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2016 Principal Survey

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Executive Summary

Project Background – Since the inception of alternative teacher preparation programs, contradictory evidence about their quality and the impact of teachers prepared through alternative preparation programs versus traditional colleges of education has been presented. While some suggest alternative programs are weak or ineffective (Zeichner, 2016) others have presented equally compelling evidence to demonstrate their equivalence or outpacing of traditional college programs (Alhamisi, 2008). Furthermore, to suggest that all alternative preparation programs are identical is incorrect and misleading (Sass, 2013). Any suggestions that alternative teacher preparation programs are identical or will produce the same results are incorrect, in the same way that all colleges of education are not identical nor produce identical teachers. As alternative teacher preparation programs in general increase in popularity, clarity about *specific* programs is essential to better understand their unique characteristics and potential contributions to the K-12 teacher workforce.

Project Purpose – In order to begin to better assess the quality of teachers emerging from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) program specifically, and compare their performance to traditionally prepared college of education graduates, ABCTE commissioned an independent study in September 2016. The main purpose of this study was to evaluate both the effectiveness and retention of ABCTE prepared teachers with those teachers emerging from traditional college pathways.

Project Sample – A final sample of 155 principals (57% response rate) participated in the voluntary survey. Response rates above 33% are traditionally considered acceptable. The response rate of 57% is excellent and allows for greater generalization of results.

Overview of Findings – Five fundamental findings emerged from this study.

1. ABCTE teachers performed equivalently to traditional, college-prepared teachers across most (75%) evaluated aspects of teacher quality.

2. ABCTE prepared teachers were rated higher on four aspects (20%) of teacher quality, relative to bringing real-world experiences into the classroom, community connection, and job appreciation.
3. Traditional, college-prepared teachers were rated higher on only one aspect (5%): pedagogy.
4. Nearly all principals (151 of 155; 97%) expected to offer their ABCTE prepared teachers a second contract.
5. Nearly all principals (150 of 154; 97%) expected to retain their ABCTE prepared teachers after the three-year mark.

Conclusions – Survey results support positive attributes associated with ABCTE prepared teachers and find them largely comparable to or stronger than traditionally prepared teachers. During this time when many underserved local communities are in need of a stable teaching force, the opportunity to attract both traditionally and alternatively prepared high-quality instructors seems exceptionally important. It is clear that ABCTE prepared teachers are well-prepared to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

Introduction and Methods

Since the inception of alternative teacher preparation programs, contradictory evidence about their quality and the impact of teachers prepared through alternative preparation programs versus traditional colleges of education has been presented. The National Education Policy Center reported that teacher preparation outside of colleges of education was sporadic, incomplete, and left student learning at stake (Zeichner, 2016). Conversely, Alhamisi (2008), noted that "teachers who completed the alternative teacher preparation programs and teachers who completed traditional teacher preparation programs did not differ on either Praxis II scores or grade point averages, as well as [across] external perceptions of job knowledge and performance" (p. 4). Further, the nature, substance, and requirements of alternative teacher preparation programs appears to influence the quality and performance of emerging teachers. Sass (2013) reported a significant difference in outcome and performance, depending on the type of preparation (coursework versus no coursework), suggesting that increased coursework was actually detrimental to the in-class performance of teachers. Thus the notion that all alternative teacher preparation programs are identical or will produce the same result is incorrect. As alternative teacher preparation programs in general increase in popularity, clarity about *specific* programs is essential to better understand their unique characteristics and potential contributions to the K-12 teacher workforce.

In order to specifically address the quality of teachers emerging from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) program and compare their performance to that of traditionally prepared college of education graduates, ABCTE commissioned an independent study in September 2016. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness and retention of ABCTE prepared teachers as compared to those teachers emerging from traditional college pathways. ABCTE offers an alternative certification program currently accepted in 12 states in place of traditional teacher preparation programs. Based on teacher placement information gathered from annual ABCTE alumni surveys, a selection of 270 principals who currently employ one or more ABCTE prepared teachers were contacted and asked to participate in an anonymous survey. The final convenience sample included 155 principal participants (57%) who completed the survey fully. This response rate is considered high and supports the generalizability of the results with a ± 5.15 margin of error and a 95% confidence level.

For this project, a unique survey was constructed to assess the performance of teachers across a variety of areas associated with the traditional role of a teacher. Twenty teacher performance indicators under this general domain were developed from teaching best practices literature and experience in the field. An expert panel of 12 principals were convened to review the teacher characteristics included on the instrument, as a method for instrument validation. This Delphi panel (Skulmaski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007) supported the use of the initial set of criteria with minor fine-tuning of the instrument based on pilot results. Table 1 lists the teacher quality (performance) indicators included on the final survey distributed for this study in no particular order of importance.

Table 1. Teacher Performance Indicators Included on Final Survey

Maturity	Classroom management
Has broad real-world experiences	Organization
Works late as needed	Conflict resolution
Leadership	Applies prior professional experience to instruction
Has roots in the local community	Content knowledge
Collaborates with peers	Pedagogy
Community involvement	Models appropriate behavior for students
Incorporates professional feedback	Motivation
Punctuality	Will remain with your school long-term
Parent communication	Appreciates the job opportunity

In addition to the evaluation of fundamental teacher performance criteria, two additional questions were asked to gauge how confident principals were in the continued employment (retention) of ABCTE alternatively prepared teachers. First, principals were asked whether they would extend an offer for a second contract to the ABCTE prepared teacher(s) in their schools. Second, principals were asked whether they intended to retain their ABCTE prepared teacher(s) after the three-year mark.

Survey results were analyzed using the Rasch (1960/1980) model for rating scales (Wright & Masters, 1982). The Rasch objective measurement model allows for the creation and use of linear measures of qualities. Linear measurement provides a level of clarity and specificity not achievable through traditional statistical means. Rasch measurement is widely used in many fields and a very common method implemented in social science high stakes testing (e.g., educational state testing, medical board certification, etc.). Additionally, Rasch measurement has been noted as the most effective method for validating and analyzing survey data (Bond & Fox, 2015).

Results

Instrument Performance

Performance of the instrument was excellent, and thus supports the notion that meaningful and reliable results were produced from this study. Table 2 presents Rasch consistency and reliability statistics for the principals and teacher qualities surveyed.

Table 2. Consistency and Reliability Rasch Statistics

	Separation	Reliability
Principals	2.99	.90
Teacher Qualities (Items)	3.68	.93

Separation is a measure of clarity, specifically, the number of statistically significant groups that may be identified amongst the principals (by the items), and amongst the items (by the principals). In the present survey, separation of the principals is only useful in that it refers to the consistency and clarity of their teacher ratings. On the other hand, the separation of items helps to validate that we are carefully describing and considering a specific construct - namely the qualities of teaching professionals. In traditional survey research, reliabilities above 0.70 are and separation statistics at or above 2.0 are considered acceptable. Instrument reliabilities and separations were excellent, providing evidence to support that valid and generalizable results were found and inferences can be drawn to the greater population that was not examined.

Survey Findings

A distinct benefit of using the Rasch model for surveys, is that precise data are made available for researchers to make clear interpretations. Most specifically, to define the operation of our construct (teacher performance), separation statistics and standard errors of measure associated with *each* quality were used. This uniquely precise information allows for the construct (concept) of teaching to be meaningfully interpreted, differentially. Traditional confidence intervals established using the standard error of measures associated with the twenty qualities assessed were defined, along with the separation statistics to establish the points of difference (where ABCTE teachers are stronger, where ABCTE and college prepared teachers are equivalent, and where college prepared teachers are stronger).

Tables 3 and 4 present results relative to the observation of teacher performance. Table 3 is a modified "construct map" which succinctly explains the findings. The Rasch model defines the construct (in this case teacher performance) in terms of qualities assessed, and evaluates their developmental and/or differential nature. Table 3 may be read as a scale, wherein reported performance of ABCTE prepared teachers is either better than, equal to, or worse than traditional college prepared teachers. Reading from left to right, the results are exceptionally positive for the ABCTE program. Across 20% of the qualities evaluated (4 of 20), including having roots in the local community, an appreciation for the job opportunity, and both integrating real-world experiences in the classroom and applying prior obtained professional knowledge, ABCTE prepared teachers were reported as performing significantly better than their college counterparts. Similarly, and exceptionally positive, across 75% of the qualities evaluated (15 of 20) ABCTE and college prepared teachers were shown to perform statistically equivalent. On only one rated quality (pedagogy) did principals rate college prepared teachers as performing higher.

Table 3. Teacher Performance Indicator Map

Better performance by ABCTE Prepared Teachers	Equivalent Performance across all Teachers	Better performance by Traditional College Graduates
Roots in the community	Classroom management	Pedagogy
Appreciates the job	Content knowledge	
Applies prior professional knowledge	Organization	
Real world experience	Parental communication	
	Conflict resolution	
	Collaborates with peers	
	Incorporated professional feedback	
	Works late	
	Community involvement	
	Leadership	
	Maturity	
	Punctuality	
	Models appropriate behavior	
	Motivation	
	Remain long term	

Table 4 presents the statistics for Table 3, wherein the set of items evaluated are arranged in Rasch difficulty order along with associated standard errors. Statistical separation lines are drawn between factors to denote the three statistically and meaningfully significant divisions. Table 4 thus expresses the points and magnitude of differences as demonstrated in Table 3. Table 4 demonstrates that ABCTE prepared teachers are not simply better in four areas; but practically, significantly, and *meaningfully* better. Similarly, it demonstrates the relative meaningful performance equivalence of most all other tasks, apart from pedagogy.

Table 4: Teacher Factors Arranged by Equivalence

<u>Measure (SEM)</u>	<u>Teacher Factor</u>
-1.27 (.20)	Real-World Experience
-1.16 (.20)	Applies Prior Professional Experience to Instruction
-1.01 (.20)	Appreciates the Job
-.88 (.20)	Roots in Community
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-.56 (.20)	Remain Long Term
-.52 (.20)	Motivation
-.32 (.20)	Punctuality
-.24 (.20)	Community Involvement
-.24 (.20)	Leadership
-.20 (.20)	Maturity
-.09 (.21)	Models Appropriate Behavior for Students
.08 (.20)	Works Late
.12 (.20)	Collaborate with Peers
.25 (.20)	Incorporating Professional Feedback
.37 (.20)	Conflict Resolution
.49 (.20)	Organization
.53 (.20)	Parental Communication
1.16 (.20)	Content Knowledge
1.33 (.19)	Classroom Management
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1.76 (.19)	Pedagogy

Complementary results were found to those above when principals were asked about retention of their ABCTE prepared teachers. Figures 1 and 2 clearly show that principals intend to retain their ABCTE prepared teachers through offering them a second contract and expect to keep them on staff for three years or longer.

Figure 1. Have you/Will you Offer you ABCTE Prepared Teacher a Second Contract?



Figure 2. Will you Retain your ABCTE Prepared Teacher after Three Years?



Conclusions

There exists considerable debate regarding the capacities of teachers prepared through alternative teacher preparation programs versus those prepared through traditional colleges of education. Where teacher shortages are a major concern, particularly in large urban districts, small rural districts, and those with higher levels of poverty, this concern is more than academic. Furthermore, the different natures of alternative models make the label "alternative" misleadingly simplistic. Alternative programs are not identical. The present study was designed to compare the effectiveness and retention of teachers prepared through a single alternative program, namely ABCTE, with those teachers emerging from traditional college pathways. Two fundamental, positive themes emerged from the study conducted: Performance and Longevity.

Performance (ABCTE Teachers Perform Equal to or Better than their College Prepared Counterparts)

ABCTE prepared teachers and teachers prepared through traditional colleges of education are largely equivalent in terms of their performance across the vast majority (75%) of teacher qualities assessed in our survey. Furthermore, ABCTE teachers are reported to perform significantly better across 20% of the teacher qualities assessed. ABCTE prepared teachers offer more connection to real-world issues, practical applications, community connection, and job appreciation. These findings are not entirely surprising. Newly minted traditional college-prepared teachers frequently have less exposure to "real-world" experiences useful for bringing into the classroom. ABCTE prepared teachers, who often possess degrees in the disciplines they wish to teach, typically enter teaching after having been within a specialized career path and consequently hold greater "real-world" experiences. Furthermore, teachers entering through this alternative pathway typically have made a conscious choice to leave a successful career in order to "give back" and teach, which may lead to a higher degree of community connection and job appreciation.

Teachers prepared through traditional colleges of education were reported to perform better on only one area, pedagogy (educational theory). This finding also is not surprising as traditional path teachers are generally exposed to vast amounts of educational theory courses throughout potentially four years of college. Taken holistically, ABCTE prepared teachers perform at or above expectations associated with nearly all aspects of

teacher quality assessed in this study. The finding that ABCTE prepared teachers are equally as strong or stronger than college prepared teachers across 95% of the evaluated teacher qualities is impressive and speaks well to the specific dynamics of the ABCTE program.

Longevity (ABCTE Teacher Retention Rates are Positive and Strong)

Principals overwhelmingly support the short- and long-term retention of ABCTE teachers. Indeed, 97% of principals surveyed suggested that they intended to offer their ABCTE prepared teachers a second contract. Similarly, 97% of principals surveyed suggested that they intended to retain their ABCTE prepared teachers at the three-year mark. These findings are not only strong, but quite meaningful for the development of a robust teacher workforce. Retention may, in some instances, be used as a proxy for teacher quality and effectiveness (Boyd et al., 2010). Principals are more likely to retain effective teachers. Based on the results of this study, ABCTE prepared teachers appear as quite successful, and likely to remain and/or be offered continued contracts long-term. Long-term retention is a component of great importance to administrations (Burkhauser, 2016). Nationally, 16% of public school teachers leave the teaching profession annually for reasons other than natural retirement (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). Knowing that (1) principals surveyed perceive ABCTE teachers as having greater “roots in the community”, and (2) these principals also remain steadfast in awarding ABCTE certified teachers new contracts, the ABCTE program appears to be well positioned to offer a comparable, effective, and functional alternative pathway to teaching, and a similarly positive pool of professionals, highly desirable for recruitment.

Final Comments

Findings from this study reflect well on the generally positive attributes associated with the practices of ABCTE teachers. There are many variations of "alternative" preparation programs, as noted earlier. From the positive findings shared in this report, the structure and dynamics associated specifically with the ABCTE program appear to be very sound. Findings from this report further agree with and support those earlier reports from scholars including Alhamisi (2008) who noted that alternatively prepared teachers were largely equivalent or better in comparison to traditionally prepared teachers. During this time when many underserved local communities are in need of a stable teaching force, the opportunity to attract both traditionally and alternatively prepared high-quality instructors seems exceptionally important.

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