how the program prepared you to teach students.

Wrap-Up

- Thank participant
- Discuss Member Checks

APPENDIX B: INITIAL EMAIL NOTIFICATION TO RESEARCH SAMPLE

Dear Mr. or Ms. XXX,

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by YaSheka Adams, Graduate Student in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development in the College of Human Sciences and Education. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration will focus on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview which is expected to last up to two hours (maximum). Interviews will be audio-recorded with your consent. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer. There will be no identifiers on either the recordings or the transcripts and I will be the only one that will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. **Your participation is voluntary and of no cost to you. You may stop participation in the study at any time.**

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your participation will have the potential benefit of increasing the understanding of instruction and assessment in online programs as instructors seek to meet the needs of diverse learners. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your position, length of service at your institution, gender, and program/department in which you work. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Electronic files will be password protected and hardcopies will be stored in a locked and secure cabinet.

If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years.

If you have questions about participants' rights or other concerns, you may contact Jason Pasqua, LSU Institutional Review Board, at 225-578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/irb.

Thanks very much for your time and help in completing this research. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

YaSheka Adams, Principal Investigator
Louisiana State University, 225-385-9486

APPENDIX C: 2ND EMAIL NOTIFICATION TO RESEARCH SAMPLE

Dear Mr. or Ms. XXX,

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by YaSheka Adams, Graduate Student in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development in the College of Human Sciences and Education. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived teaching preparation of completers of an alternative teacher certification program as it relates to their preparation to teach diverse populations. This exploration will focus on their perceptions of preparation in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview which is expected to last up to two hours (maximum). Interviews will be audio-recorded with your consent. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer. There will be no identifiers on either the recordings or the transcripts and I will be the only one that will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. **Your participation is voluntary and of no cost to you. You may stop participation in the study at any time.**

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your participation will have the potential benefit of increasing the understanding of instruction and assessment in online programs as instructors seek to meet the needs of diverse learners. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your position, length of service at your institution, gender, and program/department in which you work. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Electronic files will be password protected and hardcopies will be stored in a locked and secure cabinet.

If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years.

If you have questions about participants' rights or other concerns, you may contact Jason Pasqua, LSU Institutional Review Board, at 225-578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/irb.

Thanks very much for your time and help in completing this research. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

YaSheka Adams, Principal Investigator
Louisiana State University, 225-385-9486
Yroger1@lsu.edu

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: YaSheka Mullens
SHREWD

FROM: Robert C. Mathews
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 26, 2014

RE: IRB# E8810

TITLE: Alternative Teacher Certification: The Politics, the Preparation, and the Promise of a Quality Education

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 5/26/2014

Approved **Disapproved**

Approval Date: 5/26/2014 **Approval Expiration Date:** 5/25/2017

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): _____

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

By: Robert C. Mathews, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

VITA

YaSheka Adams, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, received her bachelor's degree from Southern University in 2001. Thereafter, she held positions of increasing responsibility within the Organizational Development realm. As her interest in adult learning and leadership development grew, she made the decision to enter graduate school at Louisiana State University focusing on Human Resource Education.