

One Size Does Not Fit All: Reflections on Alternative Routes to Teacher Preparation in California

By Michael D. McKibbin

Introduction

Eight years of teaching in and directing alternative teacher preparation programs and seventeen years of providing assistance to, developing standards for, studying and evaluating these programs has led me to some observations and conclusions. In this article I will try to describe where I think internships fit into teacher preparation and the larger range of opportunities to become a teacher that has been called the “Learning to Teach Continuum.” I will also describe some of the distinguishing features and shortcomings of internships.

In the past few years alternative routes to certification have expanded rapidly in many states. In California, teaching internships—this state’s version of alternative programs—have increased to ten times the size they were eight years ago. In 1993 the budget of the state of California contained its first allocation for alternative certification. It was \$2 million. This year the allocation is \$30 million, and more than 8,000 teachers will be prepared through internships. These interns will teach elementary, middle school, secondary, and special education students in 465 California public school districts (McKibbin & Tyson, 2000).

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To some well known writers in education, such as

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Linda Darling-Hammond, alternative certification programs have drawn specific and lengthy criticism because they claim that alternative certification programs bring “un- or under-qualified” teachers into classrooms (Darling-Hammond 1998; and Shields et al 1998). These writers criticize alternative certification programs as learning-on-the-job programs. Those who criticize various alternate routes seem to assume that more conventional routes, specifically those culminating in a student teaching experience, are preferable teacher preparation methods that can meet the needs of our schools in the next century. Others, such as Martin Haberman, describe traditional (student teaching-based) programs in the following way, “Traditional teacher education programs are like catalogues of spare parts for machines that have never been built”(Haberman 1994).

One of the issues that perplexes those immersed in trying to implement high standards and quality preparation to all forms of teacher preparation is that many types of programs are called alternative certification. Feistritzer and Chester document that forty states indicate that they have alternative teacher certification programs (Feistritzer & Chester 2000). The nature of these programs is quite varied. Some are little more than ways of putting persons in classes using emergency permits, others are states’ addition of a post-baccalaureate preparation program to their existing undergraduate program. Some, such as Teach for America, are largely recruitment programs that include some teacher preparation but certification is not necessarily the goal of the program. The National Center of Educational Information and the National Association for Alternative Certification have both engaged in defining Alternative Certification. They have determined that the following elements are necessary for a program to be called an Alternative Certification Program (Feistritzer & Chester 2000):

- u The Program has been specifically designed to recruit, prepare and license talented individuals for teaching who already have at least a bachelor’s degree.
- u Candidates for these programs pass a rigorous screening process, such as passing tests, interviews, and demonstrated mastery of content.
- u The programs are field based and have as the goal a permanent teaching credential.
- u The programs include coursework or equivalent experiences in professional education studies while teaching.
- u Candidates for teaching work closely with trained support providers.
- u Candidates must meet high standards for completion of programs.

There are programs, such as Troops to Teachers, Teach for America, the Peace Corps Fellows Program, and Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., which have been affiliated with alternative certification and have provided valuable services, including recruitment services and support, to those interested in participating in an alternative certification program; however, these programs are not Alternative Certification programs as defined above.

My approach is to acknowledge that both traditional and alternative forms of teacher preparation have both strengths and weaknesses. There is clearly much room

for improvement in whatever method is chosen. Whichever method of teacher preparation is used, we must employ the knowledge of how people learn to that method. We must use the most powerful training systems available to prepare teachers. All too frequently theory is separated from practice, and relatively weak training systems are employed, such as lecture without accompanying demonstrations. More powerful training systems break the task into component tasks. The tasks are sequenced logically to facilitate learning. They are demonstrated and the theory and rationale are presented. More complex tasks are demonstrated several times. Opportunities for guided practice are provided along with feedback and coaching. Opportunities for guided practice and feedback occur over a period of time until the teacher can apply the learning in different circumstances (transfer) and the teacher has conceptual control over the material (Joyce & Weil 1990).

I am reminded of hearing Bruce Joyce state that, "Student teaching is like learning how to cook in your mother-in-law's kitchen." His statement points out one of the flaws in a model that is based in apprenticing a novice to a more veteran practitioner. Among these concerns is how well the veteran teacher is selected and trained for this new duty. All too often the student teacher is placed by a principal with a teacher "who could use some help." All too often the first budget to be cut is the one for training cooperating teachers and the small stipend given for working with a student teacher. Both of these are fixable problems, but despite concerted efforts by respected, caring teacher educators, each has persisted over the three decades that I have been engaged in teacher preparation. I have seen many examples of solid, carefully crafted field experiences that are clinical in nature, but in most of the larger programs, the clinical model fades into the background as the pressures to assign "cooperating teachers" is accomplished by teacher educators and principals.

Criticisms of the intern model mostly focus on the issue that students in the classrooms of the interns are taught by someone who is learning the craft as he/she goes. This is an absolutely valid criticism. It is a concern that all of the seventy-five directors of funded internship programs in California confront. This concern is why internship programs should not be open to anyone who does not meet the statutory requirements for a beginning teacher. As intern programs get significantly bigger, there is pressure to select participants less rigorously and to cut corners in critical areas such as support providers and cohort support. Intern programs can only thrive if they hold to high standards for selection of participants and compensate for the "learn as you go" aspect of the program. Programs can do this by turning the on-the-job nature of the program into a strength. This can be done by using powerful learning systems that integrate theory and practice and use techniques such as guided practice, adjust the program to the backgrounds of the interns, and modify the program to reflect the pedagogical needs of the interns.

One of the things that I have learned after nearly eighteen years working at the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing is that credentials are not magic. They do not assure qualifications. They provide probability that a person has been

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provided the initial skills and knowledge that a beginning teacher should possess. That a person who has gone through a student teaching experience that could culminate in only a few weeks of solo teaching (being fully responsible for all aspects of teaching) is thereby “qualified,” and that a person who blends into the teaching experience the learning of pedagogical skills and knowledge in an internship is un- or underqualified is, at best, contrary to good sense.

The question of what constitutes a qualified teacher is very much in the eye of the beholder. For the purpose of this article the author has turned to the statutes for the distinction between qualified and unqualified since it is the legislature that has the authority to make that judgment. A qualified teacher is defined in statute as a person who has met the prerequisite requirements, which include baccalaureate degree, demonstration of basic skills and subject matter competence, character identification, and participation in a Commission-approved teacher preparation program (See California Education Code Sections 44325 and 44327 for the legal definitions of qualifications for California teachers).

Changing the Ways that We Prepare Teachers

When I was assigned to my first classroom in an urban high school many years ago, I was given the room by the fire escape. I am not sure whether that was symbolic or not. Four of the classes of students that I was to teach were what were called “the basic students.” It was acknowledged that there were not many teachers clamoring to teach these classes. I was also given another class of college bound students. I was told that I was assigned this class to help me keep my sanity. When I arrived for my one-day orientation, I found that the supply cabinet was nearly bare. Only the kindly teacher two doors over took pity on my plight and provided some materials and offered words of encouragement. I found out as time went on that this was not only typical of this school but was the experience of most beginning teachers. The first years of teaching were seen as a rite of passage.

Over the years it has been asserted that one quarter to one half of the teachers leave teaching in the first three to five years. In addition to those who leave, the work of Feistritz and Chester has shown that as many as forty per cent of those who receive a teaching credential nationwide choose not to use it (Feistritz & Chester 2000). Most of these persons received their teaching credential through a public university which means that taxpayers paid for about eighty per cent of the costs of their education. Many of those taxpayers, or at least the persons they elect, have some expectation that there will be some return on the taxpayers’ investment in terms of providing a public service through teaching. Although some of these two groups of potential teachers probably made the right decision, there is evidence that there are changes needed to reduce the dropout rate of teachers and increase the teachers who will become teachers upon certification.

Fortunately, over time some educators and policymakers have recognized that

teaching working conditions and retention are public policy issues and have taken steps to remedy this situation. The best example that I know of is California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program. This program, which is funded at \$88 million this year, is designed to provide support during a teacher's first two years of credentialed teaching. The program assures that supplies will be available when the teacher arrives. The program provides instruction that helps the teacher apply the initial skills and knowledge learned in their teacher preparation program, and then assesses their performance with students, based on predetermined measures for beginning teachers.

The evidence that this type of program works can be seen in the retention data. Recent surveys show that 93 percent of first year teachers who complete a BTSA program stay in teaching after the first year, and 88 percent after two years (Fitch 1999). Earlier data show similar trends over a longer period of time (CNTF, 1992).

The issue of who chooses to teach upon completion of initial preparation is more elusive. Most of the measures currently used to qualify or select teachers have only limited predictive power. The three most common measures are grade point average, basic skills competence, and subject matter competence. These measures account for more than 85 percent of the variability of those not admitted to a program. The percent of persons who are admitted to student teaching but are not recommended for a credential is quite small. None of the three measures that account for most of the variability predicts success as a teacher. However, low grade point average, or lack of subject matter knowledge are good predictors of failure. It is reasonable that the public and their elected representatives would expect teachers to be able to display basic literacy, computational and writing skills, but these do not predict success as a teacher.

Another aspect of this problem is whether teacher preparation programs ought to be more market sensitive. When confronted with the data that California institutions prepare seven times as many social studies and physical education credential holders as there are jobs, one dean of a California State University campus stated emphatically that this was not within the concerns of the university. A parallel issue is that teacher preparation programs are not designing programs that are sensitive to the types of jobs that are available, such as those in urban and more remote locations. Even more insidious is a comment that I heard from a person who completed teacher preparation, "I did not know that I was going to have to teach 'those' kids." Tremendous advances have been made to sensitize teacher candidates to issues of language diversity, but little of this is reflected in how a person is selected into a program.

There is a body of work that shows that teachers' attitudes and predispositions toward schools and students are highly predictive of teacher success (defined as teachers who stay and whose students perform well on various assessments) (Haberman, 1995). It is important that preparation programs go beyond prerequisites (i.e., GPA, subject matter, and basic skills) to real selection instruments that

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have some power of prediction about who will be interested and adept at teaching students in schools that are hard-to-staff, that is schools with large numbers of students in poverty.

One of the other things that needs to change is that we need to understand the complexity of the task that the teacher undertakes. All too frequently policy makers and taxpayers assume that anybody can teach. They point to the short hours and long summer vacations as evidence that it is an easy job. Even teachers often sell themselves short. Here is some evidence to contemplate. As an offshoot of my dissertation, the author compared the behavioral stimuli that an elementary teacher received in an average hour as compared to seventeen other professions, including firemen, policemen, medical doctors, certified public accountants, pharmacists, air traffic controllers, nurses, and social workers. Only one of these received and responded to more stimuli in an average hour, air traffic controllers. The average number of stimuli that the teachers received and delivered each hour was nearly 600 (McKibbin 1974).

In a study of staff development practices, Little and associates also analyzed the job that a teacher does each week. They found that a teacher, on average, spends more than thirty hours weekly at school and another twelve hours in preparing curriculum, grading or reading papers and other classroom related tasks (Little et al, 1987). The study also found that teachers spend hundreds of hours in summers and other non-salaried times improving their subject matter and pedagogical skills in classes and workshops, and preparing for the next year. They also found that teachers spend a significant amount of funds “out of pocket” for materials for their classrooms. So much for the myths of teaching as free time, short hours and an easy job.

Teacher education is being criticized in the media, in the legislature, by our colleagues, and by our constituents: parents and students. Some of it is valid, and some is not. Our task is to carefully examine those criticisms and act on that examination. Change those things that can be changed, such as using more powerful models of teaching. Mitigate the weaknesses in training procedures used, such as assuring that high quality, well-trained cooperating teachers are selected, compensating for the preparation model’s flaws in ways that will turn them into strengths, such as blending theory and practice in an internship program. I will illustrate these kinds of changes, mitigations, and compensations that have occurred in the past five years in internships.

The Differences Between Intern and Conventional Programs

In California an internship is a fully paid position in a public school where the intern serves as teacher of record while simultaneously participating in a teacher preparation program. Internships were established in statute by laws enacted in 1967 (University Internships) and 1983 (District Internships). These programs may be one or two years long, and must meet the same or higher procedural and performance standards as other teacher preparation programs. In 1993, the Governor

and the Legislature chose to provide funding so that (1) districts and colleges and universities could develop or enhance existing programs to help districts meet their immediate need for teachers, (2) Persons could be brought into teaching who might not otherwise become a teacher and to further diversify the teaching workforce, and (3) to strengthen the support and instructional segments of preparation programs that allow teachers to simultaneously be employed as a teacher while matriculating through a teacher preparation program.

The frequency and length of when projects choose to offer the instructional program varies considerably from program to program. Nearly half of the projects offer instruction one afternoon a week in either a three or a four hour block. Slightly over one-fourth of the programs meet two afternoons a week, and the remaining programs offer a variety of formats including some afternoons, some Saturday activities and some occasional seminars. The average number of semester units in a university intern program is thirty-three, and the average number of clock hours in a district intern program is more than 500 clock hours (McKibbin, 1999).

All intern programs must provide a “preservice” preparation component before an intern takes over responsibility of a classroom. District Intern programs vary from 120 to 160 clock hours in areas specified by statute. University intern programs vary from six quarter units to 15 semester units of instruction before taking over responsibility for a classroom as an intern teacher.

All of the district intern programs and many of the university intern programs use an instructional structure that is more compact and more specific than the traditional three semester or quarter units for a course. This allows the units of instruction to be offered in a more timely manner when the instruction is needed since these teachers are fully responsible for a group or groups of students. Some content areas such as reading and classroom management can be revisited several times throughout the programs.

Recruitment/Selection

Internships are not for everyone. Internships are better suited for those who bring prior work experiences and maturity to the teaching experience. One third of the programs are using instruments such as the Haberman Teacher Selection Interview that has the capacity to examine an intern’s predispositions toward teaching (Haberman 1995). Nearly all of the program directors who use this type of instrument note that the quality of candidates has improved.

One of the goals of Alternative Certification grant programs is to facilitate entry into teaching for those who had previous careers, particularly those from aerospace, the military and other defense-related industries. Through the intern grant program several hundred persons have moved into teaching from defense-related careers. Other second career persons are also well represented in internship programs. Over the past five years nearly two-thirds of the persons entering internships have held permanent jobs for it least one year prior to entering teaching.

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Projects have been less successful in recent years in attracting persons into their programs from aerospace industries and the military. The entry of aerospace personnel into teaching is in inverse proportion to the strength of the California economy. Program directors state that even though there is interest, salaries just are not competitive. In recent years the number of military personnel has also been reduced. The armed services are trying to retain their members including giving bonuses to stay. Internships are also not as attractive as was originally thought for transitioning military personnel since most require integrated instruction and practice. Most military personnel cannot be released from other duties as would be required by an internship. This is a case where the student teaching-based model may better accommodate military personnel.

Internship programs have been quite successful in attracting those underrepresented in the teaching workforce. More than 46 per cent of all interns are from "minority" ethnic, linguistic and racial groups, which is twice as large as the state's conventional programs. Nearly thirty per cent of the elementary teachers are male, which is three times the number in conventional programs. In studies done of the district intern program, more than a third said that they would not have entered teaching if the internship option had not been available to them (Wright, McKibbin, & Walton 1987).

The Legislature and the last two Governors of California have made a significant commitment to encourage teacher's aides to become teachers. More than eleven million dollars is available to provide the resources for paraprofessionals to complete their undergraduate studies and teacher preparation. Internships have served as the last stage of a career ladder into teaching for paraprofessionals. In 1997-98, more than fifteen percent of those in the internship programs had previously been paraprofessionals (McKibbin 1998).

Teaching internships seem to attract and retain persons who are interested in teaching in California's hardest-to-staff schools. The interns tend to stay in these classrooms at far greater rates than persons prepared by other methods, such as traditional university programs. As a condition of grant renewal, Teaching Internship Grant Programs are required to provide retention information for each cohort of interns. Recently the grant programs provided data for the last five cohorts, which includes more than 10,000 interns. Of those that have been teaching one year 98 percent have been retained; two years 93 percent; three years 91 percent; four years 85 percent; and five years 77 percent are still teaching (McKibbin & Giblin 2000). All that have completed their one- or two- year programs are recommended for a preliminary credential and many in the two-year intern option have completed the statutory requirements for a professional clear credential.

Since the Class Size Reduction Initiative was implemented in 1996, California schools have faced an unprecedented shortage of qualified teachers. The number of teachers with emergency permits has increased from 12,000 five years ago to 34,000 in 1999-2000. Several steps have been implemented to reduce the

number of unqualified teachers in schools. Among these is the Pre-internship Program. This program provides an early “survival pedagogy” program, assistance from a support person and assistance in becoming competent in the subject matter area(s) for that teacher.

The need for a program like the Pre-Internship was recognized when a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing study found that more than two-thirds of those who begin teaching on an emergency permit never become fully credentialed (Salley 1996). The requirement for renewal of a emergency permit was completion of six semester units toward completion of a credential. The Commission found that the courses that were taken were quite randomly selected, and usually did not help the interns meet the credential prerequisite of subject matter competence. It was also discovered that emergency permit teachers were being admitted into student teaching-based teacher preparation programs and in some cases completing them without demonstrated subject matter competence. They could not be recommended for a credential because the teacher candidates could not demonstrate subject matter competence, and the courses they had taken were not going to help them complete this prerequisite. The implementation of the Pre-Internship program is one example of how teacher preparation needed to be changed, and the Legislature acted. In its first year of activity more than 5,000 pre-interns were admitted to programs, and 7,600 will be participating in 2000-2001.

The numbers of teachers needed in the next ten years are staggering. We will need to *increase* the number of teachers by an average of 6,000 teachers each year if we are going to place a qualified teacher before every student. If we are going to meet the challenge put forth by the California Legislature to reduce to an absolute minimum the number of emergency permit-holding teachers in classrooms, we must attract a wide variety of persons into teaching. This will need to include more students directly out of undergraduate programs, more paraprofessionals, more parent volunteers, and more persons who decide that they want to be teachers after a career in another occupation. No single teacher preparation method is right for these different teacher aspirants. The task of teacher educators is to determine which methods are suitable for these future teachers and provide those options.

The Support Network

Interviews with project directors and interns almost unanimously identify the support that they receive from project personnel, support providers, and their fellow interns as the most powerful and important aspect of the program. Those programs that have several layers of support and yet are mindful not to have too much overlap are seen as the most successful. It is important that support be site based and that it occurs from the beginning of an intern’s first day of classroom responsibility.

Interns frequently talk about the importance of proceeding through a program as a cohort. The interns discuss how they help each other and how other interns provide both ideas and moral support. The interns that have been interviewed

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clearly are invested in the success of the other teachers in their cohort. In studies completed by the Commission, many discussed how the seminar format and a consistent interaction with peers had helped them become critical, reflective, and self-correcting in their practices (McKibbin & Giblin 1999). The interns interviewed stated that interaction between the support system and the instructional system was critical. The opportunity to be taught particular teaching tasks, to try them in a controlled setting with other interns, and then to try the tasks with students while receiving coaching from a support provider, and then return to the intern seminar to discuss the successes and failures on that task are the elements of powerful learning strategies that were previously discussed.

Finding qualified and willing support providers has been a daunting task for internships and other programs. Probably the only shortage in the teaching workforce that approaches the shortage of new teachers is the shortage of support providers. The success of programs such as the BTSA program, what we have learned from the internships, the research on teacher preparation literature, and common sense all lead to the conclusion that the support provider is pivotal in the success of any program for new teachers. Internships, BTSA, the Pre-Internship Program, and student teaching-based teacher preparation programs all need support providers. If all of these needs are added up, teacher education in California needs more than 50,000 experienced teachers each year to help teacher candidates and beginning teachers. That is about one in every four experienced teachers now teaching in California classrooms. This does assume the richest of ratios, but even at two to one, which is the most common ratio in internship and BTSA programs, the shortage of high quality support providers is considerable.

Not every experienced teacher has either the desire or temperament to be a support provider. To many teachers, time as a support provider is “just one more thing” on top of what is one of the most complex of professions. The skills needed to be a support provider are not the same skills that teachers were offered when they completed a teacher preparation program. Support Provider Training, such as that offered through the BTSA program, shows that the skills for this task can be provided very successfully. Finding those who are interested and able to take on this critically important aspect of teacher preparation will take an unprecedented amount of human and fiscal resources.

Building Partnerships

Many of the intern project participants have commented on how important it is to build strong partnerships between the participating districts and the participating universities. They also commented that shared decision-making and developing true partnerships were considerably more difficult than previous interactions among universities and districts.

Relationships between school districts and universities have not always been cordial. District administrators complain that the teachers that are prepared on

campus do not have adequate skills, particularly in classroom management and teaching basic reading skills, to function in a classroom. On the other hand, university faculty state that the level of cooperation that they receive from principals to find adequate placement sites for student teachers is hindered by principals who wish to buoy up sagging teachers.

It has been my experience that much of this blaming comes out of frustration and misunderstanding. Intern statutes require that districts and universities work together to develop the programs. In many cases the building of the trust and mutual respect necessary for a partnership takes time and effort by all parties. In some cases the trust and respect is spawned by self-interest. For example, in one of our field visits to an internship program in Orange County, district administrators talked about how the program directors had come to them to find out their needs. As a result the university modified its program. This occurred not because the existing program was weak, but because the modified program better met the needs of the districts. Now the challenge is that since there is great demand for the interns, both the districts and the university faculty agree that the program can only grow if quality can be maintained.

The most successful partnerships have developed their interrelationship on four levels. First, decisions about program components were made together and with parity. There were clear lines of responsibility. Some of the programs talked about the “investment” that each party was making in the relationship, and they shared common goals in the preparation of quality teachers. Second, in most of the projects the instructional staff included both university professors and district personnel. In some instances classes were co-taught by a professor and a district educator. Third, the support system was coordinated and there were opportunities for sharing information. Most programs used a seminar format and regularly scheduled feedback sessions to facilitate providing information. Finally, assessment of intern performance was also coordinated. Decisions for credential recommendation and employment are made in consultation and concerns are shared early so that remediation could take place.

Another important aspect was the importance of leadership of the program. Particularly important was continuity and consistency. In those programs where there were no clear lines of authority or when the leadership changed frequently, there was difficulty.

Delivery of Instruction

The number of instructional contact hours in a student teaching-based program and an internship program are approximately the same. The major differences are in the sequencing and modes of delivery of instruction.

Typically, student teaching-based programs have courses that address developmental issues, and one or more courses in pedagogy. All have one or more courses in reading which may also address linguistic issues. Many have courses that deal with culture and diversity, and others may have foundations courses. The average

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number of non-field experience courses is between six and seven. The most common pattern is three to four courses before student teaching begins and approximately the same number of courses taught simultaneously. Many of the programs blend theory and practice, but few report being able to or willing to adjust their program structure based on the learning needs of the teacher candidates during the course of the program.

The amount and kind of fieldwork in student teaching-based programs vary dramatically. Commission standards allow universities to establish the rationale for their field experiences, so the number of experiences and their duration follow no discernable pattern except that most are graduated in the level of responsibility undertaken. Even the pattern of graduated experiences is lost in those programs that are granting student teaching credit to those teaching on emergency permits.

There is great variability in the kinds of supervision that are available in student teaching-based programs. The variability is in the quality of those selected as site supervisors (cooperating teachers), their training, and the frequency and precision of the oversight.

Many of the internship programs are trying different kinds of instructional delivery systems. Some university internship programs still use the three-unit course structure, but many have gone to instructional modules that break down the skills and learning tasks. All of the programs concentrate on mixing the theoretical and the practical. As was mentioned earlier, several of the projects were drawing on the strengths of university faculty and partnering district personnel by co-teaching classes.

All of the intern programs begin with a preservice program. There is great variability in the length and in the quality of the portion of the programs that precedes taking over responsibility of a classroom. This is particularly true in university internship programs that are not bound to the requirements set forth in statute for district intern programs. Every program addresses classroom management, planning, and classroom procedural issues. Most address developmental issues and generic pedagogical skills. Reading skills and the ways that children acquire language are also included in most preservice programs. Most of the programs provide opportunities to try out the skills taught in controlled settings. Most of the preservice instruction is then reinforced once or several times throughout the course of the program. Much needs to be done to assure that uniformly high quality preservice experiences are part of every program.

Several of the internship projects report that they are “spiraling” the curriculum so that each course is built on the knowledge learned in the previous course. Nearly all of the programs modified the order of instruction, adjusting to the relative urgencies that interns were facing. For example, most of the programs have rearranged their programs so that reading is taught in the preservice coursework and then is revisited several times during the one or two years of the program. Another example is that many intern programs have moved foundations courses, except for

human development, to near the end of the program. Feedback from students on what they need and when instruction is more meaningful has led to logically sequenced instruction based on the needs of the interns. Programs have also learned that returning to a particular concept or skill a number of times with increasing complexity increases the probability that the interns will be able to transfer the skill or concept in a variety of instructional settings.

Most of the programs have reported modifying their programs to accommodate the needs of interns. For example, several programs have inserted special units, such as teaching the skills and techniques of parent conferencing, when that became an immediate need for the interns. In interviews interns praised the flexibility of their program and explained that they learned much more than they would have if these skills had been taught in the abstract. Having the “why” and the “how” taught, then demonstrated, being able to practice the skills with peers, and then having to take these skills into their schools, make adjustments and return to discuss their experiences in class made these experiences very powerful even though they were “learning on the job.”

There are probably reasons why so many teachers state that most of what they learned is on the job. You learn something when you have to use it and then use it again. Any of us who have crammed for an exam know that urgency does tend to heighten learning. Immediacy and need for the knowledge does seem to increase the amount that we learn. Feedback and reflection help us refine the skill. It is the proverbial teachable moment. For the two-thirds of the interns who have come to teaching as second careers, learning on the job was standard operating procedure when working in many businesses and in the military. They are used to it and believe that it is an effective way to learn.

It has been our experience that the California teaching internship programs must be built with a cooperative social system. Programs that receive grant funds must provide instruction and support through the use of a model that takes interns through the program as a cohort. As mentioned earlier, the cohort model and the opportunities that are afforded for reflection, feedback and peer assistance have always been the most praised feature of the program.

I recall one second-year intern reporting his story to me in an interview two years ago. He talked about how he was not very good the first year. He reflected that they “probably should have fired me.” Each week he met with his fellow interns. They, along with the instructors and support providers, made suggestions and offered other kinds of help. He said, “they would not let me quit.” He went on to state with great pride that “now all my students are learning. I’m not where I want to be yet, but I’m making a difference.”

The internship program staff has had the opportunity to visit a number of classrooms in the last two years as we made site visits to intern programs. On some of those visits I have had the opportunity to talk to some students about their intern teachers. I have reserved these conversations to middle and secondary students.

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Most know that their teachers are beginners. Most know when their teachers “mess up.” Most are impressed when the teacher comes back and reteaches the material another time to make sure that the students “get it” this time. Most also know when the teacher is faking it. One student said, “and the young teachers fake it a lot less than the old ones.” Another said, “I like it that they are learning too.”

Yes, they are learning on the job. For many new teachers, though not all, it is the way that they learn best, and it is therefore the most powerful learning system.

Assessment of Performance

Assessment of performance is difficult under any circumstance. Directors of teacher preparation programs report that very few persons who enter the student teaching phase are not recommended for credentials. In those cases where there are concerns usually another student teaching experience is arranged. Almost all of these persons who have had the second chance are recommended for credentials. When I have had discussions with directors of programs about assessment issues, they admit that they have reservations about some that they recommend. The directors usually provide rationales for their decision, which I will paraphrase below.

These teachers are better than those on emergency credentials; or we were afraid of being sued if they did not recommend; or they have gone this far with A's in all their classes, how could we fail them now? or the students will have opportunities in their BTSA program to pick up what they are missing.

Assessment of a student teacher is at best a snapshot of the student's work. The setting that the student teacher is working in is someone else's classroom. The curriculum, structure and rules of the classroom were designed by the teacher of record. It is very difficult to get a true reading of the student teacher's competence under these circumstances.

Because interns are responsible for the achievement of the students in their classroom, the context for assessment is more authentic than in a student teaching-based program. The success of the intern can be tied to the success of students in the classroom. In most programs the assessment is done over a longer period of time so that remediation and improvement can be applied and monitored. This is an extremely important point in an internship. If interns, through self-assessment, realize that they cannot perform a task in ways that all of their students can learn it, they can feed that information back to their support providers and to their instructors. Because most of the intern programs are designed so that mid-course corrections can be made, the appropriate remedies can be implemented immediately. In most student teaching-based programs when the student teacher realizes that she/he can not adequately perform a particular skill or task, it is usually too late.

Most of the intern programs are using more extensive procedures that include case studies, student work, and other measures as part of the portfolio assessment

process. The portfolios are gathered over the full period of the internship (usually two years). In many cases each entry requires some kind of self-reflection and is connected to student learning in one of several ways. It is a living document, which has formative as well as summative features. Most project directors felt that they had a more complete assessment picture upon which a more valid judgement could be made.

Summary

The internship program continues to meet the goals set by the Legislature, the Governor, and the Commission. The program has expanded the pool of qualified teachers by attracting persons into teaching who might not otherwise enter the classroom. The program has allowed more than four hundred districts to respond immediately to pressing needs for teachers. These districts include some of California's most rural, isolated schools as well as nearly all of the major urban districts. These interns are able to put their energies directly into their jobs and "learn by doing" in a program that models instruction, demonstration, guided trials, feedback and continued practice in authentic settings. Teaching internships allow districts and universities to become partners in teacher preparation to provide high quality, theory based, practically applied instruction, with effective supervision and intensive support so each intern's new learning can be targeted to her/his needs. The Alternative Certification grant funds provide the means to extend access to those candidates who are not reached by conventional programs and options.

In the six years that the Teaching Internship Grant Program has been in operation, growth has occurred in several ways, including a six-fold increase in the size of the program. The expertise about internships and how to make these programs thrive has grown significantly. The program has grown so that there is a 'critical mass' of local and regional expertise which enables project personnel to share and support each other in ways that would not have been possible earlier. Seven regional networks of internship directors and participants had been implemented to facilitate sharing. If this program continues to have high expectations, and if the grants are distributed so that districts and colleges and universities provide high quality, focused preparation, then teaching internships will continue to make a significant contribution to workforce of teachers for the state of California.

Teaching internships continue to be one of the most important means that California is using to meet the need for teachers. The teachers bring rich experiences with them and provide diversity that is significantly higher than traditional teacher preparation programs. Internships provide more males for elementary schools, more persons from ethnic and racial groups underrepresented in the teaching workforce, and more teachers who bring rich workplace experiences into California's classrooms after working in other areas.

With all of that said, internships should not replace student teaching-based teacher preparation programs. Student teaching-based programs will continue to

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provide the majority of those who will become teachers. They are the appropriate type of program for younger students and as part of the undergraduate experience. Both kinds of programs need to make sure that the most powerful instructional systems available are used. High quality, well-selected, well-trained support providers are more important than any other component in the preparation program. Districts and universities need to be allies and contributors to any version of teacher preparation. We need to go beyond course grades and the ability to pass tests to assure that those who are selected to teach have the attributes and attitudes that give us reasonable assurance that they want to teach all of the students and they will succeed. They must have continuous opportunities in real settings to teach, to learn, to modify, to reflect, and to grow.

We must assure that there are many ways for a person to become a teacher. Persons at different stages in their life learn differently. Their backgrounds and life experiences dictate that different learning modes should be available.

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