Reflection and Self-Efficacy:
Enhancing the Retention of Qualified Teachers from a Teacher Education Perspective

By Deborah S. Yost

Teacher retention has been the subject of much study, yet recent estimates of teachers who choose to leave the profession within the first three years to pursue other careers remains at an unacceptably high level of 33.5 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). These figures are alarming in light of the fact that schools desperately need qualified teachers. Several authors maintain that in order to solve the teacher shortage problem, the focus should be on retaining already qualified teachers rather than encouraging alternative routes to certification (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Growing evidence also suggests that teachers who lack adequate preparation to become teachers are more likely to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Studies on teacher retention demonstrate that some teachers are both resilient and persistent, remaining in the profession despite being confronted with the same challenges and obstacles of those who leave. Traits of resiliency and persistence describe people who are able to recover strength and spirits quickly and persevere in the face of obstacles. In a review of the literature on teacher resiliency, Bobeck (2002) contends that five primary factors are responsible for teachers remaining in the field despite the challenges they face: (1) relationships (mentoring programs,

Deborah S. Yost is an associate professor in the Department of Education at LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

administrative and parental support); (2) career competence and skills; (3) personal ownership of careers (ability to solve problems, set goals, and help students); (4) sense of accomplishment (experiencing success); and (5) sense of humor.

Resiliency is found in teachers who transfer to other schools, according to Johnson and Birkeland (2003). They studied the career paths of 50 new teachers in Massachusetts and concluded:

> Unlike those in the study who left the public school classroom altogether, the voluntary movers had not given up on teaching instead they looked for schools that made good teaching possible. (p. 21)

This result is compared to recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), which reported that dissatisfaction from administration and opportunities for professional development are key factors in teachers choosing to transfer to other schools to find better employment opportunities and working conditions.

Related Research

School Culture

The school culture literature points out that teacher retention decreases when teachers are confronted with inadequate support by administrators, lack of re-sources, and the mismatch between the traditional practices of teacher education program curricula and schools (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; 1996; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelley, 2004; Wood, 2001). Factors that also correlate highly with teacher attrition are working condi-tions: large class size, heavy teaching loads, lack of administrative or other support, and inadequate resources (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Hebert and Worthy (2001) point out that novice teachers are often given difficult class assignments, schedules that allow little time for reflection, and ineffective mentors, who may be unwilling or unable to provide support to novice teachers.

Hertzogís study (2002) of novice teachers revealed that they are expected to engage in activities that result in the development of shared meaning and a sense of community in their schools. This involves an alignment between the philosophy of the new teacher and the context in which he or she is teaching. The notion of collective efficacy means that greater confidence is attained when its constituents have shared visions and goals (Pajares, 1996). Thus, it seems logical to conclude that if a teacherís philosophy is not in line with a schoolís shared vision then a teacher must make a choice to join the collective group stance, align him or herself to minority opposing views, or leave either the school or teaching profession entirely. Thus, the notion of collective efficacy can have a major impact on teacher retention.

Teacher Efficacy—Resiliency and Persistence

Pajares (1996) stated, ìThe higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort,

persistence, and resilienceî (p. 544). Thus teacher resiliency and persistence are strongly related to teacher efficacy. Personal as opposed to collective self-efficacy has to do with the amount of confidence individuals have in their ability to complete tasks successfully; therefore judgments of efficacy forecast how much effort one expends and how long he or she persists on a task (Bandura, 1982). Knowledge and prior skill attainment are poor predictors of future performance because the beliefs people hold about their performance have more power than acquired learning (Pajares, 1996). Therefore it is not enough to merely increase feelings of worth or of competence; instead the focus should be on raising competence and confidence primarily through successful authentic mastery experiences. Practical applications of this construct for teacher education programs should be geared to greater understanding of how to provide authentic experiences for teacher candidates that not only teach them what to do (raising competence), but how to do it well in a variety of contexts (raising confidence).

Teacher education research has focused on various ways programs have positively impacted confidence levels through successful participation in field experiences that are connected to course work (Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenberger, 2001; Goddard & Foster, 2001; Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Yost, Forlenza-Bailey, & Shaw, 1999). The more successful experience a teacher candidate has working with diverse groups of students, the higher the confidence level of the teacher, which in turn, positively influences self-efficacy. Thus, if the environment is conducive to positive growth and provides the novice teacher with opportunities for success, then the likelihood is that his/her self-efficacy will increase. On the other hand, if the novice teacher experiences little success early or while student teaching, judgments of low efficacy may determine how long the teacher will persist in developing a strong teaching repertoire.

An important aspect of this research on self-efficacy is its relationship to a novice teacherís ability to effectively think about, cope with, and solve problems that arise in the classroom setting. Bandura (1986) considered self-reflection an important personal attribute that contributes to oneís ability to positively alter his/her own thinking and behavior. However, few opportunities are available for novice teachers to reflect deeply on their teaching practices thus schools may unintentionally thwart the development of an in-ward sense of self-as-teacher (Conway & Clark, 2003). Thus, teachers need knowledge of how to reflect as well as time to think about their practice, both of which are essential to oneís ability to problem-solve and cope with challenges.

Reflection and Inquiry

In order for novice teachers to become successful, they require the tools necessary for coping with challenges they encounter. Numerous authors have put forth the proposition that critical reflection is a viable tool to help teachers cope with problems that occur in the classroom setting (Dewey, 1933; Schˆn, 1987; Van Manen, 1977). Noted earlier, if people feel confident in their ability to manage and

solve problems, then the likelihood is that they will be motivated to persist in finding solutions. Teacher education programs strongly influence the extent to which novice teachers are able to think and problem-solve.

There has been some promising research that suggests that novice teachers will use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool if educated to think in that way (Dieker & Monda-Amaya, 1997; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Pultorak, 1996; Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Colton, & Starko, 1991; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). In fact, a study has shown that using critical reflection throughout the teacher education experience has resulted in a marked ability of first year teachers to reflect on critical levels (Yost, 1997; Yost Forlenza-Bailey, & Shaw, 1999). Goddard and Foster (2001) suggest that research is needed to discover how the failure to develop critical reflective skills may be indicative of a teacherís desire to leave the profession.

The notion that reflection is enhanced when teachers engage in research has been well documented in the literature (Feuyo & Koorland, 1997; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Yost & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). When schools partner with universities in the induction process and teacher reflection is a primary focus, increased teacher retention rates have been demonstrated (Kelley, 2004; Wood, 2001). Kelleyís study revealed that teacher retention is linked to high levels of novice teacher growth and reflection through the use of inquiry projects. The induction program in this study required teachers to evaluate the efficacy of their own practice, which enabled them to determine whether their teaching practices resulted in student learning.

An important aspect related to the development of critical reflection, is the role that theory plays in a novice teacherís ability to enact meaningful change in the classroom or school setting (Harste, Leland, Schmidt, Vasquez, & Ociepka, 2004; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). According to Harste et al (2004), teachers who can theoretically justify their actions are more successful in making change in their classrooms. Similarly, Korthagen and Kessels (1999) posit that the connection between theory and practice must be made explicit to teacher candidates in order to empower them to act based on knowledge; this can only occur through reflection on practice.

Research on successful novice teachers stresses the importance of praxis in teacher education, as well as a positive and supportive school culture. The studies presented in this review also point to self-efficacy and reflection as two important components related to teacher retention, persistence, and resiliency. These results are confirmed by a review of the literature that points to two factors relating to increased resiliency: Achieving success and the ability to solve problems (Bobeck, 2002). The present study offers some insights into these factors and provides recommendations for teacher education programs as to how resiliency and persistence can be fostered and enhanced in teacher candidates.

Purpose of the Study

The literature on teacher education has focused on novice teachers who leave the profession, which has substantially contributed to our understanding of important variables related to teacher retention. Future research should focus on novice teachers who are exemplars in the field in order to isolate key characteristics that teacher education programs can nurture and enhance in their teacher education candidates (Goddard & Foster, 2001; Hebert & Worthy, 2001).

The purpose of this qualitative study is to answer the following research questions: (1) what major obstacles did successful novice teachers face during their first year of teaching? (2) What teacher education or other factors shaped their current views and successes? and (3) To what extent are these teachers able to use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool?

Method

Design

A qualitative research design was used in order to capture the complex reality of teachersí daily work and experiences. The study was triangulated using multiple sources of data: Interviews with principals who were responsible for supervising the teachers, interviews with second year teachers, and observations of their teaching performance.

As with all research, limitations should be acknowledged. Qualitative research seeks to uncover the complex, dynamic, and changing phenomenon being studied. Several features of the design of this study provide the reader with in-depth insights into the complex nature of the teacher education experience by providing thick descriptions and overall effects of the program from the perspectives of the researcher, administrators, and teachers. However, the reader should understand that the results of this study cannot be generalized to the teacher candidate population as a whole.

Internal and external validity have been maintained through the use of alternative constructs (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). For example, dependability addresses the issue of whether the findings of the study can be replicated. To increase dependability an audit trail was used which documented procedures, field notes, code notes, coded transcripts, and personal documents supplied by the participants. To increase objectivity, the interview protocols were reviewed and feedback provided by several education professors, graduate students, and teachers not associated with the study. Moreover, to enhance confirmability the teachers were sent copies of the data analysis section of the study and asked to note any distortion.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data collection occurred through interviews and observations of

teaching performance over a two-month period of time in the fall of 2000, during the participantsí second year of teaching. A second phase of data collection occurred in 2004, five years after graduation from the teacher education program. During the first phase, interviews ranged from one to two hours and were tape-recorded. A certified court reporter transcribed the recordings, resulting in over 580 pages of interview data. Field notes were taken throughout the interviews and videotaped observations. Videotapes of classroom performance were transcribed by a graduate assistant. These data were compiled with interview data and field notes and analyzed using the coding procedures of Lincoln and Guba (1983). To ease the coding process the researcher used published software: QSRís NUD*DIST, N4 Classic. This program allowed the researcher to code hundreds of pages of text based on categories that emerged. The process of coding these data resulted in six major themes (learning, practice, personal qualities, first year, values, and administration) and forty-three sub-themes.

During the second phase of data collection, which occurred five years after graduation, teachers were sent a questionnaire that requested information on their current teaching position, education-related activities, and graduate program pursuits. Of the ten questionnaires sent to teachers, eight were returned for analysis.

Participants

The teachers all graduated from the same teacher education program and were in their second year of teaching when data collection commenced. The interviews were planned to allow teachers sufficient time to reflect on their first year with more objectivity. Also, because they had graduated from the teacher education program only a year and five months prior to data collection, their recollections of the impact of the teacher education program would likely be fresh in their minds at this time.

The teachers were selected from a group of 17 volunteers. All had completed an undergraduate program leading to dual certification in Elementary and Special Education. The sample was stratified to obtain a range of teaching experiences: urban, suburban, private, public, middle, special education, and elementary education set-tings. All participants were white except for one who was Hispanic. All were in the age range of 22-25 years old at the time of graduation from the program. The mean GPA of the participants was 3.42. The mean GPA rating is comparable to the population in the teacher education program due to program requirements for certification.

Teacher Education Program

Overview of the program. This qualitative study was undertaken at a small, liberal arts university of approximately 3,000 undergraduate students. At the time of the study the teacher education program enrolled approximately 450 candidates seeking certification in either secondary or elementary/special education (ESE) in a four-year, undergraduate program. Course work for ESE majors begins in the freshman year and culminates in two semesters of student teaching in the senior year.

The combined ESE program was first developed in 1985 by a group of education faculty; it was one of the first undergraduate programs in the nation that offered a dual certification elementary and special education program (ESE), with *a combined emphasis.* In a combined program teacher candidates learn about the wide variation of the human condition, including students with disabilities, in courses in which the content for elementary and special education is integrated. The program focuses on developmental and cognitive psychology as a basis for understanding student variability (see Feden & Vogel, 2003).

Mission. The mission of the combined ESE program is to produce graduates who are able to understand the unique attributes of each student without focusing solely on established special education or other labels. Highlights of the program include:

◆ Developmental levels, learning styles, and methods that would accommodate a variety of learning styles in the classroom setting.

◆ Numerous and diverse field experiences that are connected to course work. Students experience urban, suburban, lower and upper elementary, middle/high school, and special education classrooms. Their philosophy of teaching is further developed during the student teaching year, requiring students to provide a justification for their beliefs.

◆ Critical reflection as a problem-solving tool. The model used is similar to Deweyís (1933) process of critical thinking. These elements are: (1) to identify a problem, (2) locate its source, (3) make connections to teacher education content or research, (4) implement alternative strategies, and (5) closely observe results and alter strategies when and if necessary.

◆ Conduct action research through two courses that coincide with the professional year óTeaching & Research Methods I and II. These courses require students to collect and critically evaluate data collected in general and special education settings. The goal is to produce graduates who define their role as teacher/researchers and who use critical reflection for the purpose of educational change.

Results

The analysis of data revealed a surprisingly cohesive group of teachers with respect to their teaching philosophy, methods of teaching, and managing of behavior. Several propositions emerged from the data analysis.

Proposition 1: Successful field and student teaching experiences that are connected to coursework build teachers' confidence and self-efficacy and thus encourage a higher level of competence in their first year of teaching.

With the exception of one teacher, Chandra, all were very aware of the attributes that contributed to their success as novice teachers. This intuitive sense of the contribution they were making in their respective schools was corroborated during separate interviews with their building administrators and in observations of their teaching. Data were analyzed relative to the level of teaching competence displayed by this group of novice teachers and factors they felt contributed to their success.

Administrator's views of teaching performance. Data was obtained from administrators regarding the level of proficiency demonstrated by this group of teachers. When administrators were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of these teachers, nine out of ten administrators stated that a major strength was the teachersí ability to meet studentsí needs by adjusting and accommodating instruction. Other singular themes emerging from an analysis of this data were their ability to collaborate with other teachers and parents, take on leadership positions and volunteer to help out at school functions. The leadership positions taken on by this group of teachers were characterized for the most part as creating new programs and directing new initiatives. Several of the candidates were depicted as passionate about teaching, knowledgeable and able to ìsee the big picture.î Regarding the latter two areas, Karenís principal stated:

> In terms of curriculum, it wasnít just getting to know the districtís curriculum, but when you talked about broad areas, whether it was whole language or technology, or integrating areas, she had an awareness of what they were. If you do not have a framework, then itís beyond understanding for some teachersÖ We had two other teachers who began new to the district at the same timeóa vast difference.

Four teachers were observed to experience some minor challenges during their first year, and Chandra experienced some serious challenges in her teaching and managing of behavior. The minor challenges were revealed as difficulty collaborating with more experienced teachers (feeling intimidated); dealing effectively with an instructional aide who was weak; prioritizingówanting to do it all, and; developing sense of timing during lessons. Regarding the latter, Kathyís principal stated, ìÖchallenges in organizing lessons, playing them with a sense of time, getting everything done in the time frame; making sure that their arenít any pieces left out. Part of that is plain experience.î

Teacher education program experience. In addition to identifying program elements, such as adjusting and accommodating instruction that contributed to their success in teaching, six teachers discussed their field and student teaching experiences as being powerful learning opportunities. As an example, Naomi (middle school suburban, learning support-teacher) commented: ìThe thing that stands out is that we were in the field so much and the fact from freshman year, we were out there for two hours [a week] and really got to see what was going on. We then brought it back to the classroom and discussed issues.î

Teachers also commented on what was most important during the field and/or student teaching experiences. The most prominent theme had to do with *believing in oneself* and having *confidence*. Kathy (fifth-grade inclusion teacher) stated, ìI think believing in yourself óyou are going to face different challenges. Itís just a matter of knowing that you can do it. That is the difference.î Ellen (teacher of students with severe disabilities) shared, ìStick to what you believe in, what you feel is right, or if it is not right, question authority.î

Teachers' view of successful teaching qualities. Teachers were asked what particular personal/professional qualities they believed made them successful teachers. Major themes emerging from the data were: knowing your students, being persevering and patient, showing enthusiasm, having a positive attitude, and being organized, creative, and personable. Stating that she possessed the quality of perseverance and patience, Linda (middle school, urban, learning support teacher) commented: ìI wonít give up. I am stubborn. That can also play into the ëyouíre a nagí kind of business, but I wonít give up [on students].î

On a metacognitive level, the majority of teachers in this study were very aware of the attributes that they brought to the teaching situation. This sense of the contribution they were making was corroborated during separate interviews with their building administrators.

Observations of teaching practice. Two themes emerged from an analysis of observation data, which focused on establishing a positive classroom environment and student-centered instruction. With the exception of one teacher, all displayed these skills in the classroom setting. Chandra (second-grade teacher) was not able to demonstrate either characteristic in her teaching despite the fact that her philosophy of teaching was similar to the other teachers.

The remaining nine teachers demonstrated through their practice that they were able to meet the needs of their students and they were able to create a positive and supportive classroom climate. These teachers were also observed to use questioning as a formative assessment tool, variations in groupings to ensure that students were learning at appropriate levels, and a wide range of instructional practices, such as cooperative grouping, centers, and inquiry methods, to ensure that all styles of learning were accommodated in the classroom setting.

On the other hand, Chandra did not display sophisticated teaching strategies. She used primarily direct instruction and lacked many essential lesson plan elements, such as set inductions and closures. At no time during the taping did Chandra adequately address the developmental needs of her second graders or help them make meaningful connections to content.

Proposition 2: Critical reflection as a problem-solving tool empowers teachers to cope with the challenges that they encounter in their first few years of teaching.

Extensive data were collected on the self-reported challenges that this group of teachers encountered during their first year of teaching and how they analyzed and attempted to solve these challenges. All had long and detailed stories of the academic and behavioral student-related problems they encountered in their first and second years of teaching. With the exception of Chandra, all were able to identify the source of the problem, which gave them a logical way to assist their students in making progress toward an academic or behavioral goal. Kathyís comment illustrates this point: ìYou know, finding out about her background, you can figure out the reasons why her behaviors were like that.î Thus Kathy spent a lot of time talking with her troubled student to establish trust because she discovered that the child was constantly uprooted and was now living with her grandfather. Kathy also contributed to the childís security by establishing consistent routines and rules. ìConsistency is the big thing. She needed to know what we were willing to put up with and were not.î Regarding progress she made with this student, ìWe felt we made such gains with her, because we had support from her grandpop. But she moved and it was such a shame.î

Naomi in her first year teaching in an urban middle school (general education classroom) encountered a student whom she described as follows:

> He was in sixth grade and if you spoke to him, he had a little speech problem, but you would think that this kid is probably the smartest boy in my class because of the vocabulary he used. He was so intelligent and he could write, but the whole thing was inventive spelling. He could not read.

This boy was not diagnosed as having a learning disability by his urban middle school. She realized that he had a problem in the area of phonemic awareness and thus began to tutor him after school in that area. She also got him into a special program at Temple University to ensure that he would make quick progress in reading.

Susan (second-grade teacher) worked with a very challenging student who had difficulty with schedule changes and ìwas always freaking out from a kid moving a shoe or moving a chair.î She made numerous accommodations for him and helped him to improve his writing skills, which were significantly below average. Susan read a book entitled, *The Explosive Child*, to assist with strategies to help this boy. In the end, Susan stated that the most important intervention was:

> I gave him space and I gave him time. As soon as he did his explosion, he would go to his spot. I would let him have maybe five, ten minutes. Then I would invite him back to join us when he felt comfortable. Over time, and it took a long time, he was able to get himself back up and join us.

All of the stories told by the teachers contained elements of the critical thinking model introduced to them in their teacher education program as a problem-solving tool (explained earlier) and used extensively during their student teaching semesters in the form of journal writing, action research projects, and seminar class discussions.

Proposition 3: Mentoring components in teacher induction programs have a powerful impact on beginning teachers. Conversely, traditional induction programs that focus on transmitting knowledge in a short period of time have limited utility in enhancing the learning of novice teachers.

Of the ten teachers interviewed, five believed that their teacher induction programs were very helpful and supportive, three felt that their teacher induction programs were very poorly organized and run, and two had no teacher induction programs at all. It is interesting to note that five participants, who indicated that their induction programs were helpful, participated in suburban district programs. The three who disliked the experience were first year urban teachers. The content of the teacher induction programs varied greatly from district to district. All programs had a three-to-five day component, which consisted of an overview of district policies and procedures, laws, setting up rooms, management techniques and teaching strategies. Other programs organized a mentorship component, which was greatly valued by the teachers who were offered this service.

Organization. Teacher induction programs that organized much of the content into sessions prior to the school year had unfavorable reviews by several teachers because it was too much information to take in at one time, and it detracted from the teachersí desire to get their classrooms ready. These teachers shared that they wished the sessions could have been spread throughout the summer to give them time to assimilate new information and look for ways to integrate the ideas in their teaching repertoires.

Program Content. Negative comments surfaced as a result of how the content was delivered. Three teachers indicated that they did not learn very much from their induction programs because the content was delivered via lecture methods. Sally noted, ìIt was kind of too much all at once right in the beginning, kind of intimidating and overwhelming.î Ellen recalled that her urban teacher induction program was not helpful at all. ìIt was in a big auditorium full of new teachersÖ I could not hear what was going onÖ there werenít enough packets of material to go aroundÖ I canít remember what was even spoken about, to be honest.î Another urban teacher noted that one of the lectures was about special education laws, but she already knew the information.

Several teachers participating in suburban teacher induction programs gave positive reviews regarding program content. Karen recalled one presentation: ìOne was on guided reading, which was great . . . The next day I came into my room and I wanted to do it all.î An urban teacher noted that the teacher induction sessions taught her how to set up her room and to teach mathematics more effectively.

Mentorship. The most positive aspect of the teacher induction programs was an opportunity to network with other teachers and/or work with a mentor teacher. For Kathy, meeting with other new teachers was very helpful: ìIt helped because it made you not feel alone and then you also got insight on how somebody [handled]

a similar situation.î Regarding her mentorship experiences during her second year after transferring to another school, Ellen noted:

> I was assigned a mentor here. We meet throughout the week. But it was geared toward my experience, what I have gone through and what I havenít gone through, what I am scared about, and that I can be so completely honest . . . It has helped me a great deal.

Sally noted that one day of her teacher induction program was very good because she got to share a bad situation she had with a student with her mentor group. ìWe did some reflection. It was kind of a boosting morale day.î She also noted that the best part of the program was ìsitting with my mentor teacher.î

Proposition 4: A positive and supportive school environment may not in itself be enough to support a struggling teacher. Conversely, unsupportive school climates cause high efficacy teachers to transfer to other schools rather than leave the profession.

Supportive School Climate. The data clearly depicted one teacher, Chandra, who was unable to find success in her urban classroom despite having tremendous support from her principal and colleagues. This teacherís personality was passive and lacked with-it-ness with urban students. Chandraís situation was one in which she had a tremendous desire to succeed and never gave up, but she lacked the necessary traits to succeed in a tough, urban school setting. Her principal commented:

> She does not have the personality to take control or the energy . . . I sent anybody and everybody to help her [last year]. I will give her credit though, she hung in. I mean, she didnít take sick days. That is why I am giving her another chance this year and I moved her down from fifth to second grade.

The principal also noted that the students in this urban school were very challenging. However, when she moved Chandra to second grade, she was careful to place students in her class who were relatively well behaved. Despite this selection, Chandra continued to struggle. Chandraís feelings of efficacy during the interview were at a low point. ìI had fifth grade last year, 30 students, and I just couldnít have imagined how horrible their behavior was going to be. It was horrible. I am getting choked up even thinking about it.î She cried several times during the interview session.

Chandraís desire to continue teaching at this school despite the overwhelming challenges she faced might have to do with a strong sense of personal mission, which was linked to her twin sisterís work as a volunteer with homeless women as well as her family ethos: ì[My twin sister and I] are the oldest in our family. Our parents are very kind, caring people so I definitely would attribute it to our parents. I always knew I had some kind of calling like that.î

Thus, Chandraís story of her life, her experiences in the teacher education program and teaching in a tough, urban school depict a young woman who was clearly out of her depth, despite the strong personal mission that she held with regard

to service to the poor. As her principal stated, she did not have ìthe personality or the energyî to take control over the academic lives of her students. Although she experienced the same teacher education content and experiences and had a teaching philosophy similar to the other teachers in this study, she was unable to demonstrate effective teaching practice. This may suggest a lack of ìfitî between her personal qualities and the challenges that confronted her in this urban school.

Unsupportive School Climates. The data also shed light on reasons that three teachers left their schools during and after the first year. Marie taught in a rural school located in Hawaii during her first year and left to obtain a position in a special education classroom for students with severe disabilities in Pennsylvania. Naomi taught general education in an urban middle school and left this position to teach in a suburban, middle school learning support classroom. Similarly, Ellen left her urban, elementary, learning-support classroom after only six months for a position in a private school teaching students with severe disabilities. All three left their positions because of the perceived lack of administrative support and the failure of these schools to attend to the needs of their students. It should be noted that all three teachers had numerous urban field placements throughout the program. In fact, Naomiís student teaching placement was at the same middle school in which she subsequently obtained a position upon graduation. Regarding the lack of administrative support she experienced at this school, Naomi stated:

> What surprised me was probably having no support; being put in there with nothing . . . they basically throw you 33 kids and that was it. If there was something going on in your classroom, there was no one for you to go to. There were two guidance counselors for 1,600 kids, so my kids never saw a guidance counselor, even the ones who desperately needed it.

Marie similarly noted that the administration in her rural Hawaii district did not give her any support and special education was largely ignored: ì[To them] special education did not exist. It didnít apply to them at all. So we were in the dark the whole time.î Ellen, speaking of why she left mid-year, stated: ìI felt unfortunately hopeless. I had no where to turn. When I would bring the issues up no one wanted to discuss them.î

Two teachers, who began their teaching careers in urban schools, also commented at length on the illegalities they observed in their schools. For example, Naomi (middle school, urban, general education teacher) stated:

> Everything was done so illegallyóeverything in special education. Who was at the meetingóit was just the teacher signing all of the things and, the principal would sign it later. Parents wouldnít come. My partner and I disagreed with something the head of special education wanted for the student. We said, ìNo, we disagree with this.î They said to just sign itóthat it doesnít matter. It was hard seeing that because it was not doing anything for the kids.

These three teachers left their teaching positions after the first year and obtained teaching positions elsewhere. Naomi obtained a position teaching in a suburban middle school working in a resource room. Stating why she left her urban position, Naomi observed: ìyou feel like youíre there and you want to be there to help and you canít help. Everything was against you trying to help students. Itís really sad.î Ellen also stated, ìIt wasnít the kids. And even the administrators asked, ëOh what did the kids do?í But, it wasnít the kids, unfortunately.î

Both teachers spoke of their new positions as being an excellent fit for them. Ellen (teacher of students with severe disabilities) commented: ìI feel this is a tremendous match . . . I canít wait to start every single day. I canít wait to fix something or try something else until something clicksówhen there is a little accomplishment it is a big deal to me.î These teachers found a teaching environment in which they could make a difference in their studentís lives.

During phase II of the data collection process, I sent questionnaires to these teachers to gain longitudinal information on their current teaching placements, educational activities, and graduate school pursuits. Of the eight teachers who responded, six were still teaching. One was completing an administrative internship and the other was pursuing doctoral work. Four of the six teachers who were still teaching had transferred to other schools and were teaching different grades and/or students with different exceptionalities. Only two teachers, Karen (first-grade teacher) and Kathy (fifth-grade inclusion teacher) remained at the same suburban schools at which they began their teaching careers. All respondents had completed masterís degrees, which were in a variety of areas. Two teachers obtained an advanced degree in reading, one in education, one in educational administration, one in learning disabilities, and one in divinity.

Conclusion

The research questions guiding this qualitative study and resulting data highlight the important contributions made by teacher education programs in fostering resiliency and persistence in teacher candidates so that they will remain in the field. The results therefore shift attention away from a primary focus on school culture and induction to the crucial role teacher education programs play in the retention of qualified teachers.

In this qualitative study an extensive amount of data were collected and analyzed, revealing several propositions that were reviewed in the body of this article. The research questions used as a guide for this study are summarized as follows: (1) what major obstacles did the successful novice teachers face during their first year of teaching? The data show very clearly that these second year teachers were confronted with numerous academic and behavioral challenges in their first year and, in some cases, frustrated in their attempts to help students with little to no administrative support. (2) What teacher education or other factors shaped their

current views and successes? To a large extent, the teachers in this study pointed to the numerous and diverse field and student teaching experiences connected to content that gave them the confidence they needed to develop and use a wide repertoire of teaching and management strategies. In addition, their principalsí observations of their ability to meet the needs of students matched their own personal teaching philosophies and that of the teacher education program mission. (3) To what extent are these teachers able to use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool? The teachers were highly successful in resolving academic and behavioral challenges using a model of critical reflection introduced to them in their teacher education program.

Implications

Much of the teacher education literature focuses on teacher quality and how best to produce that level of quality in teacher education programs. The ability to produce novice teachers who are resilient and persistent in the face of the complex problems encountered in todayís schools is a goal to which every teacher education program aspires. Feiman-Nemser (2003) notes that, ìthe stories of beginning teachers typically revolve around several themesóreality shock, the lonely struggle to survive, and the loss of idealismî (p. 27), implying that teacher education programs can better prepare teacher candidates for challenges they will face as new teachers.

Research on teacher retention underscores the need for a positive and support-ive school environment in order to assist novice teachers in becoming successful, confident teachers. Moreover, teacher education research suggests that a teacherís confidence level or self efficacy is related to a personís ability to problem-solve and cope with dilemmas that arise. Levels of confidence are also thought to derive from a focus on praxis and the ability to think on critical levels and problem-solve.

The results of this study support the notion that self-efficacy, derived from successful field and student teaching experiences and the ability to use reflection for problem solving actually outweighed positive school climate as a factor in novice teacher success. Not all the high-efficacy teachers in this study were fortunate enough to find positions in schools that had positive and supportive school cultures. What several of the teachers did was continue to search for the right environmentói.e., for school settings that were suited to their philosophical views and practices, and where they were able to make a difference in the lives of their students.

On the other hand, the findings also suggest that positive school environments are not enough in themselves to support struggling teachers. The results clearly showed one teacher whose philosophy was in-line with the other teachers who was unable to find success in the classroom despite having support from principal and colleagues. This teacher also displayed a non-reflective teaching orientation, which prevented her from finding appropriate solutions to the problems she faced. A strong personal mission to serve the poor provided her with tremendous persever-

ance to remain in a job to which she was ill-suited. This teacherís poor performance was attributed to ìlack of fit.î In other words her personal characteristics did not match the competencies one needs to be successful in a tough urban school.

This research provides strong support for the contribution of education programs in fostering teacher resiliency and persistence. Programs have the capacity to ensure that coursework is tied to field experience and that critical reflection is interwoven throughout the educational experience. This is the first step in the long road to developing reflective practitioners, since reflection requires a real-life dilemmas and requisite problem-solving skills. Resilient teachers are those that can think deeply, problem-solve, and feel confident in their ability to meet the needs of their students. This leads to high levels of self-efficacy, which in turn leads to greater persistence and risk-taking.

From a teacher education perspective, teacher candidates should have a solid philosophical framework based on theory and research from which instruction can be designed to meet the needs of students. Metacognition, in the sense of knowing themselves and their preferences for styles of teaching and school governance, will enable teacher candidates to interview prospective principals, rather than the other way around. A poor match between teacher candidate and school environment, as this study did show, encourages high efficacy teachers to transfer to other schools rather than leave the profession.

Teacher induction programs add to the solid foundation built by the teacher education experience, especially when district-sponsored programs foster mentorship and/or opportunities to collaborate with other new teachers. Lecture formats were perceived by participating teachers as being an ineffective means of promoting initial teacher learning.

Further research should address how teacher reflection, inquiry, and self-efficacy, relate to teacher resiliency and ultimately teacher retention. Studies prior to this one have touched upon this idea, but a more systematic investigation of these variables is needed.

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