In the Wake of Class-Size Reduction:
The Role of Traditional Student Teaching Versus Emergency Permit Teaching

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> This has been a very hard and confusing year for those who were involved with classroom reduction. It is hard to say what could have been done to help. My feeling is if you're going to implement a plan you should have all your ducks in a row and this was not the case. The Governor acted too quickly, therefore not allowing enough time to prepare.
> (an emergency permit teacher)

When class-size reduction hit California schools in the summer of 1996, there was an immediate teacher shortage that presented preservice teacher education with a set of dilemmas carrying short and long-term implications. In their haste to hire teachers to reduce class sizes in the primary grades to a 20 to 1 ratio for the opening of the school year, school districts tapped several sources of potential teachers. One pool of possible recruits was preservice program students who were set to do their student teaching in the Fall of 1996. These teachers-in-training had, for the most

part, completed their program course work and lacked only a semester of student teaching before becoming credentialed. Next to credentialed teachers reentering the work force, districts viewed these preservice students as preferable to the other types of candidates attracted to classroom teaching, even though they did not yet possess a valid teaching credential. Districts frequently offered them the opportunity to begin teaching immediately on an emergency permit.

Preservice programs thus confronted a situation in which many of their students took emergency permit jobs before completing the student teaching experience. Programs could insist that their students do traditional student teaching before recommendation for the credential, or they could allow emergency permit teaching to substitute for "student teaching" as the culminating field experience. Some programs chose the former option, which essentially meant the program continued unchanged; some chose to utilize internship arrangements; and some programs chose to use emergency permit teaching as "student teaching."

This paper reports a study of a preservice program that used emergency permit teaching as the "student teaching" experience for those students on emergency permits under the class-size reduction initiative. The broad purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions traditional student teachers and emergency permit teachers held of their different ways of completing the culminating field experience. Specifically, we wanted to know how program participants perceived their culminating field experience relative to the alternative, i.e., traditional student teaching versus emergency permit teaching; we wanted to know what motivated students to do one or the other; we wanted to know what students perceived as the advantages and disadvantages of doing one or the other; and we wanted to know how students perceived the quality of support provided by the program, the school, and the district.

Theoretical Framework

Increasingly since the publication of *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983) and as teaching and the preparation of teachers has come under attack, alternate routes to certification have occupied a larger portion of the teacher preparation agenda. Alternate routes to licensure include state- and district-based programs, as well as independent programs such as Teach for America. State regulated internship programs administered solely through districts or in district-university partnerships also fall within this category.

Though they may be linked to the university, alternate routes have typically sought to fast-track or circumvent university-based teacher education. Though some fear that alternate routes seek to eliminate professional preparation altogether (Roth, 1986), Trish Stoddart and Robert Floden (1996) maintain that the decision is not over professional preparation *per se* but "over the timing and institutional context for teacher preparation, and about the mix of professional knowledge and

skills to be acquired" (p. 90). Alternate routes have been established to provide accessibility for non-traditional entrants; to staff underserved geographical areas; to teach in subject areas that have perennial shortages such as science and math; to attract high potential individuals who might otherwise pursue non-teaching careers (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Shen, 1997); and, in California in particular, to reduce the critical shortage of bilingual and special education teachers (IER, 1996; McKibbin & Schrup, 1995).

Research on alternative certification provides mixed results (Ashton, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Dill, 1996). Reviewing a number of studies, Linda Darling-Hammond and Velma L. Cobb (1996, p. 41) conclude that "fully prepared and certified teachers are generally more highly rated and more successful with students than teachers without full preparation." Their review indicates that teachers who complete traditional preservice preparation before beginning teaching are superior to alternate route teachers on virtually every dimension of teaching, including classroom management, curriculum development, repertoire of teaching strategies, knowledge of students, awareness of differing learning styles, and ability to assess for evaluative as well as instructional planning purposes (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996). The theoretical foundation provided through course work and the practical benefits of guided clinical experiences are key to the success of university-based teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996).

In support of traditional teacher preparation, Patricia T. Ashton (1996, p. 21) summarizes that teachers "with regular state certification receive higher supervisor ratings and have higher student achievement than teachers who do not meet certification standards." Alternate routes have shown some success in attracting non-traditional entrants and in staffing inner city schools, but there is little evidence yet to determine if they show more or less success than traditional programs at mitigating attrition rates for the first five years of teaching (Dill, 1996). Jianping Shen (1997) found that teachers drawn to alternate routes had lower academic qualifications than did traditionally prepared teachers, were less attracted to teaching as a lifelong career, and that many entered alternate route programs to escape traditional teacher preparation.

Though tolerated out of necessity, emergency permit teaching has been frowned upon by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) as a means of entry into the profession. The CCTC prefers teachers-in-training to complete their preparation through traditional student teaching in the classrooms of credentialed teachers. Because of the overwhelming demand for bilingual teachers, preservice programs have for some time accepted bilingual emergency permit teachers' classroom work as part of their program requirements, an instance of the exception highlighting the rule. Similarly, special education programs have long integrated emergency permit teaching into program requirements (McKibbin & Schrup, 1995).

The teacher shortage initiated by class size reduction created a rationale for

alternate entry teachers much broader than that for the special instances of bilingual and special education. Class size reduction suddenly opened hundreds of regular K-3 classrooms to alternate route teachers with little or no professional preparation prior to assuming teaching responsibilities. Districts no longer needed to show special hardship to put emergency permit teachers in classrooms (McKibben, 1996). In sum, the playing field for alternate route entry into teaching shifted radically in California.

Evaluation of the pathways to licensure available to potential teachers is particularly crucial at this historical moment when the door to employment in the profession has opened so wide. As educational policy and practice relating to teacher preparation evolve, it is important to consider the efficacy of individual programs within local contexts (Zumwalt, 1996). Because alternate routes to teaching and certification will continue to coexist with more traditional teacher preparation programs, it behooves teacher educators to be actively involved with the design and implementation of alternate routes rather than to leave the field to state and district administrators. This study offers the opportunity to look at the perceived effects of altering one program feature in the preparation of teachers. The altered feature is a crucial one, since a body of research points to the traditional student teaching experience as the most important part of preservice preparation (Guyton & MacIntyre, 1990).

This study offers insight into an area of teacher preparation that falls in the borderland between alternate route and traditional entry. Unlike typical alternate route teachers, the portion of the study participants who were emergency permit teachers were neither quick-entry nor ill-prepared teachers; rather, they had received all the university-based preparation available to them in their program short of the student teaching experience. We are thus able to compare (a) traditional student teachers with (b) their program peers who opted to forego traditional student teaching in favor of using their emergency permit teaching as their culminating field experience. Though emergency permit teachers do not share most of the characteristics of true alternate route teachers, they do share the important feature of not having had a supervised clinical field experience commonly called student teaching. This study, rather than attempting to measure teaching or student outcomes, investigates perceptions by traditional student teachers and emergency permit teachers of their experiences during the semester of their "student teaching."

Data Collection

Data Source

Participants were students in a preservice program in elementary education in a public, urban, California university. All had completed university course work—including foundations courses, four methods courses, and 80 hours of field work. About half of the 138 participants completed their preparation program in each

teaching category (49 percent utilized emergency permit teaching; 51 percent did traditional student teaching). Eighty-eight percent were female, 67 percent were in their twenties, 20 percent were in their thirties, and 11 percent were over 40. Participants self-identified as White, 68 percent; Hispanic, 16 percent; Asian American, 6 percent; other, 5 percent; multi-ethnic, 4 percent; and African American, 1 percent.

In this program, traditional student teaching is accomplished in two separate assignments, one in a primary and one in an upper elementary grade, with two cooperating teachers and a single university supervisor as support during a 15-week period that coincides with the university semester. Emergency permit teachers were contracted by districts for the entire school year; they could use fifteen weeks of either the Fall or Spring semester as "student teaching." Emergency permit teaching was manifested in a variety of ways: some teachers were the teacher of record in their own classroom; some shared a classroom with another teacher but worked essentially alone in opposite areas of the room and at different times; some team-taught with a veteran teacher; some were linked with two teachers in two classrooms, with the student spending time in both rooms teaming with both teachers. In a few cases, students had completed half of their student teaching prior to taking a position. In a few other cases, students took a teaching position during the semester after having started as a traditional student teacher.

The program provided support for both student teachers and emergency permit teachers in keeping with its traditional model. Supervisors observed and conferenced with both types on a weekly basis. Supervisors met with their cohorts in a weekly seminar at one of the school sites. Since emergency permit teachers would not have a traditional cooperating teacher, the program sought to gain a commitment from the school to provide a site-based support teacher for each emergency permit teacher. The role of the site support teacher was to function as much like a traditional cooperating teacher as possible without actually being in the classroom with the student on an ongoing basis. The site support teacher's role was to be available for conferencing, assist the student with curriculum and materials, and to gain release time to observe the student in her or his classroom.

Instruments

Participants completed a single, untimed survey developed specifically for this project. All participants responded to the same set of questions. (However, emergency permit teachers provided answers to an additional set of questions regarding their instruction in reading that yielded data unreported in this paper.) Data were collected over two semesters from two separate cohort groups, one which began the culminating field experience in the Fall and one which began in the Spring. Survey administration was held as near as possible to the end of each semester in order to tap into students' reflections of the entire culminating field experience. In the first data collection semester, surveys were distributed through

University supervisors, completed at the leisure of respondents, and returned via mail. However, since it was felt that this distribution method contributed to the low return rate, in the second data collection semester surveys were distributed through supervisors at the weekly seminar meeting near the end of the semester, completed at that time, and collected for return by the supervisor.

Data Analysis

Fifty-seven out of 162 distributed surveys (34 percent) were returned in the initial collection period; 81 out of 151 (54 percent) were returned in the second period. Quantifiable survey responses were entered into an SPSS database (Norusis, nd). Frequency and descriptive statistics were drawn on for this paper. Analyses of the open-ended survey responses involved transcribing, coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and thematic clustering utilizing HyperResearch software (Hesse-Bilber, Kinder, Dupuis, P. R., Dupuis, A. & Tornabene, 1993).

Results

Students overwhelmingly (95 percent) reported that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their culminating field experience. Traditional student teachers (73 percent) indicated they were "very satisfied" at a higher rate than did emergency permit teachers (57 percent). A small number of students (5 percent) felt "unsatisfied" or "very unsatisfied." Dissatisfaction appears linked to an emergency permit position in which there was little school or district support for the beginning teacher or to a poor student teaching placement.

Seventy percent of emergency permit teachers (EPTs) and 87 percent of traditional student teachers (STs) reported that they would complete their culminating field experience (CFE) the same way had they to do it over again (n=136). No STs would opt to do only emergency permit teaching. Six percent of EPTs would do student teaching in hindsight. Thirteen percent of STs would do a combination of student teaching and emergency permit teaching if they had the opportunity, whereas 24 percent of EPTs would do a combination in hindsight. Eighteen percent of the combined groups would do a combination assignment in hindsight.

Motivation for EPTs foregoing traditional student teaching included: financial rewards, the opportunity to have one's own classroom, feeling "ready" for teaching, attraction for the "hands-on," "real life" experience emergency permit teaching offered. Primary among the factors STs gave for preferring traditional student teaching were: a sense of unpreparedness for full classroom responsibilities, a concern that they would be shortchanging students if they took a job prematurely, and a desire to develop their teaching skills in a "sheltered" environment under the tutelage of a master teacher.

EPTs reported as advantages to taking the job: the chance to work independently, gaining "authentic" experience, the immediate financial rewards, and

support from other teachers at their schools. Importantly, a large majority of EPTs do not report any disadvantages significant enough to make them reconsider how they might have done their culminating field experience. Nevertheless, EPTs are not uncritical of the experience and reported drawbacks to having taken the job. Specifically, they reported as drawbacks: a lack of close mentoring, including not having a safety net, not receiving feedback from a veteran teacher, and not being able to observe other teachers; a feeling of being overwhelmed with the complexities of teaching, e.g., paper work, administrative details, parents, planning; and the stress of full-time teaching. To a lesser extent they reported unclear expectations, poor support, and a lack of respect from other teachers as shortcomings of working as emergency permit teachers.

STs reported as advantages to pursuing the traditional route: the close mentoring they received, the chance to practice their teaching in a less risky environment, reduced stress, having time to observe teachers, and getting help with specific areas of teaching in which they felt weak. Classroom management, lesson and unit planning, and curriculum emerged as primary areas in which STs felt cooperating teachers were of particular assistance. The primary disadvantage to doing traditional student teaching was the lack of financial rewards—a large majority of STs remained in traditional student teaching with some regret because they would have liked the income and benefits their peers received. A small number of respondents reported doing student teaching in unsatisfactory placements. There were also voices among the respondents who felt they were ready for the classroom after a short period of traditional student teaching. A handful also expressed the fear that all the jobs would be taken by the time they were credentialed.

Both STs and EPTs reported unevenly on the levels of support provided by the program, the schools, and the districts. This is to be expected, since individual contexts varied widely. Though many EPTs reported that they received beneficial support from teachers, principals, supervisors, and district personnel, a significant number indicated they would have liked stronger support in several areas. They would have liked: (1) more assistance with curriculum; (2) to be provided with more materials, resources, and funds; (3) in many cases, an on-site mentor; (4) for methods courses to provide more grade-specific content; (5) clear expectations set for them; (6) timely, appropriate district inservicing; (7) a more supportive principal. Student teachers reported that they would have liked: (1) more prior field experience, (2) earlier notice of their student teaching site, (3) opportunities to visit other classrooms, and (4) financial assistance while student teaching.

Discussion

Most respondents would do their culminating field experience (CFE) again in the same way they did it originally, i.e., STs would do student teaching and EPTs would take the job. This is despite EPTs identifying a number of areas in which they

would have liked more support, particularly in terms of district and school support in the form of a close working relationship with a mentor, and despite STs keenly regretting the lack of financial rewards while student teaching. The drawbacks both STs and EPTs saw in their different ways of completing their preparation did not outweigh the perceived benefits. One of the more interesting findings in this study is that a combination of traditional student teaching for some period of time before taking an emergency permit position appears to be a preferable way of completing the culminating field experience for a significant number of respondents. The fact that 24 percent of EPTs (n=68) would choose this arrangement implies that a significant number did not perceive bypassing student teaching for the classroom as the best way of completing their preparation. Further investigation with this group should prove interesting since it has implications for program thinking about the optimal length for student teaching and the potential benefits from combining traditional student teaching arrangements with early entry into the classroom.

Open-ended responses indicate that students who took emergency permit positions clearly recognized the value of traditional student teaching preparation (e.g., working with a master teacher) but wanted to get their own classroom before receiving the credential for a cluster of reasons. The financial factor was by far the primary motivation for EPTs foregoing traditional student teaching. Wrote one emergency permit teacher: "...I could not afford to do student teaching and support myself. If you do not receive financial support from your family or have a spouse, it is very hard." One emergency permit teacher called her work "student teaching with a paycheck." Another asked rhetorically why she should "...do all the work [of student teaching] without getting paid?" A fourth EPT responded, "Traditional student teaching is like slave labor!"

But there were other important reasons EPTs took the job. Some had a desire to work independently: "As an emergency permit teacher I get to jump in and try things the way I want to do it...there is no one telling me what to do." For others there was an affinity for experiential on-the-job learning: "There are a lot of things about teaching that I believe one must learn on one's own...I might have felt 'held down' if I had to go the traditional route." For many there was a general sense of being ready for the responsibility of full-time teaching: "I felt I was ready and able to handle my own class, and student teaching may have been redundant."

Traditional student teachers clearly missed the income that emergency permit teaching provided, but also appear to have had the wisdom to know their developmental stage and to have made a decision to stay in the "sheltered" environment of traditional student teaching because it was the better way for them to complete their professional preparation. Said one ST, "I had no previous experience and knew I would flounder if I did not take the traditional route. I was simply not prepared for the responsibility." A sense of unpreparedness was related to a concern for the welfare of children on the part of some STs. Representative of this concern was the response by one student teacher that "I was unsure of my abilities as a teacher and

did not feel it was fair to the students to subject them to my inexperience." Student teachers were explicit in their appreciation for the opportunity traditional student teaching afforded them to work with a veteran cooperating teacher. Responded one, "I believed that there was a great deal to learn from a good master teacher. I wanted to observe how to start a class at the beginning of the year and I wanted the feedback and support from a master teacher and supervisor as I learned to teach..." Another wrote that "As a student teacher, you gradually phase into taking over teaching the entire day. You continually get feedback, constructive criticism and positive reinforcement, which aids in your improvement and success." Traditional student teachers were also aware of the reduced stress they experienced: "I felt my first year stress level would be lowered if I did student teaching first."

Despite their preference for taking the job, emergency permit teachers were often aware of the drawbacks. Many lamented the lack of mentoring they received. Their responses indicate they missed "...having a professional right by your side giving you tips," having "...the opportunity to collect ideas and strategies from a master teacher," and "...not being able to see or watch a master teacher teach." For some, a hint of regret seeps into their responses: "The greatest disadvantage has been not having the opportunity to observe how a class is run, how lessons are taught, or, rather, teaching modeled in general. The fallout has been numerous trial and error failures and the subsequent assault on my self confidence." And for one respondent, there was a clear awareness of lost opportunities: "The student teaching semester is a unique experience that cannot be recaptured if missed. I realize now that I missed the opportunity for observation of many classroom techniques. I definitely would not recommend [emergency permit teaching]."

Conclusion

Rather than offer definitive conclusions, we raise a set of questions that carry short and long-term implications for teacher education. What should be the place of clinical student teaching as the "culminating field experience" when preservice students can enter the classroom as teachers of record at any time during their preparation? Should teacher educators adhere to traditional notions of preparation, or should they modify programs, and to what extent, to meet changing conditions? For example, we are finding it difficult for many of our students who work on the emergency permit to fulfill the field work requirement in their methods courses. By virtue of their teaching position they are getting substantial field experience, but they are not getting the range of experience we prefer them to have across a variety of classrooms in different school settings. How can we provide the diverse field experiences we believe are essential in preparing teachers for tomorrow's classrooms when many of our students do not have the time? There is also the question of what the relationship should be between a professional knowledge base for teacher education (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996)

and policy-driven imperatives originating outside the profession that ignore the need for research-based, theoretical knowledge in concert with experiential knowledge in the training of teachers. Early entry sends the message to novice teachers that teaching is skill-based work easily learned on the job, rather than a profession with an established knowledge base embodying important theoretical perspectives.

Findings in this study support arguments for traditional student teaching *and* for early entry into the classroom. In all but a handful of cases, participants in this study, both traditional student teachers and emergency permit teachers, completed the culminating field experience successfully from the program's perspective. This suggests that for most preservice students, the culminating field experience can be accomplished either through traditional student teaching or through emergency permit teaching *if* the methods sequence has been completed. A key question remains: at what point is early entry feasible? What level of preparation do teachers need and what competencies should they possess in order to go into the classroom even as they are finishing their preservice training? Data from this study do not address the question. However, increasingly we will be faced with preservice students who are already classroom teachers when they enter the program.

Though it is outside the scope of this study, the ultimate assessment of the desirability of different routes into teaching is the effect alternate route teachers have on student learning and achievement. Research will need to be done on the effectiveness of alternate route teachers with the children they teach. Such research will need to look not only at measures of student achievement but also at a range of teaching behaviors and their effect on student learning that do not lend themselves to quantitative measures.

Another area of concern for teacher educators must be the financial implications of emergency permit teaching. The most frequent analytic code for both STs and EPTs across several related survey items was "financial." Can traditional student teaching programs continue to compete with alternate entry routes that offer markedly superior financial rewards? Student teachers greatly missed the income and benefits foregone by remaining in traditional student teaching. In the future, will preservice students be able to make wise personal decisions and take the traditional route even as they are given the opportunity to accept a paid position?

This study reports data on preservice students who had completed all but the final stage of their preparation. Would those who chose to work on the emergency permit have perceived their experience differently had they entered the classroom earlier in their program, or even before beginning the program? Since there are many emergency permit teachers in California classrooms in this category, future research will need to look at this population.

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