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## ABSTRACT

Low initial employment rates and high attrition among teachers are factors recognized as major contributors to the national teacher shortage. This research compared the effectiveness of three teacher preparation methods used in Texas: alternative certification programs (ACPs), Centers for Professional Development and Technology (CPDTs), and traditional certification programs (TCPs) in addressing the teacher shortage. Researchers examined the employment records of those teachers who completed training in 1995 through a period of 5 academic years. Results indicate that significant differences exist in initial employment and attrition records between the preparation programs, meaning that each program contributes in a unique way to exacerbating the shortage. While a greater proportion of ACP completers were employed in the first year, they left the profession at higher rates than the other completers. Results also indicate that the TCP is the most effective in preparing teachers who remain in the profession over time. The authors suggest that implications of these findings should be discussed by program providers in the context of: how well each approach addresses the teacher shortage, why the impact of the programs appears to vary over time, and what factors cause the noted differences). (Contains 18 references. (SM)

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## New Structures and Approaches for Teacher Preparation: Do They Make a Difference in Teacher Retention?

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## Abstract

Low initial employment rates and high attrition among teachers are factors recognized as major contributors to the national teacher shortage. The research compared the effectiveness of the three teacher preparation methods used in Texas; alternative certification programs (ACP), Centers for Professional Development and Technology (CPDT), and traditional certification programs (TCP), in addressing the teacher shortage by examining the employment records of those teachers who completed training in 1995 through a period of five academic years. The findings indicate that significant differences exist in initial employment and attrition records between the preparation programs, meaning that each program contributes in a unique way to exacerbating the shortage. The authors suggest that the implications of these findings should be discussed by program providers in the context of three vital questions. First, “How well does each of the three approaches to teacher preparation program design address the teacher shortage?” Second, “Why does the impact of these programs appear to vary over time?” And finally, “What factors cause the noted differences?”

# **New Structures and Approaches for Teacher Preparation: Do They Make a Difference in Teacher Retention?**

*Steven A. Harris, William E. Camp, Judith Adkison*

*Readers will learn that significant differences exist in the employment records of graduates from each of the three programs used in Texas to prepare certified classroom teachers. While the content of the paper is of importance to the profession, the intent is for teacher educators to use the information as a starting point to consider the effects of the design of their own teacher preparation programs on graduates' initial employment and retention in the teacher ranks*

## **Introduction**

Education leaders recognize that many regions of the nation face a teacher shortage as researchers estimate that about 200,000 new teachers must be hired annually during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Other studies predict the nation requires from one million to 2.7 million newly hired teachers by 2010 to fill the ranks of teachers leaving for miscellaneous reasons (Hussar, 1999; Tesoriero, Foote, & Downey, 2000). Attrition, or the lack of the profession's ability to retain its professional classroom teaching corps, has been recognized as a major contributor to the shortage. The current teacher attrition problem began to gain notoriety when Murnane (1987) reported that one out of three new teachers left the profession within the first year of service in the early 1970s, as compared with only 16% who left in the first three years in the late 1960s. Other researchers found that new teachers left the profession about two and a half times more often than more experienced teachers (Huling-Austin 1986).

The 150,000 - 190,000 teachers annually prepared by existing teacher preparation programs would nearly meet the need, if all newly certified educators actually entered and remained in the profession upon completion of training (American Council on Education, 1999). However, an alarming number of neophyte teachers do not join the teacher ranks. Proportions of newly certified teachers not immediately seeking or securing classroom positions range from 18% (Kotterman, 2000) to 30-40% (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The number of those who do obtain teaching positions is ultimately reduced by attrition, especially among novice teachers. If more recently certified teachers entered the profession straight away and remained in teaching longer, the goal of meeting national, state, and local needs for certified classroom teachers would be largely met.

In response to the growing shortage problem, exacerbated by low initial employment numbers and new teacher attrition, policy makers have authorized new approaches for

preparing teachers. Two options to the traditional university degree-based teacher preparation program have been suggested in Texas. The first movement involved the authorization of alternative certification programs (ACP) in Texas in 1984 with the intention of increasing the number of highly qualified classroom teachers while addressing a perceived cause of teacher attrition; lack of support during the induction year (Littleton & Larmer, 1998). A second movement, begun in the early 1990s, involved the reformation of the field experience component of teacher preparation programs and culminated with the development of the professional development school (PDS) model (Byrd & McIntyre, 1999; Hoffman, Reed & Rosenbluth, 1997; Valli, Cooper & Franks, 1997). The PDS model was approved under a Texas law that provides funding to reform university programs into Centers for Professional Development and Technology (CPDT). By default, the remaining university programs are classified as traditional certification programs (TCP).

Alternative program participants take a decidedly different path to certification than their counterparts trained through other methods. These trainees already possess at least a bachelor's degree and have demonstrated competency in their teaching fields by presenting transcripts with required grade point averages in specified university coursework. They receive sustained, intensive, professional development before, during, and after a year-long paid internship served as classroom teachers of record. The training year is spent in cohorts while trained mentors provide continual guidance (National Center for Education Information, 2000). Because ACP teachers enter the program with bachelors' degrees and histories of successful employment in other fields, they are arguably more mature and more motivated to succeed in the classroom (Feistritzer, 1998; Stoddard & Flodden, 1995). Thus, it has been suggested that ACP teachers are more likely to secure a teaching position and remain over time than traditionally trained teachers.

The Texas Centers for Professional Development and Technology, on the other hand, have developed university-public school partnerships that use schools as clinical settings where aspiring teachers are immersed in a school-based learning community as they earn their bachelors degrees and standard teaching certificates. Aspiring teachers in the CPDT are seen as part of the school, working closely with certified professionals, directly with students in a variety of ways, and participating in faculty meetings and other school events. Thus, they are prepared for the "real world" of teaching (Darling-Hammond & Scian, 1996). As they are better prepared, they experience more success in their early years of teaching compared to traditional program graduates and, consequently, may be less likely to leave the profession.

### **The Problem**

This research compared the effectiveness of the three teacher preparation methods used in Texas in addressing the teacher shortage by examining the employment records of those

teachers who completed training in 1995 through a period of five academic years. From the results of the research, teacher educators may consider several questions. First, "How well does each of the three approaches to teacher preparation program design address the teacher shortage?" Second, "Why does the impact of these programs appear to vary over time?" And finally, "Why the differences?"

### **Methodology**

This study followed the teacher employment records of all teachers produced in 1995 by the three types of teacher preparation programs in Texas. Data provided by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) traced the cohort of all 14,945 Texas teachers certified in 1995 who were prepared in the state's traditional undergraduate teacher certification programs (TCP), alternative certification programs (ACP), and the Centers for Professional Development and Technology (CPDT) from the 1995-96 academic year through the end of the 1999-2000 academic year. These data make it possible to compare the effectiveness of each approach in meeting the state's need for teachers. The categorical data allow for classification of all accredited programs into one or another of these three categories authorized by state law. For each academic year following completion of the respective programs, the research determined percentages of the cohort from each type of certification program who: were employed as Texas public school teachers, who left the state public school system, and leavers who returned to teach in the state's public schools. When chi-square statistical data analyses indicated the existence of significance, Tukey multiple comparisons tests for proportional significance were used to isolate differences. As the participation rate among the categories varies over time, the value of conducting longitudinal research in evaluation is demonstrated.

Several limitations to the study should be noted. The categorical data provided by SBEC followed the 1995 teacher preparation program cohort, not individuals, through subsequent years from the year after initial certification; no control existed for discovering at what point particular teachers either left or returned to the profession. This limited the study to examining initial employment and attrition rates of program cohorts utilizing categorical statistics without following identified individuals through the years studied. Graduates who left to teach in another state or who taught in private schools are not considered part of the state's teaching force since SBEC no longer tracked their employment histories through state record-keeping systems. The research did not attempt to address program quality or any other outcome other than participation of its graduates in the state's public school teaching force.

### **Definitions of Terms Used**

Precise definitions of terms as used in this report are necessary to distinguish these comparisons from other research that may use similar terms with different meanings.

Alternative Certification Program (ACP) - A type of teacher preparation program in Texas providing an additional means of training classroom teachers and, in many instances, of offering staffing options to districts with critical shortages of certified applicants. In these programs, a degreed candidate completes a year-long, paid internship as the classroom teacher of record under the supervision of the employing district, a trained mentor teacher, and the program administrator while completing additional certification requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2001). As a part of their teacher training, school districts hire ACP interns under probationary certificates as classroom teachers of record for a year-long internship. Methods classes are not taught in field-based integrated classes but were instead taught in university classes, workshops, and seminars.

Center for Professional Development and Technology (CPDT) - A type of teacher preparation program in Texas, based on the Professional Development Schools (PDS) model for teacher training, that embodies standard education degree requirements but emphasizes: a) field-based experiences, in the form of a semester-long non-paid internship before gaining certification; b) the use of prevalent technology in support of learning and instruction; c) collaboration across entities, including school districts, education service centers, businesses, and universities, and; d) inclusion of teachers already in service as part of the client base (Texas Education Agency, 1998).

Employed – A teacher working under a standard teaching certificate as a classroom teacher in a Texas public school in a given academic year after completion of teacher preparation training.

Initial Employment - The event of a teacher gaining employment under a Standard Teaching Certificate in a position of Texas public school classroom teacher in the first year subsequent to completion of teacher preparation training and certification. For the purposes of this study, a paid internship as a part of teacher preparation in an alternative certification program counts as part of a teacher preparation program and does not constitute initial employment.

Intern - A classroom teacher working under a probationary certificate granted by the state while engaged in an alternative certification teacher preparation program.

Leaver - A certified teacher who leaves employment as a Texas public school classroom teacher.

Returner - A certified teacher who leaves employment as a Texas public school classroom teacher and subsequently returns to Texas public school teaching.

Standard Teaching Certificate - The certificate issued to teachers who complete all requirements of their teacher preparation programs and pass all state examinations for qualification as classroom teachers.

State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) - The governing body in the state of Texas that regulates the certification of professional educators.

Teacher Attrition - A major component of teacher turnover that includes both teachers who exit the profession and teachers who either leave to teach in another state or leave public schools to teach in private schools. For purposes of this study, teacher attrition refers to the number of certified teachers employed as classroom teachers in Texas public schools who were no longer employed in any professional education field at Texas public schools up to five years subsequent to their initial certification (TEA, 1998). Once a leaver returns to the profession, his/her data are no longer considered to be a part of the attrition data.

Teacher Retention - The number of teachers in any year who are still teaching in subsequent years (TEA, 1998). For purposes of this study, teacher retention refers to the number of certified teachers in any year that continues teaching in following years in any education field at any public school site in the state of Texas.

Traditional Certification Program (TCP) - The traditional university-based program in Texas leading to teacher certification sometimes known as a campus-based program. A standard component of this program requires one semester of a ten to sixteen-week student-teaching experience. The State Board for Educator Certification considers the standard, vocational, and regular post-baccalaureate certification paths to be parts of the traditional certification classification.

## **The Data Analysis**

### Employment in the First Year After Completion of a Teacher Preparation Program

As shown in the compilation of data in Table 1, more than one out of four teachers who completed training in Texas institutes in 1995 were not employed as classroom teachers in the first year after earning their standard certificates. Nearly 30% of those trained in TCPs and CPDTs had not accepted a classroom position, which parallels Darling-Hammond's report (2000) that proportions of newly certified teachers not immediately seeking or securing classroom positions range from 30-40%. It should be noted here that, contrary to the records of their peers trained in TCPs and CPDTs, who were hired at statistically identical rates of about 70%, almost 91% of the ACP trained teachers were working as classroom teachers in the state's public schools.

Table 1 - Certification Program by Year-One Employment Status of Texas Teachers Who Completed Training in 1995

Certification Program	A	B	C	D	E
Alternative Certification Programs	2,540	2,305	90.75%	235	9.25%
Centers for Professional Development and Technology	4,945	3,487	70.52%	1,458	29.48%
Traditional Certification Programs	7,460	5,261	70.52%	2,199	29.48%
Total	14,945	11,053	73.96%	3,892	26.04%

$$\chi^2 = 447.9; df = 2; p < .001$$

A= Number of Teachers Produced by Teacher Preparation Program

B= Number of Teachers Employed as Texas Public Schools Classroom Teachers in the Year Following Teacher Preparation Training

C= Percentage of Teachers Employed as Texas Public Schools Classroom Teachers in the Year Following Teacher Preparation Training

D= Number of Teachers Not Employed as Classroom Teachers in Texas Public Schools in the Year Following Teacher Preparation Training

E= Percentage of Teachers Not Employed as Classroom Teachers in Texas Public Schools in the Year Following Teacher Preparation Training

Multiple comparisons tests indicate that ACP completers exhibit a statistically higher rate of year-one initial employment than graduates of the other two programs. Since more than nine out of ten ACP completers taught in year-one, while only about seven out of ten CPDT and TCP graduates found year-one public school teaching positions, ACPs appear, at this stage, to be proportionally addressing the goal of national, state, and local needs for certified classroom teachers.

#### Attrition by the End of Year-Two

Table 2 - Certification Program by Year-Two Attrition of Texas Teachers Who Completed Training in 1995

Program	Newly Employed	Total Employed	Leavers	*Year-Two Attrition Rate
ACP	26	2,331	209	8.97%
CPDT	342	3,829	280	7.31%
TCP	533	5,794	315	5.44%
Total	901	11,954	804	6.73%

$$\chi^2 = 31.4; df = 2; p < .001$$

\*Attrition Rate = Leavers / Employed

The data in Table 2 show that 901 teachers trained in 1995 joined the employed cadre of Texas public school teachers for the first time in year-two as a total of 11,954 had found employment by this time. A total of 804 cohort graduates left teaching employment by the end of year-two. Statistically, both ACP and CPDT teachers left the profession at higher

rates than their TCP trained counterparts. The data show that ACP teachers exhibit the highest year-two attrition rate at nearly nine percent, while over seven percent of CPDT graduates left. Just over five percent of TCP graduates left the profession by the end of the year. The multiple comparisons tests show the 1995 TCP cohort attrition rate is statistically lower than the CPDT rate. No differences in year-two ACP versus CPDT attrition rates existed.

#### Attrition by the End of Year-Three

The analysis revealed significant associations in 1995 cohort year-three attrition data of ACP, CPDT, and TCP teachers shown on Table 3. Tukey post hoc tests showed the 1995 ACP cohort left the profession at a significantly higher rate, 14.34%, than the other two programs in year-three. The 10.41% attrition rate exhibited by graduates of the CPDT cohort turned out to be statistically lower than the ACP rate but significantly higher than the 8.70% of the TCP cohort who left classroom teaching. A cumulative total of 12,218 of the 1995 cohort taught in Texas public schools by the end of year-three. Of those, 1,533 left the profession and 269 former leavers returned to the classroom. The combined three programs experienced an overall attrition rate of 10.34%.

Table 3 - Certification Program by Year-Three Attrition of Texas Teachers Who Completed Training in 1995

Program	Newly Employed	Employed	Leavers	Returners	*Year Three Attrition Rate
ACP	12	2,343	381	45	14.34%
CPDT	108	3,937	517	107	10.41%
TCP	144	5,938	635	117	8.70%
Total	264	12,218	1,533	269	10.34%

$\chi^2 = 44.6; df = 4; p < .001$

\*Attrition Rate = (Leavers – Returners) / Employed

#### Attrition by the End of Year-Four

The chi-square analysis of year-four employment data of teachers who completed the three programs in 1995 shown on Table 4 revealed significant associations in the data. Tukey tests showed that the 1995 ACP cohort left the profession at a significantly higher rate, 17.26% in year-four, than either the CPDT cohort, which experienced a 12.81% rate, or the TCP cohort, which had a 12.10% rate. No significant difference existed between the CPDT and TCP rates. A total of 12,376 of those who completed teacher training in 1995 in the three programs gained employment as classroom teachers in Texas public schools by the end of year-four. Of those, 2,203 left classroom teaching and 556 former

leavers returned to Texas public school classrooms for a overall cumulative attrition rate of 13.31% for the three combined programs.

Table 4 - Certification Program by Year-Four Attrition of Texas Teachers Who Completed Training in 1995

Program	Newly Employed	Employed	Leavers	Returns	*Year-Four Attrition Rate
ACP	3	2,346	504	99	17.26%
CPDT	60	3,997	727	215	12.81%
TCP	95	6,033	972	242	12.10%
Total	158	12,376	2,203	556	13.31%

$\chi^2 = 33.0$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p < .001$

\*Attrition Rate = (Leavers – Returns) / Employed

Attrition by the End of Year-Five

The statistical analysis of the data depicted in Table 5 indicated significant associations in year-five attrition data of 1995 ACP, CPDT, and TCP graduates. Multiple comparisons tests indicated the ACP graduates' 19.05% year-five attrition rate significantly exceeded the 14.18% rate exhibited by CPDT graduates and the 11.72% TCP attrition rate. The tests also showed the noted CPDT attrition rate to be significantly higher than the TCP rate.

Table 5 - Certification Program by Year-Five Attrition of Texas Teachers Who Completed Training in 1995

Program	Newly Employed	Employed	Leavers	Returns	*Year-Five Attrition Rate
ACP	1	2,347	602	155	19.05%
CPDT	23	4,020	929	359	14.18%
TCP	48	6,081	1,199	486	11.72%
Total	72	12,448	2,730	1,000	13.90%

$\chi^2 = 69.7$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p < .001$

\*Attrition Rate = (Leavers - Returns) / Employed

The data in Table 5 shows that the three combined programs demonstrated an overall year-five attrition rate of nearly 14% as 2,730 of the 12,448 employed graduates left the

profession, and 1,000 returned to public school teaching. As the data depicted in the previous years, the employed graduates of ACPs experienced a statistically higher attrition rate than graduates of the other two types of teacher preparation programs. ACPs demonstrated a year-five attrition rate of 19.05%, while CPDTs and TCPs experienced year-five attrition rates of 14.18% and 11.72% respectively. Previously employed TCP graduates returned to the profession in numbers that helped lower the TCP attrition rate from 12.34% in year-four to 11.72% in year-five.

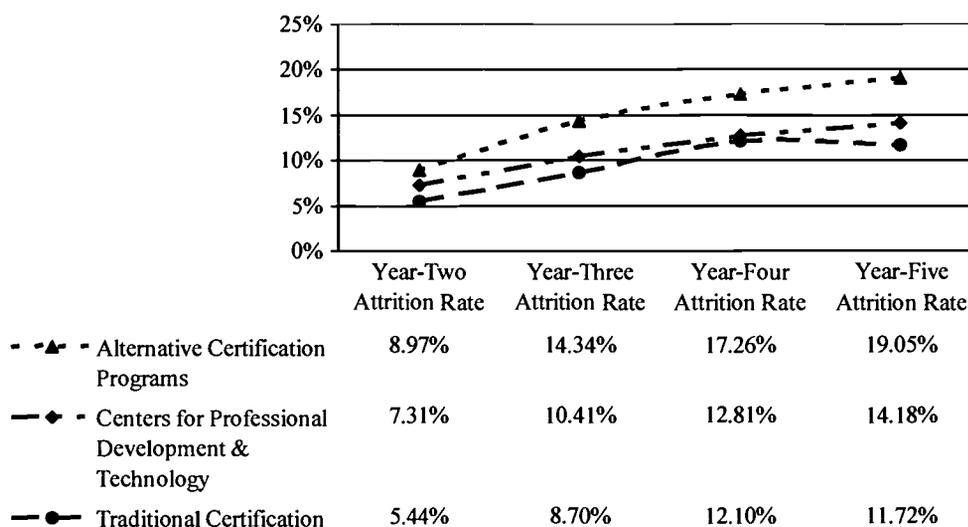
According to data in Table 6, while ACP completers had shown the highest attrition rates of the three programs, they had actually experienced the highest percentage of employment over the five years after receiving certification. The data show that, of the 2,540 teachers produced by ACPs in 1995, 2,347, or over 92% had taught by the end of year-five in Texas public schools. Only about 81% of those trained in CPDTs and TCPs had taught in the same period. Of the nearly 5,000 CPDT graduates, only about 4,000 had taught, and only about 6,000 of the nearly 7,500 TCP graduates taught in Texas public schools by the end of year-five.

Table 6 - Percentage of Teachers Produced in 1995 Who Were Employed as Classroom Teachers by the End of Year-Five

Type of Certification Program	Teachers Produced in 1995	Number Employed	Percent Employed by the End of Year-Five
Alternative Certification Programs	2,540	2,347	92.40%
Centers for the Professional Development of Teachers	4,945	4,020	81.29%
Traditional Certification Programs	7,460	6,081	81.51%
Total	14,945	12,448	83.29%

$\chi^2 = 16.0; df = 2; p < .001$

Chart Showing Attrition Rate Trends of the 1995 Cohort ACP, CPDT, and TCP Completers From Year-Two Through Year-Five



### Conclusions

This research provides information concerning the impact of one state’s teacher preparation approaches as it relates to the teacher shortage. Different routes to teacher licensure were developed in response to the public demand for improved EC-12 learning. That learning is negatively affected and the teacher shortage exacerbated if newly certified teachers do not enter public school classrooms and remain in the profession over time. The data offers implications on the future thinking of our profession in that we must evaluate the design and implementation of programs with an awareness of the importance of providing impetus for new teachers to actually enter and remain in our profession. The research did not attempt to address program quality or any other outcome other than participation of its graduates in the state’s public school teaching force. Instead, the study followed the teacher employment records of all teachers produced in 1995 by the three types of teacher preparation programs in Texas. The longitudinal five-year study expands the knowledge base by providing answers to the effectiveness of long-term contributions of the programs’ participants in addressing the teacher shortage.

The answer to the question, “How well does each of the three approaches to teacher preparation program design address the teacher shortage?” appears to be evident from the results of this research. The data indicated that the 1995 cohort of ACP completers were employed in the first year after training (the 1995-1996 academic year) at significantly higher rates than graduates from the other two programs. The CPDT and TCP cohorts gained employment in the first year after their training at a statistically identical rate.

While a greater proportion of ACP completers were employed in the first year, the longitudinal data showed that those who received that type of training left the profession at a higher rate than TCP graduates in year-two (1996-1997 academic year) and at a higher rate than both TCP and CPDT graduates in each subsequent year up to five years after graduation.

The study shows that ACPs meet the short-term goal of providing teachers who actually enter the classroom after training, but those teachers do not remain in the classroom as long as their peers trained using the other two methods. This study shows that the oldest teacher preparation method in use today, the TCP, actually appears to work the best in preparing teachers who stay in the profession over time. A significantly greater proportion of 1995 TCP graduates remain in the classroom over a period of five years than either of the other two types of programs.

In the light of these findings, teacher educators should develop a dialog based on the questions, “Why does the impact of these programs appear to vary over time?” and “Why the differences?” to discover why the newest approaches to teacher preparation do not perform better. From these discussions they may be able to begin the process of fine-tuning programs with the ultimate goal of adequately addressing the teacher shortage crisis from both the short-term and long-term perspectives.

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