Teach for America: Perceptions of Dedication, Commitment, Content Knowledge, and Instructional Competence

Ashley N. Hall
B.S., University of Missouri – Columbia, 2006
M.A., Baker University, 2009

Submitted to the Graduate Department and Faculty of the School of Education of Baker University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

_____

Harold B. Frye, Ed.D. Major Advisor

_____

James Robins, Ed.D.

_____

Juana Hishaw, Ph.D.

Date Defended: April 27, 2016

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that traditionally certified educators have in regards to the Teach for America program. A qualitative approach was used for this study. The findings suggest that traditionally certified educators do not have a favorable opinion of the Teach for America program when comparing Teach for America individuals to the quality standards outlined in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards indicators.   It was further discovered that traditionally certified educators raised many concerns regarding the Teach for America program. The methodology, findings, analysis, and suggestions for future research are outlined in this study.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents who could not obtain terminal degrees as African-Americans two generations removed from slavery in the South. It is because of the fact that you could not due to circumstance I found the determination to persevere and complete this dissertation. I love you all from the bottom of my heart.

Acknowledgements

To God be the Glory! I would like to acknowledge my fellow cohorts in EDD cohort 8, especially my "sistahs" Tamikia, Nikki, Judy, & Amy. The endless support, networking, guidance, and wisdom you all have shown me as the "youngin" in the class will forever leave me empowered and treasured. I also want to thank all of my co-workers and principals that motivated me. Special recognition goes to Yvonne Hattfield and Dr. Amy Casey who saw the potential in me that I did not. I would also like to recognize the members of the Societa Docta, especially Dr. Gwendolyn Squires, Dr. Everlyn Williams, and Dr. Juana Hishaw, for mentoring me through this process. A special thank you to all of my "sorors" in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, especially the members of the Upsilon Rho Omega chapter who allowed me to take a "sabbatical" from active membership to focus on completing this degree. Extra shout out to Alicia, Veronica, Liz, both Jackies, Angie, Kelly, the Ivys, Diann, Brigida, and Clim. You all in particular continued to motivate me during this process. Special thanks also goes to all of my extended family, cousins, aunts, and uncles who kept pushing me to make it to the end. To all of my personal friends, especially Angie and Lil Jon, thank you for understanding why we could not always enjoy life and for constantly "nagging" me to finish. To my advisor, Dr. Harold Frye, I truly appreciate your dedication and compassion in seeing me to the finish line. Lastly, to my parents, Anthony and Valerie Hall, and my little big brother AJ, your love and support before, during, and after this process is beyond words. I cannot express my gratitude and love for you all enough. Thank you!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One

Introduction

The status of the American education system continuously calls for critical

examination. At many points in history, a major reorganization was required of the

nation's public school systems. As the twentieth century progressed, the nation saw a

change in the role of education in society. There arose a new emphasis on teachers

becoming professionals. Teachers were transforming into educators and needed to

possess the knowledge of child development, learning theory and educational psychology

(Best & Sidwell, 1967 p. 252). As a result, the need for educators to be properly trained

became paramount. Thus, America saw the rise and expansion of teacher colleges (Best

& Sidwell, 1967).

While America had a steady source of educating its teachers, the post-secondary

market began to boom as well. Between 1880 and 1885 the United States witnessed

nearly 30 new colleges and universities per year (Wright, 2006 p. 16). Eventually, these

larger colleges and universities replaced teacher colleges as the sole provider of teacher

degrees in the 1960s (Wright, 2006).

America had figured out how to educate its teachers, yet could it produce enough

teachers to meet the demand for its primary and secondary schools? Until the release of *A

Nation at Risk,* Americans were not concerned with the number of teachers in the

classroom. However, this report sparked panic in America when it stated that there was a

shortage of teachers in mathematics, science, and English. As a result of this report,

many states re-examined teacher certification and created emergency certification

programs (Pushkin, 2001). These programs eventually evolved into alternative

certification programs.

Compared to traditional teacher certification programs, alternate certification

programs were significantly condensed in time and had an expedited program of study

(Scribner & Heimen, 2009). The intent of these programs was to attract a diverse pool of

applicants who otherwise would not consider teaching as a career and place them in

teaching vacancies in high needs areas as soon as possible.   While the intent of the

alternate certification movement was pure, the question eventually became how this

movement impacted the quality of the education field in the new millennium.

Background and Conceptual Framework

Since the late 1800s, the United States of America has vowed to provide its youth

with a free education (Monroe, 1911). To adequately educate the youth within America's

schools there arose a need for properly trained educators. Therefore, America established

a structured system to prepare the individuals who choose to take on the challenge to

teach. The earliest form of teacher preparation came in the form of teacher colleges.

Dating back to the 1800s, these "normal schools" (as they were referred to) were post-

high school level institutions that were entirely devoted to the preparation of the nation's

teachers (Hall Bio). Eventually, these stand-alone colleges became enveloped by larger

universities and dwindled to smaller departments within the larger system in the 1960's

(Wright, 2006). A debate grew over whether teacher colleges focused too much on

educational theory and not enough on the application of actual teaching skills. Thus

came the competency-based education movement of the 1970s that required preservice

teachers to demonstrate they thoroughly knew their subject matter and could teach it while managing student behavior (Wright, 2006).

While the nation was experiencing a shift in the preparation of its teachers, a new shift was also beginning to form. Around the 1970's, America began experiencing a decline in the number of available teachers. Many factors were noted for this shortage, such as low salaries, lack of on-the-job training, demands of the profession, and marital status (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 2006). This teacher shortage eventually led to the creation of alternate certification programs in the 1980s (Kee, 2012). These programs addressed the shortage of certified instructors by offering a shortened or "fast-track" route to teacher certification for college graduates who desired to enter the field (Kee, 2012). This substantially abbreviated certification route became a success and grew into over 122 programs nationwide (Alternate routes to teacher certification, 2005). One of the most popular programs that arose from this era was Teach for America (Mconney, Price, & Woods-McConney, 2011).

Created in 1989, Teach for America was crafted specifically to address the growing shortage of certified teachers in American classrooms. The program was designed to target the hardest to staff classrooms, typically those in urban areas. Since its inception, Teach for America has placed over 30,000 alternatively certified individuals into the nation's toughest schools to serve as teachers (Teach for America: our organization, 2012).

By mere numbers, the program appeared to be a success. With a high applicant pool, Teach for America prided itself on selecting a small number of those who applied for the program. The 2007 recruitment season, for instance, saw 18,172 applicants and

only 3,026 actual accepted members (Teach for America Profile for Young Professionals, 2007). However, when 2007 attrition data and teacher supply and demand data were examined, the question now was whether this program still fulfilled the intended goal for which it was originally created.

In 2002, President George W. Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, which stated that every primary and secondary classroom in America had to be staffed by a "highly qualified educator." This new focus on the quality of classroom teachers raised new questions in how teachers were trained (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007, p. 46). The term "highly qualified" included the need for novice educators to possess a current and valid teaching certificate and pass content area exams and complete an undergraduate degree program in that content area (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007). This clause presented a new dynamic to the alternate certification movement.

Schools and colleges of education have typically been regarded as the nation's preferred source for quality teachers. Therefore, when the "highly qualified" clause came, these institutions responded and produced more than enough quality teachers to fill vacancies. According to a report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "the general demand for teachers can be easily met by current sources of supply" (2002, p. 4). Data from the U.S. Census Bureau showed that in 1993 over 6 million people had at least a bachelor's degree in education while only 3 million were actually teaching at the time (Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage" problem, 2002). This created a surplus of teachers; which was the opposite of why Teach for America was originally created.

In 2010, the United States witnessed another wave of teacher surplus when nearly 80% of the nation's school districts either froze teacher hiring, eliminated positions through attrition, and/or laid off teachers due to financial shortages (Ellis, 2010). In 2015, it became evident that the teacher shortage of the past was not entirely the case. Data suggested that in certain fields, there existed a teacher surplus, particularly at the elementary level (Follo & Rivard, 2009). With many areas experiencing a teacher surplus, the question of teacher *quality* became the focus when evaluating the effectiveness of alternatively trained individuals in comparison to traditionally prepared educators since the teacher shortage did not exist to the level reported by the media (Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage" problem, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

With the perplexing distribution patterns of certified teachers across the nation, some teacher programs produce more elementary teacher candidates while others produce a greater number of secondary science, technology, and mathematics educators; at the same time, some geographical areas are in greater need of elementary teachers due to increased birth rate projections while others need more secondary teachers due to high turnovers (Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage" problem, 2002). More schools are faced with the possibility of placing lesser qualified individuals in the classroom as teachers. This is done in large part to fill vacancies that would otherwise go to either revolving or long-term substitute teachers. The speed at which alternatively certified individuals are placed in the classroom, some with as little as three months of training, is cause for concern as to the quality of the training such individuals receive. As one of the most visible programs in this movement, Teach for America has set the precedent by which

government agencies look for guidance in the alternative certification movement. Therefore, it is imperative that this program is evaluated through non-TFA lenses to provide a balanced perspective regarding its benefits and costs to the education field.

Significance of Study

With the achievement gap failing to close at the anticipated rate for which No Child Left Behind was originally created (Murray, 2008), the high turnover rate of teachers within the first five years (French, 2013), the need to fill secondary science, technology, and mathematics vacancies at a growing rate (Gray & Behan, 2005), and the ever-growing accountability demands placed on student performance through academic achievement tests, it is important that the effectiveness of alternate certification programs be evaluated. As districts look for innovative ways to address the above concerns, one option is to hire individuals holding alternative teacher certification versus individuals with a traditional teaching degree. This practice poses a problem for the future of traditional teacher certification programs. Teach for America has become one of the most visible alternate certification programs in the United States. As a result, other agencies could look to Teach for America as a model for structuring future alternative certification programs.

This study can be used by individuals wishing to pursue alternate routes to teacher certification, particularly through the Teach for America program, to reveal how these programs are perceived in the education community before entering if this route is chosen by the future teacher. Also, this study can help school systems when deciding whether or not to utilize the Teach for America program, as it will give a perspective of the reception individuals trained under this source could have from established educators within the

district and community. This study also may help state and national policy makers when evaluating the effectiveness of the Teach for America program and the expenditures for it. Further, this study can assist potential donors in assessing the value of the program. Lastly, this study will contribute to the limited body of independent research on the Teach for America program conducted outside the organization.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of teacher effectiveness of alternately certified teachers trained through the Teach for America program by fellow teachers and administrators who were trained through a traditional teacher education program from a college or university. The target population for this study included school administrators and teachers working in urban or suburban schools with at least some background knowledge of the Teach for America program.

Delimitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), delimitations are "self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). This study only presents perceptions from individuals who indicated that they were a traditionally certified educator. This study also only examined alternately certified individuals trained through the Teach for America program. Participants were asked to frame their perceptions of Teach for America educators during their tenure as corps members or during the two-year term that members train to become teachers while simultaneously teaching full time in a classroom. Further, this study examined Teach for America individuals who worked in urban or suburban settings. Lastly, this study was only conducted within the Kansas City metropolitan area of Missouri and Kansas.

Assumptions

Lunenburg and Irby state that assumptions are the parameters around which the study was conducted. These parameters include the nature and analysis of the study as well as the interpretation of the data (p. 135). For this study, the assumption was made that participants have a working knowledge of the Teach for America program. One would also assume that participants have had contact with individuals from the Teach for America program. Further, one would assume that participants understand that differences exist between the Teach for America program and teacher preparation programs offered through schools and colleges of education. The assumption should also be made that Teach for America is not the sole source of alternate certification in the United States and therefore does not represent all alternative certification programs offered.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ 1. What strengths do traditionally certified educators perceive from the Teach for America program as it relates to the competence demonstrated through corps members in the classroom?

RQ 2. What weaknesses do traditionally certified educators perceive from the Teach for America program as it relates to the competence demonstrated through corps members in the classroom?

RQ 3. What concerns do traditionally certified educators have regarding the Teach for America program?

RQ 4. How do Teach for America corps members compare to traditionally

certified teachers when assessed by traditionally certified educators on quality

indicators derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

Definitions of Terms

Alternate certification program. A program that places candidates in teaching

assignments with full responsibility for students after a few weeks of training or a post-

baccalaureate program offered over one or two years with ongoing support, integrated

coursework, close mentoring, and supervision (Bowe, Braam, Lawrenz, & Kirchoff,

2011)

Accountability testing. A common way to ascertain that students have met

minimum proficiency standards based on performance scores derived from well-

established, commercially available achievement tests that assess the core subjects taught

in the United States (Friedman, 2005, p. 9)

At-risk youth. A student at risk of dropping out of school because of his or her

individual needs and thus requires temporary or ongoing intervention in order to achieve

in school and graduate with meaningful options for his or her future (Committee, 2008)

Corps member. The moniker given to candidates completing teacher training

under the Teach for America program (Mconney, Price, & Woods-McConney, 2011)

High need school/district. A school where at least one of the Title II

requirements for either teacher attrition rates, percentage of students eligible for free and

reduced lunch or percentage of teachers without a bachelor or graduate degree in the

content area in which they do the majority of their teaching (Bowe, Braam, Lawrenz, &

Kirchoff, 2011)

Praxis exam. The licensure exam perspective teaching candidates must take in order to receive certification; these exams generally include teaching theory and practice; under schools and colleges of education, perspective graduates must pass these exams prior to graduation (Pushkin, 2001)

Pre-service teacher. Teaching candidate under the guidance and supervision of a mentor or cooperating teacher who gradually assumes greater classroom management and instruction responsibility over the course of time; typically a student seeking certification through a traditional teacher preparation program (Virginia Wesleyan College - Preservice Teaching, 2015)

School or college of education. A smaller department within a larger college or university that is devoted to the scientific study of education and training of individuals who will serve in the nation's schools (Cubberley, 1948)

Standardized test. Any examination that is administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner; the two many types include aptitude and achievement; achievement tests are what school's effectiveness is based on (Popham, 1999)

Student teaching. Any form of teaching internship in which new teachers are provided with classroom experience prior to being granted full certification; typically, in traditional teacher programs, this internship occurs during the senior year of college, in alternative certification programs, it occurs during the first two years of teaching (Pushkin, 2001).

Teach for America. An organization founded in 1990 by Wendy Kopp which recruits high-achieving recent graduates from notable colleges and universities to commit for a two-year teaching assignment in an underprivileged school (Brill, 2011, p 19)

Traditionally certified teacher. Teacher certified by completing an undergraduate or graduate degree in education prior to entering the classroom

Traditional teacher certification program. Generally offered through a college of education as four-year undergraduate degrees, these programs typically combine subject matter instruction, pedagogy class, and unpaid field experiences and/or student teaching; at the conclusion of the program, candidates must pass assessments before receiving their degrees (Bowe, Braam, Lawrenz, & Kirchoff, 2011)

Urban school. Schools located in large central cities often characterized by high rates of poverty, minority students, English language learners, and high rates of mobility (Jacob, 2007)

Overview of Methodology

This study examined educators' perceptions of the instructional quality of individuals serving as teachers prepared under the Teach for America program. This was a qualitative study. A survey with less than 50 respondents and personal interviews were the methods for data collection. The population for this study consisted of teachers and administrators from districts in the states of Kansas and Missouri. Data from the survey was analyzed and tested against the research questions by the researcher. Interview responses were transcribed, analyzed and coded by the researcher using the Dedoose online data analysis program.

Summary or Organization of the Study

This chapter consisted of an introduction to the study, background information on teaching in the United States and the rise in alternate certification programs. This chapter

also included the assumptions, delimitations, significance, and purpose of the study. The methodology was introduced along with the research questions. Terms utilized throughout the study were defined in this chapter.

In chapter two, the review of literature guides the reader through a journey of the history of education in the United States. Trends in education are examined and lead into the rise in alternate certification programs. The chapter ends with a look at the state of education in America as of 2015 and the question is posed as to the validity of alternate certification programs, particularly Teach for America.

In chapter three, research design, methodology, and instrumentation are presented in detail. Chapter three also describes data collection and sampling procedures. Chapter four gives an in-depth look at the results of the study and analysis of the data. Chapter five provides interpretations of the data, connections to the literature, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The History of Education in America

The idea of a free and mandatory education for all children was not an original foundation of this country. As Schlechty states:

[When] America's schools were created it was never intended that all students would learn at high levels…relatively few students would learn at high levels, many students would learn a good deal, some students would learn a bit, and others would learn enough to know how to respond to authority in order to carry out tasks assigned to unskilled workers in factory system production. (2005, p. xi)

Since its conception, America has evolved from this ideology to a newer thought of providing all students with a free public education. The way in which this belief was interpreted and applied has had a profound effect on the development of this nation.

In the pioneer days, children were often viewed as "savages" as they were not required to attend school but were permitted to run freely or were utilized as a labor force (Thomas, 2006). The main focus was on the grooming of the future labor force which did not require sophisticated knowledge but rather manual skills. Eventually, this view of children became problematic, and thus, a new emphasis was placed on education.

The evolution of the system. In the early days, education was viewed as a paid privilege for the elite boys of higher society. There were no standard measurements or rules regulating attendance, curriculum, assessment, and structure. In those days, education mostly consisted of learning how to follow orders from the "higher ups" (Wright, 2006). Around the 1700s, there were two educational systems in America. The

first was a reflection of the classical European model, emphasizing the study of Latin, Greek, literature, and history. This form of education was typically reserved for privileged families. The second system became known as the academy model. In this model, a more practical curriculum was emphasized through the study of surveying, navigation, accounting, and agriculture (Pushkin, 2001, p. 27). While the idea of higher education matured during America's infancy, the concept of elementary and secondary education took a while longer to evolve.

Around the 1860s, the idea of "graded" schools began to enter the major cities. This concept separated students into "grades" based on age ranges. The main goal of this method was to replace the one-room schoolhouses, which housed every student who sought education, regardless of age and had grown to sizes of over 100 students in some cities (Wright, 2006). In 1874, a Supreme Court ruling allowed for tax money to be levied to support both elementary and secondary schools (p. 6). With this ruling, the mass expansion of secondary schools in America began.

In 1856, the first kindergarten opened and not until the 1920s did the idea spread across the country. The first kindergarten was taught in the German language. The concept was designed by German educator Friedrich Frobel and was intended to be less formal than elementary school but organized in a way to allow children to construct learning through play (Wright, 2006). In 1860, the first English-speaking kindergarten was founded. In 1873, the first public kindergarten was opened. After that time, the idea began to spread across the country and by the 1920s kindergarten was a solidified part of the American education system (2006).

Secondary education took a little longer to evolve. In 1636, one of the original schools for the education of privileged males who planned to attend college became one of the most well-known universities in the world: Harvard. In 1821, the first free public high school opened in Boston. By the time this school was founded, seven of the eight Ivy League schools, several state universities, and even a free school for immigrants had all been established well before America created a systematic educational system for secondary students (Wright, 2006).

The (mis)education of African-American students and other historically ignored populations. Discrimination has eroded American culture and consequently its educational system for much of its existence. Every early instructional institution that was founded was not intended to educate African Americans, Native Americans, Asian immigrants, and in many cases women (Bull, Fruehling, & Chattergy, 1992). While the first public school for the education of immigrants opened in 1809 in New York (Wright, 2006), the immigrants that this school intended to educate often only included the European immigrants who found their way to Ellis Island during that era.

Beginning around the 1830s, higher education institutions were opened primarily for the education of African American students who desired to pursue higher education but were ultimately denied admission to other institutions based on race. These colleges and universities initiated in the southern and midwestern states of America. After the establishment of the First and Second Morrill Acts in 1862 and 1890 respectively, land grants were provided for the establishment of colleges and universities to educate newly freed blacks. Many of these institutions were non-degree-granting schools of agriculture, mechanics, and industry (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004).

In 1954, the Supreme Court issued a monumental ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Education*. This case, which was a collection of five separate but similar cases involving racial injustice in educational settings, reversed the "separate but equal" doctrine that the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case had established in 1864. Essentially, the *Brown* case called for the desegregation of American schools "with all deliberate speed" (Balkin, 2001).

The American landscape at that time was riddled with fear and ignorance: fear of the unknown and ignorance of human encounters. In the era leading up to *Brown*, many white southerners believed that elementary and secondary students were extremely vulnerable to racial integration, with the possibility of developing inappropriate ideas if placed in the presence of other races (Balkin, 2001). In contrast, proponents of desegregation believed that minority, particularly black, children would benefit from having a richer network of opportunity and exposure to learning how to function in the middle-class, predominantly white setting (Kluger, 2004, p. 773).

While *Brown* opened the doors for integration, the policy was a common belief that the decision would also close many doors: particularly for African-Americans as they would now have to contend with whites for jobs that were exclusively salvaged for them, due to the separate but equal doctrine. As noted in Jackson's book, this phenomenon was a reality as a study conducted by the National Education Association found that 30,000 African American teachers had lost their jobs since the passing of *Brown* (Jackson, 2001, p. 53). As affirmative action eventually evolved to help alleviate this fear, it did not fully solve the issue. Affirmative action was a retributive measure that intended for any sector of the economy to halt any and all discriminatory practices in hiring and selection processes (Kluger, 2004, p.759). Since its inception, affirmative action has granted many

African-Americans elite educations, better-paying jobs, and membership in the growing American middle-class. Over time, however, the clause has created controversy as many whites have been denied acceptance into programs or hiring for jobs since a portion of vacancies were reserved for African-Americans and other under-represented minorities (2004).

While America began to educate minority youth and thus expand the number of youth eligible for the free public education America declared back in the 1800s, classes began to transform into more diverse and complex arenas. As this phenomenon began to unfold, a prevailing question emerged: was there a perceived or actual intellectual difference (particularly, deficiency) that existed amongst minority groups? The answer to this question has been problematic to answer as it carries hidden consequences.

In his book *Real Education*, Murray discusses this possibility in full detail. In chapter one, he explicitly states that academic ability does vary from individual to individual (Murray, 2008). However, he does not delve into the racial and gender implications of this statement. He merely problematizes these intellectual differences in terms of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences. From this standpoint, Murray poses the question that if some are inherently inept in certain areas of intelligence, is it reasonable to assume that any educational system can overcome these shortcomings and truly show academic gains. Murray answers this question by stating that half of America's children are intellectually below average when it comes to various academic measures and that very little if anything can be done to educate the child's weakness (2008).

Later, Murray argues that to realistically expect significant gains in academic achievement amongst students who were inherently below average in their intellectual ability is a disservice to students (2008). The issues brought by Murray present an interesting view to how minority students are educated. If students inherently cannot perform better than they are already pre-disposed to, how can educators fairly encourage students to achieve higher than their natural threshold will allow? This issue opens the door for many disputes. On the one hand, to admit this, in some ways is to admit the academic superiority of some groups versus others. In advancing this notion of academic superiority, eventually the academic piece would fall and the new notion would be the pure superiority of one group over another. Further, it is easy to assume that the academically inferior group would contain a lot of minority students. This would then lead to the idea of racial superiority, something our country has been trying to escape ever since the end of the Civil War. A rise in this ideology ultimately leads to (and in many cases has already laid the foundation for) the *mis*-education of the minority youth.

As America slowly began to accept the changing tide of its student population, a prevailing issue remained: the miseducation of minority youth. With integration in place, many districts began to focus on the portion of its population that were not making achievement. This group, which consistently contained a disproportionate number of minority youth, eventually became known as the "at-risk" youth. Data trends continued to show that the achievement of minority, non-native, poor and special needs youth consistently lagged behind that of affluent white youth. This phenomenon became known as the achievement gap.

Eventually, the achievement gap became alarming and a cause of embarrassment in the nation's schools and data was examined in a new perspective. As data from specific sub-groups were analyzed, the growing trend became that racial minorities scored lower than whites on intelligence measures. This trend was explored in a study conducted by Mirci, Loomis, and Hensley in 2011 in which the authors noted that fellow researcher Terman stated the following in regards to the lack of achievement produced by minorities: "Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in family stocks from which they come. The fact that one meets this type with such extraordinary frequency among Indians, Mexicans, and Negros suggests quite forcibly the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods" (Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011, p. 59). This mindset created the foundation for educating "at-risk" youth.

Typically, at-risk has been considered any student on the verge of not successfully completing the k-12 education experience through high school graduation (Committee, 2008). Many factors contribute to this prediction such as non-employment of parents, single-parent household, level of parent education, poverty, and truancy (2008). These environmental factors in combination with a lack of interest in school, failing grades, and substantial deficit in basic reading and/or math skills result in the labeling of such students as "at-risk" (Committee, 2008; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensly, 2011). One of the biggest challenges with such labeling is the influence it has on students' perception of their own self-worth and ability to succeed academically (Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011). Thus, a need grew for the proper education of students who did not look like their

teachers and whom their teachers, in turn, could not reach, teach, or help bridge the achievement gap.

As America continued to better understand the minority, special needs, and underprivileged youth, the nation's focus shifted from the students themselves to the perceived quality of the education. The National Commission on Excellence in Education born from the Department of Education released a 1983 report. Thus, the United States turned to a new initiative to ensure that the education in its classrooms was comparable or better than the other industrialized nations America competes with. The new "Excellence in Education" era as it was called shifted America's attention to the following issues:

1. Low student achievement was pervasive and threatening to the nation's economic and social well-being;

2. Many of the nation's schools were failing to provide an adequate education;

3. New public policies to make schooling rigorous would remedy education deficiencies; and

4. Disadvantaged students would benefit disproportionately from efforts to strengthen academics. (Rhodes, 2012, p. 40)

While this shift in focus was occurring, the minority youth had not been properly educated. Twenty years after the shift, Americans still asked why minority groups were not achieving at the same proficiency as whites. As advocates continued to address this issue, one answer emerged: to attract new teachers, who hopefully would be more diverse than the current supply of educators, into the field with new ideas, from new and innovative ways.

History of Teacher Certification

  In the beginning, normal schools were established for the preparation of teachers in America's public schools. At their conception, these institutions were primarily post-secondary schools that offered an "apprentice-type" training for the nation's educators. By the early 1900s, these "normal schools" became known by the new distinction of "Teacher's College" as many began to require entrants to hold a high school diploma (Clifford and Guthrie, 1988, p. 60). This new entry requirement shifted the dynamics of the certification that individuals would receive from institutions upon completion.

  From teacher colleges to colleges of education…and teacher certification.

  In the 1830s, the expansion of independent normal schools began (Pushkin, 2001, p. 27). Gradually, these schools evolved into established teachers' colleges and then finally merged into the multi-disciplined university. One of the speculattions that teacher colleges were moved into the larger university system, as cited by Christiansen and Ramadevi (2002), was that it "would make teaching and the preparation of future teachers more professional, thus giving a higher profile to education and educators" (p. 5).

  The evolution of certification. In the 1860s, a new concern began to grow over creating national standards for the preparation of teachers. At the Fifth Annual Meeting of the American Normal School Association in 1869, a motion was made with the following goals:

1. To create a uniform definition for the science of education;

2. Organize a standard program of study that leads preservice teachers towards the mission of this definition;

3. Elevate the standard of teaching into a regular profession. (Edelfelt & Raths, 1998) (p. 3)

According to the authors, this motion made the assumption that educators could create a norm that would define best practices in teaching. The motion also assumed that the lack of uniformity in practices could be alleviated once more effective practices were noted and elevated, thus allowing less effective practices to weaken and wean out (1998). At that time, this motion did not gain the needed momentum. A year later, the Association created a proposal outlining criteria to regulate the applicant process for teacher education programs and detailing a two-year program of study for all normal schools. The proposal called for instruction in ethics, theory and practice (1998).

In 1899, a report compiled by the Department of Normal Schools set standards and criterion for many aspects of teacher education. Some of these standards the report addressed stated the following:

1. Admission shall be based on a completed course of study that included mathematics (algebra and arithmetic), language arts, geography, American history, hygiene, physiology, art, civics, music, spelling, penmanship, and English;

2. Student teaching (or clinical experiences) shall consist of no more than twelve children;

3. The normal school would be responsible for all administrative authorities related to the teaching training including setting the curriculum, selecting texts, and selecting and dismissing teachers. (Edelfelt & Raths, 1998) (p. 4)

However, according to Edelfelt and Raths, one of the pervasive practices that colleges employed that emerged during that period and existed through the 21st century was "operating with criteria and not standards" (1998, p. 5). Over time, the two words have become synonymous with each other. However, the criterion is the variable of concern and standard is the amount of the variable needed to meet the criterion (1998, p. 4).

In 1929, the Commonwealth Teacher-Training Study occurred. This study looked at teacher preparation and in short sparked the beginning of competency- and outcomes-based teacher education. Nearly a decade later, The Commission on Teacher Education was created in 1938. This commission studied the following areas of teacher preparation: selection and recruitment, placement and follow-up, curriculum, subject-matter preparation, professional education, student teaching, teacher in-service for k-12 and college educators (Edelfelt & Raths, 1998). The overall result of the commission's work was a more democratic structure for the teaching field (1998, p. 7).

In the 1940s, a breakthrough came in the way that teachers were educated. The American Association of Teachers Colleges concluded that it was pertinent for teacher education to take what was known about learning and apply it to teacher education. It was further decided that direct experience completes the link between theory and practice and thus would be a pivotal component to teacher training (Edelfelt & Raths, 1998, p. 7). Therefore, professional laboratory experience and student teaching were clearly defined with standards set for each. The sequence, length, supervision required, and parameters of laboratory experiences were set by the association's subcommittee in 1948 and are currently part of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education standards (1998, p. 8).

Through the 1980s, only eighteen states had established state examinations in pedagogy or subject matter for prospective teachers to pass before becoming credentialed. The structure and control of education were largely under the governance of local communities (Rhodes, 2012). This meant that there were no uniform decisions regarding curriculum, teacher training, and even school structure.

In the 21st century, a new battle in teacher education emerged. As the teaching field continued to develop as a profession, the number of critics who questioned the validity of such a label multiplied. As Kincheloe points out in an article from the *Teacher Education Quarterly,* "Contempt for teacher education and pedagogy emanates not from the knowledge of their historical failures but from a generic devaluing of the art and science of teaching as an unnecessary contrivance" (2004, p. 50). This means that many individuals in the public do not understand the complex nature of teaching, but rather dismiss the *process* of teaching as something that anyone with working knowledge of the subject matter can do (2004). Arguably, this rationale opened the doors for alternative certification programs in America.

Supply and Demand

As the demand for a literate population grew, so did the need for educators to make this a reality. The composition of the American educator began as a predominantly white, male, upper-class individual. Around the 1860s, the United States began to see a shift in its teaching supply since many men were part of the war efforts (first the Civil War and then eventually World War I) (Pushkin, 2001, p. 28). While there was a shift in teacher supply, as new laws began to allow for more students to be educated, there was also an increase in the demand for educators.

The shortage of qualified teachers in American classrooms. Beginning around the "Baby Boom" era following World War II, the nation saw an intensified need for available educators. As America worked to fill teaching vacancies at a rising speed, the issue of quality began to enter the debate. With more children being educated, the nation wanted to ensure that those who took on the task to teach were qualified to do so.

As the issue of quality consistently came to the forefront at the close of the 20th century, a new lens was placed on teachers already in America's classrooms and inevitably the unions that kept these individuals employed. As Brill noted in his book *Class Warfare*, the true issue with education rested in the hands of teacher unions and the contracts unions created that dictated what could and could not be done in disciplining a teacher (Brill, 2012). Soon, the issue of teacher quality would become more complex as the makeup of the American classroom would become less homogenous and more often teachers would find themselves educating students who did not look like them or share in the socioeconomic status of the educator.

Another dimension in the teacher quality equation was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In this act, then-President George W. Bush declared that a highly qualified teacher would teach all students. The definition of such a teacher was an individual with: a bachelor's degree, content area certification, and proven knowledge of the subject taught (Baines, 2010). Over time, while the bachelor's degree credential was easy to verify, the certification aspect created a challenge for education interest groups (2010). However, quality was defined and verified had little effect on the issue of educational equity, which became a growing concern as America's demographic began to shift.

The rise in alternative certification programs. As the nation began to educate more youth, it also began to experience a shortage in available teachers (Irwin, 1985). To combat this issue, innovative methods were created to place individuals in the classroom. In some states, teacher certification was redefined to allow for more individuals to enter the classroom. In Massachusetts, for example, certification was redefined to allow anyone possessing a bachelor's degree and passing the state teacher's examination to be granted a teaching certificate (Baines, 2010, p. 153). Thus came the creation of alternative certification programs. In their original conception, these programs were designed to bring individuals who already possessed a bachelor's degree into rural and urban classrooms where a higher demand existed as teachers (Blazer, 2012).

Compared to traditional certification programs, alternative certification programs were typically shorter in length to complete, reduced in costs, and generally were more rooted in practice opposed to theory. Student teaching typically occurred during the summer rather than the actual school year and could range from a couple to several weeks. The overall goal of alternate certification programs was to ease the barriers for entry to the teaching profession while attracting a strong and diverse pool of teachers who otherwise would never consider education as a career (Blazer, 2012). In some programs, individuals could begin teaching in the classroom immediately while simultaneously completing coursework towards full certification (Carroll, Hayes, Mercer, Neuenswander, & Drake, 2006). In the state of Kansas, for instance, a program created in 2003 allowed individuals with a degree in the content area they planned to teach and who were willing to teach in a high-need school district to enter the classroom as a full-time teacher while completing online professional education courses (Carroll et al., 2006,

p. 9). Program candidates were granted a restricted teaching license at the beginning of the program to allow for classroom teaching responsibilities. At the conclusion of the three-year program, participants who achieved a 2.5 or higher cumulative grade point average, passed the Praxis II exam, and received approval from designated partner institutions in Kansas were granted a conditional teaching license (2006, p. 8).

While alternative certification programs often attract a diverse group of educators, some programs do a disservice to students. As these programs grew in popularity, many educators began to question how this could occur. The following explanations have been offered by the National Academy of Education:

- As a society, we do not invest seriously in the lives of children, most especially poor children and children of color, who receive the least-prepared teachers.

- The conventional view of teaching is simplistic: teaching is viewed merely as proceeding through a set curriculum in a manner that transmits information from the teacher to the child.

- Many people do not understand what successful teaching requires and do not see teaching as a difficult job that requires rigorous training.

- Others believe that there is not much more to teaching than knowing the subject matter that children should learn.

- Many state licensing systems reflect these attitudes and have entry requirements that compromise standards, especially for teachers who teach poor and minority students.

- Researchers and teacher educators have only recently come to consensus about what is necessary, basic knowledge for entering the classroom and about how such knowledge and skill can be acquired. (2005, p. 2)

It is the second, third, and fourth ideals that became the catalyst for alternate certification programs, the fifth idea that allowed these programs to flourish, the last ideal that challenged many alternative certification programs, yet the first one that built the foundation for the program studied in this dissertation.

In 1983, when the alternate teacher certification movement increased, only eight states reported having any type of Alternative Certification Program. As of 2005, 47 states and the District of Columbia reported over 600 individual program providers (National Center for Education Information, 2005). One of the most noteworthy programs, with national acclaim and recognition, was Teach for America.

The "Solution"

As America desired to solve the teacher shortage issue, one solution was the creation of alternate certification programs or "fast-track" programs. As a whole, these programs were designed to deregulate the entry into the teaching profession, thus allowing for more individuals to enter at a faster pace, thus helping to alleviate the teacher shortage. The Teach for America program was designed with this goal in mind.

The creation of "the solution" – Teach for America. In 1990, Princeton graduate Wendy Kopp created what she thought would be the solution to the teacher shortage witnessed in America's public schools. She created the non-profit program Teach for America to place top college graduates in schools that were hard to staff for a two-year teaching commitment (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). Since its

induction, Teach for America has placed over 24,000 individuals, as of 2011, into America's classrooms (Higgins, et al., 2011). The structure and success of this program have evolved over the twenty years it has been in existence.

The first group of Teach for America corps members consisted of about 500 individuals (Xu, Hannaway, Taylor, 2011). The 2010 cohort consisted of over 4,000 individuals (Teach for America, 2015). These individuals, from the original 1990 cohort to 2010, have been placed in some of America's most struggling school districts. These districts include, but are not limited to Kansas City, Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri, Detroit, Michigan, New York City, Washington D.C., Chicago, Illinois, and Los Angeles, California (Teach for America: our organization, 2012).

The application and training of "the solution." Teach for America has a distinctive recruitment process. According to the Mathematica study, the program seeks graduating seniors from some of America's top universities. These individuals then apply for the program by submitting an application, letter of intent, essay, and resume. If an individual passes this stage, they are then invited to a day-long session which includes the candidate presenting a sample teaching lesson, written exercise, group discussion, personal interview, and preferred region and teaching assignment. From that point, Teach for America bases its final decision on candidate criteria in the following areas: achievement, respect, motivational ability, personal responsibility, critical thinking, organizational skills, and commitment to the Teach for America mission (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). In its entire selection criterion, Teach for America does not seek candidates that are committed to education.

Once a candidate has been admitted into the Teach for America program, the individual then completes the summer institute. The institute is a five-week program that introduces candidates to the Teach for America model of teacher preparation. During the institute, participants take the following courses: Teaching as Leadership; Instructional Planning and Delivery; Classroom Management and Culture; Literacy Development; Diversity, Community, and Achievement; and Learning Theory (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). During the second week of the institute, corps members team-teach a summer school class under the guidance of a TFA advisor and teacher from the district. The teaching assignment continues through the end of the institute (four weeks total). Members also attend weekly team meetings to discuss content- and grade-specific information. Teach for America beliefs, values, and mission are also covered during the institute (2004). The institute runs from approximately 9am-6pm daily (Gabriel, 2011).

Following the summer institute, corps members receive their fall assignments and continue induction training in the assigned region and district. Typically the program places corps members in schools with other TFA members or alumni. According to TFA, this is done to allow members to collaborate with each other and "support each other's professional growth" (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004, p. 5).

Teach for America corps members do not always have full or initial certification as do beginning teachers from traditional certification programs (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). Members can be hired by participating schools through alternative certification routes that are outlined by the district and state. Often corps members will seek full certification by enrolling in master degree programs through one of TFA's partnership graduate schools (2004).

As a salaried staff of the cooperating district, corps members are paid directly by the district. Generally, they receive the same salary scale and benefits as regular teachers in the same district, however, information on actual corps members' salaries could not be obtained. To offset program costs, participating districts pay Teach for America an annual fee, anywhere between $1,000 to $5,000 per corps member (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Simon, 2012).

One of the issues that critics of Teach for America constantly raised was the level of preparation of training. In Kee's study, she found that on average, the more training and clinical experience a teacher received had a positive relationship with their feelings of preparedness (Kee, 2012). She further noted that incomplete pedagogical study led to first-year teachers feeling less prepared than teachers with a more complete pedagogy training (2012).

How long does "the solution" last? Retention is a huge criticism that opponents of the program have voiced for years. As of 2009, a mere 29 percent of former corps members who completed the program were still in the classroom (Toppo, 2009; Hootnick, 2014). Of that percentage, a small fraction, less than 15 percent, remained in their initial school placement after four years of completing the TFA program (Blazer, 2012). Compare that to the 90 percent of traditionally certified teachers who return to the classroom the following school year (French, 2013), Teach for America has created a "revolving door" effect.

The schools in which corps members have been placed have some of the largest obstacles to overcome. Poverty, crime, deplorable learning conditions, instability in the home, and inadequate access to resources were all issues that students faced daily in the

schools to which corps members were assigned. Additionally, those who were less committed to the profession often created a revolving door.

Lessons from "the solution" that can apply to traditional certification programs. While the time allotted for the Teach for America model has been a concern, the manner in which this program provides teacher support and ongoing, personalized professional development should call for consideration from traditional college of education programs. First, engaging pre-service teachers in real-time teaching experience that allows for the practice of pedagogy recently studied, allows for real-time application of content. Second, giving teachers layers of support through ongoing observations, reflections with master teachers, and periodic data analysis allows for the teacher to continuously be aware of the impact they are having on students and what needs to be changed. Third, working directly with the districts TFA places its corps members, allows the program the advantage of teaching its students relevant curriculum that they will actually utilize in their future classrooms. Too often in traditional teacher programs, the content is significantly disconnected to the actual curriculum that students will experience in their future classrooms. The main issue is that placement in a particular district cannot be guaranteed. Each state, district, and, in some cases, schools differ in the curriculum taught, programs and resources used, and the manner in which student achievement is measured. Therefore, traditional teacher preparation programs have to prepare students for the field of education and not just an individual school district.

However, this disconnect is a profound source of frustration amongst many novice teachers. According to a study conducted by Thornton for *the Professional Development School network* (2004) "three main reasons were cited for teacher

dissatisfaction: meeting individual needs, student motivation, and collegiality" (p. 7). It was this dissatisfaction that in some cases led to early teacher departure from the profession.

In meeting students' needs, the teachers surveyed indicated a desire to see students master and fully understand the concepts and skills presented. The reality of keeping pace with the demands of the school or district caused many of the teachers to feel that students were not able to fully engage in meaningful learning opportunities to master the curriculum. Many surveyed felt that students were thus "left behind" because the pacing guides and curriculum had little room for meeting individual learner needs (Thornton, 2004).

When it comes to student motivation, the teachers surveyed noted that the demands of today's assessment-driven society created a lack of ownership for students and teachers, thus making the content less motivating and engaging for students. Some of the teachers attributed the lack of motivation to the actual students and their families. Others attributed it to the plethora of mandates and inability to infuse creativity into the classroom (Thornton, 2004). Whatever the cause, the data suggests there is a disconnect between the content presented and the relevancy students see for their lives.

In the Thornton study, the teachers noted a lack of collegiality amongst fellow teachers within their buildings. Some teachers attributed this lack of peer interaction to the busy schedules of being a teacher and the constant pressure to perform and produce adequate results on standardized tests. Other teachers felt that the high-stakes testing culture has started driving teachers into a more competitive mode where survivor instincts take effect. When in survivor mode, teachers are less willing to work

collaboratively with peers and do not help each other grow professionally. It is all about

keeping the best practices so that your individual class will experience success (Thornton,

2004).

All three of the above-mentioned factors have been addressed in Teach for

America's training model. During summer institute, Teach for America used the

materials directly from the districts in which corps members served. The program

fostered collegial relationships by having corps members enter the program in cohorts

and by providing a rich alumni network for corps members to rely on. Teach for

America attempted to increase student motivation by placing individuals in the classroom

who were passionate about creating change, though not necessarily passionate about

teaching.

The allure of "the solution." So what is it then that attracts participants into the

Teach for America program? In a study conducted by Maier for *the Journal for Teacher*

Education, three main reasons are cited: deregulatory entry into teaching, delayed career

decision of the participant, and the social justice desire (2012).

The first reason claims that the program offers participants a less complicated way

to enter the field of education. By reducing the coursework, the pre-service time is

drastically reduced from the traditional four years at a college or university down to five

weeks in the TFA Summer Institute. Like with the traditional undergraduate program, at

the conclusion of the coursework, students are then fully immersed into a teaching

experience, under the direction of a mentor teacher. The only difference with the TFA

program is that the teaching experience is a full-time teaching assignment, complete with

a salary and full classroom responsibilities.

The second reason many are attracted to the TFA program is the delayed career advantage. Corps members are allowed to delay permanent career decisions for at least the duration of the two-year commitment. This trend has been reflected in the labor market of the new millennium as the practice of changing careers has become a common trend in novice entrants into all professional fields (2012).

The final advantage Maier noted in his article is that TFA offers participants a chance to give back to the community and fulfill a social justice desire. The recruitment message TFA commonly gives is that students in struggling schools can achieve given dedicated and hard-working teachers (2012). This message contributes to the common attraction of idealistic college graduates who desire to help poor, low-achieving students (2012, p. 13).

Another possible explanation of the acclaim that Teach for America receives is that like many other alternative certification programs, TFA has an applicant screening process not evident in traditional teaching programs. Bowe, Braam, Lawrenz, and Kirchoff note that Hess concluded, "traditional education programs do not have a screening process like other academic programs…thus, they provide little protection against weak or incompetent pre-service teachers who complete the teacher preparation regime" (Bowe, Braam, Lawrenz, & Kirchoff, 2011).

Perhaps one of the most profound allures of Teach for America was that it created a voice in the progressive neoliberalism education movement. According to Lahann and Reagan, progressive neoliberalism reform includes the following five assumptions:

1. Public education reinforces social inequalities by failing to provide an excellent education to all students;

2. Public education benefits from deregulating market reforms that reward the

most efficient service providers, encourage innovation, and bridge the private and

public spheres;

3. Public education benefits from the logic, technology, and strategy of business;

4. The market cannot be trusted to rectify educational inequality by itself;

5. Public education is an arena for social activism in which actors can work both

within and against the system. (2011, p. 14)

This means that the current system is failing students (particularly disadvantaged

students) and that the best answer to the disparity is to reform education into a business-

oriented field that is results-driven and competition-based. For individuals who agree

with this ideology, Teach for America falls right in line with this movement by providing

a competitor to traditional teacher certification that is focused on producing performance

results via student test scores.

  The "success" of the solution. Over its 20 years of existence, Teach for America

has cited numerous examples of success: in the form of student achievement, participant

retention, and leadership development of corps members. According to a study from

Higgins, Hess, Weiner, and Robinson, Teach for America produces a large number of

entrepreneurial leaders (2011, p. 20). In this study, the researchers found that Teach for

America alumni were cited as top management team members of 14 of the selected 49

entrepreneurial organizations. Former corps members were also cited as 15% of the

founders of entrepreneurial organizations (Higgins, Hess, Weiner, & Robinson, 2011).

  The revolving nature of "the solution." As evidenced by the literature, Teach

for America placed greater emphasis on creating educational leaders opposed to

educators. The organization continued to place emphasis on the role the TFA alumni played outside the classroom in pushing for the education reforms that are in line with the organization's mission (Higgins, Hess, Weiner, & Robinson, 2011). The founder, Wendy Kopp, has even been quoted saying that Teach for America is not a teacher organization but rather a leadership development organization (Hootnick, 2014) and that when it comes to Teach for America "It gets to whether we're a teacher education model or a movement for social justice…I would say we are the latter" (Wilgoren, 2000).

The statements and viewpoints of the Teach for America founder can be viewed as problematic for a number of reasons. First, to put individuals in the position of a classroom teacher without regard to whether or not they have (or eventually will) develop into a teacher is harmful to the children that receive the education from this individual. All students, regardless of the district they reside in, deserve a teacher who is committed to educating students. Second, a social justice movement should not occur within the class, but rather outside of the school. Bringing political agendas into classrooms creates an atmosphere where students are used as pawns to further advance the interests of differing sides. This ideology takes the focus of learning away from students and makes education a game for those who wish to prove a point and choose to play at the expense of children. Lastly, the ideology of the founder isolates those who genuinely applied to the program because of a genuine interest to become an educator. With sentiments like the previous statements from the TFA founder, after 20 years of existence, Teach for America began to see an uprising from former corps members and classroom teachers.

A 2010 corps member wrote that Teach for America had essentially run its course and that it is now time for the organization to fold. Matt Barnum posted a column citing

that Teach for America creates a wasted investment for schools when members leave the classroom after the two-year commitment. He stated that wiser investments for schools would be on improving teacher salaries and working conditions to retain effective teachers (Strauss, 2013).

Another former corps member, Olivia Blanchard, posted to The Atlantic in 2013 her reasons for leaving Teach for America after only one year. Blanchard stated that as a 2011 corps member, her instructional preparation included training material that advised corps members that effective teaching techniques include emphasizing key points, commanding student attention, actively involving students, and checking for understanding. She then stated that Teach for America's instructional delivery cited setting high academic and behavioral expectations, structuring and delivering lessons, engaging students in the lesson, and building character and trust as uncommon teaching methods. This disconnect between instructional reality and Teach for America's perception of education has created a cast of corps members who, according to Olivia, are "confused about their purpose, uncertain of their skills, and struggling to learn the basics" in the classroom (Blanchard, 2013, p. 8).

In 2013, a special education teacher in Chicago Public Schools wrote a letter to the corps members slated to enter the district that fall. She requested that they all resign on their contracts and not enter the classrooms as teachers. She further stated how corps members do a disservice to the neediest students by creating an unstable teaching force that is ill-prepared and not committed to the students (Osgood, 2013).

The deception of "the solution." As the popularity of Teach for America has grown, so have the critics of the program. One critique that has been brought up is the

validity and reliability of the data reported by the organization. According to the Teach

for America website, 88 percent of corps members return for their second year of their

commitment (Teach for America, 2015). However, there is a major component that this

data does not account for: the number of individuals who never complete their first-year

commitment. Many articles allude to this discrepancy; however, the official numbers are

near-impossible to find as Teach for America reports its own data (Blanchard, 2013).

Nevertheless, when taking a closer look at the data reported by the organization,

questions do arise. For example, as Table 1 from the Teach for America website shows,

the number of individuals who did not return the following year consistently figures

between 80 – 90 percent. However, these figures are problematic in that the percentages

do not account for the individuals who did not complete their first year.

In addition, the data are not reliable because the first cohort on the chart reports

only 384 members where other sources report that cohort number to have been closer to

500 individuals (Strauss, 2013; Toppo, 2009) or 489 members (Brill, 2011, p. 63).

Table I

Incoming and Total Corps Size from 1990-2013

Year	Incoming Corps Members (First-Year Teachers)	Returning Corps Members (Second-Year Teachers)	Total Corps Size
1990-1991	384	---	384
1991-1992	684	364	1048
1992-1993	505	570	1075
1993-1994	516	414	930
1994-1995	428	450	878
1995-1996	480	361	841
1996-1997	438	417	855
1997-1998	457	395	852
1998-1999	621	410	1031
1999-2000	743	519	1262
2000-2001	847	618	1465
2001-2002	926	759	1685
2002-2003	1725	793	2518
2003-2004	1714	1376	3090
2004-2005	1661	1379	3040
2005-2006	2223	1439	3662
2006-2007	2409	1905	4314
2007-2008	2902	2167	5069
2008-2009	3594	2575	6169
2009-2010	4039	3313	7252
2010-2011	4485	3732	8217
2011-2012	5031	3982	9013
2012-2013	5807	4444	10251
2013-2014	5961	5070	11,031

Last Updated: 02/2015

Note: (Teach for America, 2015)

Further, Brill states that "[o]ne-third of [the] first 489 recruits would not last through their two-year commitments" (p. 63). When these calculations are complete, that would mean that nearly 163 initial corps members would not become alumni. It then raises questions how this number could be figured if 364 returned as second-year corps members as this calculation would result in a total of 326 corps members from the initial group that would actually complete the two-year commitment.

Another inconsistency appears in the table in years 2000 and 2003. According to the chart, the year 2000 cohort consisted of 847 people and the 2003 cohort had 1,714 members. However, the Mathematica study (which was paid for by Teach for America) cites each cohort as having 868 and 1,656 for the respective years (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004, p. xi).

Lastly, the website and chart indicated that this table was updated February 2015. By that time, official numbers should have been obtained as to the number of new corps members and returning second-year corps members for the 2014-2015 school year. This lack of reporting brings the validity of the data into question. While discussing this version of the data, it was further discovered that as of June 2015, the website reported a beginning corps size of 400 members (not an estimated number, but an actual number) (Teach for America, 2015). The inconsistencies in the data reporting draws scrutiny to the organization's validity as the former research director, Heather Harding, even stated that "many teachers provide performance statistics based on self-designed assessments" and that she does not "think that it stands up to external research scrutiny" (Blanchard, 2013, p. 8).

The new reality of "the solution." Back in the 1980s when Teach for America was originally conceived, there was an actual shortage in the number of available teachers. Many schools and districts began hiring permanent subs and issuing emergency certifications to fill growing vacancies. At the time of its creation, there was a true need for Teach for America.

Fast forward to 2015. The teaching landscape of this era was not the same that existed in the '80s. In the new millennium, seniors graduating from colleges and schools

of education faced a highly competitive job market. From the recession of 2007 to the growing desire to "do more with less," many teaching jobs became lost to attrition (Oliff, Mai, & Leachman, 2012). Unfortunately, those jobs were never fully recovered and as teachers went out, no one came in. For some districts, the cuts were so impactful, hiring freezes were in place for at least one academic year (2012). Across the nation, the reality was that over 7,000 jobs were cut in 2012 (Leachman, 2012). However, while districts were not necessarily hiring, that did not mean that students were not still graduating with education degrees.

As some districts were not able to afford hiring new teachers due to budget constraints, contractual obligations forced space to be made for Teach for America corps members into classrooms. In some districts, this came at the expense of certified teachers. According to an article from the *Chicago Tribune*, Chicago Public Schools laid off nearly 400 teachers at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. That fall, room was still allowed for 25 corps members while the teachers who had been laid off still remained unemployed (Cancino, 2010). In 2009, Boston told a similar story when twenty certified teachers were fired and replaced by Teach for America corps members. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., the superintendent laid off hundreds of teachers but kept 100 TFA corps members due to an obligation the district had with the program (Toppo, 2009).

Supply and Demand in the New Millennium

The teaching reality that existed when alternative certification programs originated had changed in the new millennium. In many areas teacher surpluses existed due to a number of reasons. As the number of traditionally certified educators began to grow, a closer examination of the teacher shortage was imperative.

So, *is* there a teacher shortage? As teachers were laid off from school districts facing budget constraints, as fully certified and recent college and school of education graduates could not find teaching jobs and as less retiring positions were refilled, the teaching supply of the 2000's was more than adequate to meet the demand. The issue, therefore, was not having a shortage of teachers, but rather certification stipulations amongst states and content areas that prohibit areas with surpluses to "outsource" to areas with need.

One study from White and Smith found that the perceived teacher shortage has been more due to teacher attrition than an actual shortage in supply. The study, though conducted in the United Kingdom, found that the same applied to the United States (White & Smith, 2005).

Nevertheless, the true question became: did a shortage of teachers actually affect student learning? The answer to that question was mixed. According to the same study from White and Smith, in the United States, less than 50% or principals reported teacher shortages as hindering student learning (p. 97). On the contrary, a report from the Kansas Center for Economic Growth stated that the cuts to education suffered in 2009 significantly cut the number of teachers in its public schools down by 665 individuals. According to the report, this created increasingly crowded classrooms, which were adverse to student learning as it took teacher attention away from individual students (p. 2).

Ultimately, the issue is not of a shortage, but rather how the education field certifies and distributes teachers across the country. Since states have not come together (nor has a federal mandate been made) which sets criteria for all teachers who enter

classrooms in this country. Therefore, it is difficult for a teacher certified in one state to become certified in another. However, northeastern states have begun to create a more transparent and transferable certification process. As Fowler noted in his article, 24 percent of the teaching licenses issued in that area between 1999-2007 were to individuals who prepared to teach in other states (Fowler, 2009, p. 10). This is a practice that could be beneficial to supplying the needs of teaching staff in areas experiencing shortages. The key is to make the process uniform across all states.

The medical community learned this lesson back in the early 1900s. At that time, programs varied in beliefs, coursework, and clinical experiences. In Flexner's 1910 report on the state of medical education, he noted that programs varied in length from three weeks to three years (The National Academy of Education, 2005, p. 55). After research from the field emerged, a widespread reform effort came to the profession as standards were set for medical training, accrediting programs, and licensing and certifying candidates (2005, p. 55). Shortly after, law, engineering, nursing, psychology, accounting, and architecture followed suite and created standards for their fields, thus transforming each from an occupation and into a profession. It was not until the end of the twenty-first century that the education field attempted this process with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. Each created a set of standards to help define what quality teaching should reflect in America's classrooms (2005, p. 55-56). The standards created by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards were utilized in this study.

Education in America in the new millennium…as measured by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. At the end of the 20th century and into the

new millennium, a growing wave of teacher accountability became evident. Teachers, schools, districts, states, and even the nation based effectiveness on the standardized test scores of the students in the classroom. With such high demands on student performance, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was created in 1987 to address the essential question of what teachers should be able to do in the new millennium. In 1989 the board established the following indicators as what effective teachers should be able to do:

1. Are committed to students and their learning;

2. Know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students;

3. Are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning;

4. Think systematically about their practice and learn from experience;

5. Are members of learning communities. (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, 1989, pp. 3-4)

The work conducted by the NBPTS was largely influenced by the release of the 1983 federal report *A Nation at Risk* (1989). The mission of the NBPTS is to:

- Maintain high and rigorous for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;

- Provide a national voluntary system certifying teachers that meet those standards;

- Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers. (1989, p. 1)

As dedicated educators, teachers should understand what strengths and abilities students possess to better maximize on success. As Murray states:

Ability varies. For any given ability, the population forms a continuum that goes

from very low to very high. The core abilities that dominate academic success

vary together. Schools that ignore those realities are doing a disservice to all their

students. (2008, p. 30)

This means that teachers need to know the ability level of their students, how this ability

impacts the child as a learner, and how to best utilize the given skill to make learning

meaningful and relevant to the learner. In theory, a teacher committed to education and

the learning of students will better accomplish this competency as opposed to a short-

term volunteer who is accomplishing one step in their overall career path.

Teachers of the 21st century needed to know their subject matter and how to teach

it to students. According to Friedman, "Teachers must first understand the goals and

tactics for achieving them [expectations for student learning] in an instructional unit, and

then they must communicate those goals and tactics to their students" (2005, p. 25).

Murray notes that teachers "need more experience with subject matter on a deeper and

broader level, need to be more appreciative of subject content for all elementary grades,

and more appreciative of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge" (2008, p. 72).

According to a 2005 report from the National Academy of Education, teachers should be

able to effectively plan and execute meaningful learning activities that guide students to

the key concepts and skills needed for success (p. 15). According to the Academy, "this

is not something that most people know how to do intuitively or that they learn from

unguided classroom experience" (p. 15). Further, it is stated that "Even when teachers

are provided with texts and other materials, they must figure out how to use these to meet

the goals and standards, given the particular needs and prior learning experiences of their

students and the resources and demands of the community" (p. 15). Therefore, a mere background in the subject matter is not enough. One must know how to transmit the subject to the students in an effective way that solidifies the knowledge into the mind of the student. This task is not done haphazardly. In short, teaching is more than picking up the teacher's guide and reading from page one, as some would believe it to be.

In the new millennium, teachers needed to manage and monitor student learning and behavior. In order to accomplish this, a thorough knowledge of child development and how children learn was essential. In the previously mentioned report, the National Academy of Education (2005) noted that teachers must understand:

- The child as a learner, understanding strengths, interests, and preconceptions;

- The knowledge skills, and attitudes the child sees to acquire and how they may be organized in a way that the student uses and transfers the knowledge;

- How to assess the learning and revelation of students' thinking;

- The community in which the learning occurs both in and out of the classroom. (p. 7)

This meant that new teachers needed to:

- Know the constructive nature of learning; how humans interpret the world based on background knowledge, skills, and present level of development (this means knowing and understanding what students currently know and believe and then creating connections to the new learning that is needed);

- Understand the cognitive process of connecting new learning to previous knowledge and making that knowledge accessible at a later time;

- Be aware of how people use metacognition to monitor their own learning (this includes teaching students to reflect on their thinking and understanding and self-monitoring the strategies they need to acquire new information);

- Utilize motivation as a vehicle for learning (being aware of what encourages students to engage in the learning process and understanding the tasks, supports, and feedback that will accomplish that engagement). (p. 8)

Once teachers have a thorough understanding of how students learn and a solid foundation in the subject matter they will teach, the two paradigms must meld together to create meaningful learning experiences for students. According to Friedman, "These abstract concepts [of the subject matter] must then be taken [by the teacher] and translated into concrete learning objectives so that student achievement can be observed, evaluated and demonstrated [by the student]" (2005, p. 23). Teachers who understand how to monitor student learning are better able to implement what Freidman refers to as corrective instruction, or reteaching material until mastery is achieved (p. 31). To adequately monitor performance, teachers should be able to:

- Establish criteria that defines correct performance of the objective and when learning is achieved;

- Administer assessments that measure actual performance on the indicated learning objectives;

- Have a comparison which establishes the correct performance of the objective as a criteria to measure student performance against. (2005, p. 31)

In short, teachers should understand the objective students need to master, have a model of what mastery should resemble, and an accurate way to assess student mastery. This

depth of understanding student learning and achievement often takes a longer time to master.

Another key indicator that teachers in the new millennium needed to do was to think systematically about their practice and learn from previous experiences. Learning from previous experiences could include that when "students fail to perform an instructional task, teachers [then] clarify their misconceptions and turn to corrective tasks, which the students perform until they master the learning objective" (Freidman, 2005, p.23). This meant that teachers needed to take student non-achievement as a learning point to consider and correct.

An additional aspect of learning that this indicator alludes to is that of continual professional development. According to Pushkin (2001) "'Development' is synonymous with 'growth,' 'maturation,' 'progress,' 'evolution,' and 'improvement'" (p. 173). Educators must understand that the teacher they are on their first day should and will be drastically different from the educator they will evolve into with experience, collaboration, reflection, and time. Further, Pushkin states that "Professional development, whether for teachers seeking to remain in the classroom or for aspiring administrators, needs to require additional academic training for training's sake seems counterproductive" (p. 172). True professional development then challenges existing paradigms in educators and requires them to construct new knowledge as learning occurs. Teacher development should go well beyond merely giving ideas for the classroom but to developing a deeper understanding of the phenomena that occur in the classroom. With this deeper knowledge, educators can better make instructional decisions for students as they will understand the reasoning behind their actions and the impact it will have on students.

This thought process encourages what Pushkin advocates for with a "better connection to the intellectual growth of students and educators" (p. 172). For as Pushkin states "To organize professional development around efficiency models [as some organizations do] ...seems counterproductive and undermines the process of knowledge" (p. 172).

A teacher in the new millennium needed to be actively engaged in the learning community of other certified teachers. One way of achieving this indicator has been the establishment of professional learning communities. A community, as defined by Sergiovanni (1994), is "[the] collection[s] of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together binded to a set of shared ideals and ideas" (xvi). A learning community is further defined by Schlechty (2005) as:

> [a] group of persons who are bound together by the pursuit of common questions, problems, or issues. They have developed clear norms and procedures that ensure that this pursuit goes forward in a way that honors the ideas of mutualism, collegiality, trust, loyalty and friendship while showing a bias for hard-nosed analysis and concrete action. (p 241)

In both of these definitions, the common theme is on collaboration. Teachers willingly come together to collaborate on what is best for all students through critical performance analysis. The analysis refers to analyzing student performance on common formative assessments. The concrete action Schlechty mentions refers to what educators plan to do to further student learning as a result of the assessment results. What makes this practice different from merely examining ones' own data independently is that with this process, educators collectively reflect on the learning of all students and collaboratively create action steps to utilize within individual classrooms.

Summary

This chapter addressed the history of teacher certification, alternatives to licensure, and the standards held by most teacher preparation programs. The chapter also presented the development of the Teach for America program as a way of comparing the various paths to teaching. Chapter three follows with an explanation of the methodology used in the study.

Chapter Three

Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers from the Teach for America program as interpreted by traditionally certified educators. The rationale for selecting the Teach for America program was that it has become one of the better-known national alternative certification programs. The reason for only collecting data from traditionally certified educators was to gain a perspective of the Teach for America program that is difficult to attain as the majority of the research on the program is internally ran.

Research Design

The methodology for this study was qualitative. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is used to seek understanding of situations faced by populations of people or individuals. Further, "qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in people's lived experiences" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 30). A social constructivist knowledge claim guided this study. According to Bloomberg and Volpe, social constructivism states that "reality is socially, culturally, and historically constructed" and that "the researcher attempts to understand social phenomena from a context-specific perspective" (2012, p. 28). The social constructivist approach was chosen because, at the time of the study, Teach for America was a recently new program. Therefore, the claims that are made by the program are based on the social and cultural realities of that time, which are constantly changing. The data collection for this study consisted of a series of focus group interviews and surveys. The questions for both data

collectors were created by the research and modeled after the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards teacher quality indicators.

The purpose for using surveys was to collect information on perceptions of the effectiveness of Teach for America candidates from a diverse pool of educators. The survey was also utilized to reach a greater population of respondents as opposed to the focus group. The survey questions were developed for this study by the researcher and the reliability testing that went into the creation of the questions are explained in the Validity and Reliability section.

The purpose for utilizing focus groups for this study was to gain deeper insights into the perceptions held by traditionally certified educators on the effectiveness of Teach for America Individuals. Focus groups allowed participants to elaborate on the understandings and perceptions held and allowed the researcher to further probe areas that were not probed on the survey.

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ 1. What strengths do traditionally certified educators perceive from the Teach for America program as it relates to the competence demonstrated through corps members in the classroom?

RQ 2. What weaknesses do traditionally certified educators perceive from the Teach for America program as it relates to the competence demonstrated through corps members in the classroom?

RQ 3. What concerns do traditionally certified educators have regarding the Teach for America program?

RQ 4. How do Teach for America corps members compare to traditionally certified teachers when assessed by traditionally certified educators on quality indicators derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of traditionally certified educators in public and charter schools at the elementary and secondary level. Participants came from urban, suburban, and urban-suburban districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area of Kansas and Missouri. A total of 40 educators were contacted for this study based on the researcher's knowledge of the individual's educational background, connections through mutual contacts, and accessibility for the study. The final sample contained principals ($n = 6$), vice principals ($n = 2$), central office personnel ($n = 4$), and classroom teachers ($n = 12$) for a total of 24 participants.

Sampling Procedures

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), the purpose of this section is to explain how participants were selected for the research. For this study, a purposive sampling method was utilized. In this sample, participants are selected based on the researcher's experience with or knowledge of the individuals. Participants were selected based on their educational background, familiarity with the Teach for America program, and employment in the educational field.

First, the researcher went through the multiple professional organizations, cohorts, and teaching assignments where contact with other educators had been made. From this listing, individuals were selected who through previous conversations had indicated a knowledge of Teach for America or were employed at some point in an area where the

program is found. Next, the researcher solicited these individuals to ascertain if in fact

they did have knowledge of the program and to ensure that the individual had previously

completed a traditional certification program. After all, credentials were verified,

individuals were then invited to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

For this study, both a survey (appendix D) and focus group interview (appendix

E) were used. The researcher created both the survey and interview script. Teachers and

administrators completed the survey through the SurveyMonkey website. Copies of both

the survey and the interview questions are included in the appendix.

The survey consisted of three sections with a total of 26 response items. The first

section asked to what extent did respondents feel that Teach for America corps members

demonstrated ten indicators. Each indicator was evaluated using a forced-response 4

point Likert-type scale ranging from "Very" (the highest rating) to "Not at All" (the

lowest rating). Section Two had the same ten indicators but had respondents evaluate the

indicators in relation to traditionally prepared teachers. Both sections one and two

addressed research question four: How do Teach for America corps members compare to

traditionally certified teachers when assessed by traditionally certified educators on

quality indicators derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The third and final section included open-response questions on how much preparation a

teacher needs in several domains and the overall effectiveness of the Teach for America

program in preparing new teachers for today's classrooms. This section was designed to

allow for elaboration on any area of the survey respondents felt very passionate about and

thus, voice their opinion deeper. From the responses, research questions one, two, and three were indirectly addressed.

The focus group interviews contained a series of thirteen questions. All responses were open-ended. The first question established familiarity with the Teach for America program. The next seven identified strengths and weaknesses observed from individuals trained from the Teach for America program. Questions two, three, four, seven, and eight were directly from National Board of Professional Teaching Standards indicators. Answers to each question revealed either a strength or weakness of the program and as a result addressed either a combination of research questions one, two, or three. Question five asked for specific strengths participants witnessed from the program and was directly tied to research question one. Question six asked for specific weaknesses participants witnessed from the program and is directly tied to research question two. Question nine probed at interviewee opinion on the overall effectiveness of Teach for America as a program to prepare individuals to become classroom teachers and usually revealed a concern participants had about the program, thus addressing research question three. Question nine solicited participant opinion as to the better method to prepare an individual for becoming a classroom teacher. Each focus group session lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

The researcher crafted both the survey and the focus group interview questions for use in this study. The purpose for creating new surveys and interview questions was because of the desire by the researcher to have purposeful questions specific to the nature of this study. The procedures for validating both instruments are outlined in the validity and reliability section.

With both instruments, participants had the option to not complete the data collection and have their results removed from the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were also stressed in this study as stated in the invitation given to participants (appendix A). All rights, procedures and process are outlined in the back of this study (appendix A, B, and C).

Measurement. The researcher created both the survey and interview items utilized for this study. All survey and interview items were designed to closely align with the research questions. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) created a framework to model the survey and interview questions after. These standards were chosen as a model because they created a neutral framework for the researcher to evaluate teacher quality. The five guiding NBPTS propositions that were utilized in this study were:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning;

2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students;

3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning;

4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience;

5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

(National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, 1989)

Survey items were selected to solicit and understanding of traditionally certified educators' perceptions on the effectiveness of Teach for America corps members in the areas of commitment to students, subject matter knowledge, behavior management, monitoring of learning, and contribution to the learning communities of other teachers.

Interview questions were designed to ascertain educators' opinions on the Teach for America program in training corps members to become classroom teachers. The survey was designed to solicit greater participation and obtain a deeper research base. The focus groups were utilized to gather deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of the program. Both methods were chosen to create a richer study that could contribute to the limited body of knowledge on the Teach for America program.

Validity and reliability. According to Lunenburg (2008), "construct validity provides justification of the instrument being used in a research study and the appropriateness of the intended instrument interpretations" (p. 182). Since the researcher crafted the instruments used in this study, both had to be tested to establish validity and reliability. The instruments used in this study were tested on a sample group of five individuals per instrument. The expert panel for the survey was chosen due to their familiarity with the field of education, willingness to critique, expertise in survey components, and to gauge the user-friendliness of the instruments. The expert panel for the focus group questions was chosen due to their ability to critique the structure of the questions and flow of the interview. The expert panel completed the survey to ensure clarity of questions, accuracy in response options, and ease of completion. The interview questions were tested on a different set of five individuals. The expert panel analyzed interview questions to ensure clarity of questions, open-ended opportunity for responses, and test time needed to complete. The feedback from both panels was taken into consideration as the final drafts of the survey and interview were completed. Once the researcher analyzed data from the pilot group, the researcher's advisor provided

further review for clarification and modification. After the survey and interview questions were approved, both became accessible for use by the sample population.

Data Collection Procedures

As permission to study was being considered from the university, the researcher compiled a list of educators with whom professional and personal contact had previously been established. From this list, the researcher solicited contacts of other individuals who may have wanted to participate in the study. Once the final list was compiled, initial and informal contact was made via social media and in person. Once rapport was established and final permission was granted to conduct the study, an invitation to participate was sent to study participants via e-mail with a link to complete the survey (appendix G). Results from the survey were tabulated by the researcher and compiled for analysis and interpretation.

As the survey was open and available to participants, the researcher initiated personal contact via social media and in person to educators who had expressed interest in participating in the focus group. The researcher then divided participants into one of two groups based on their credentials. The groups were Teacher and Administrator. The Teacher group consisted of educators who serve as classroom or resource teachers. The Administrator group was compiled of building and district level administrators. The groups were divided in this manner to allow for open and honest sharing. It has been the experience of the researcher and the advice of the advisor that teachers may not share as openly when they are in the presence of administrators. Therefore, to avoid that possibility, the researcher divided teachers from administrators. Another reason for

utilizing two different groups was to obtain a lateral (teacher) and vertical (administrator) perspective.

Arrangements were made for focus group sessions to occur in various public libraries and at the Overland Park Baker campus. Once meeting rooms were secured for the study, an e-mail invitation from the Evite web service was sent to participants (appendix J). Focus group sessions were then conducted at each of the selected locations. A moderator read questions while the researcher secured audio recordings from the session and scribed participant responses. The researcher then reviewed notes and transcripts from each focus group interview and determined similarities and differences among the responses. Upon completion of the initial reading of each session, the researcher then entered the audio files from each interview and the open ended response survey answers into the Dedoose program. From there, files were transcribed and coded for common themes that emerged throughout the data set. Codes and themes were then further analyzed for frequency and application to each research question.

Simultaneously, survey data was monitored for response rates. As the researcher noted low response rates, additional invitations and reminders were sent out. In addition, contact was made with possible participants to ascertain if the link had been received. If individuals indicated that a link was not received or did not work, new links were created and sent to the individual. Finally, at the conclusion of all data collection, all study participants were sent a thank you note (appendix L) to show appreciation for participation in this study. The data from both the surveys and interviews are included in chapter four.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the survey questions were tabulated within the

SurveyMonkey program, analyzed by the researcher for quantity, and then compiled into

descriptive statistics. Focus group responses and open-response survey answers were

transcribed using the Dedoose Research Analysis program. Responses were uploaded

onto the program. After the data was uploaded, descriptors were used to provide

demographic data for each participant. Descriptors for this study included gender

(female, male), educational role (administrator, teacher), ethnicity (African American,

Caucasian), and current employment setting (urban, suburban, or urban-suburban). Next,

the researcher transcribed the focus group responses within the program. After

transcription, the researcher re-read and coded each document. After codes were

developed for each document, the researcher re-read the documents again to discover any

further codes.

The Dedoose research analysis program allowed the researcher to examine the

frequency of codes by transcript. A code definition feature was available which allowed

the researcher to define each code as it was discovered. Comparisons between codes

were analyzed using the qualitative chart function within the program. The researcher

was able to examine interview excerpts against all 44 codes developed during the

analysis. The findings from the study are presented in chapter four.

Limitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby, limitations are factors that are beyond the

control of the researcher (2008). For the purpose of this study, a very small sample was

attainable from educators in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Due to the metropolitan

area only having two districts that actively utilize the program out of 107 total districts (Kansas City Metro Area School District, 2015), the pool of potential participants was limited as many educators did not have knowledge of the program and could not speak to its strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, it should also be noted that the Teach for America program is a national program that reaches well beyond Kansas and Missouri. Therefore, trends that are noticed in this area may not apply to other areas where the program is located.

Another limitation of this study was the knowledge that educators had about the program. As the researcher inquired to acquaintances to gauge their familiarity with the program and thus see if they could participate in the study, it was discovered that many did not know what the program was. Further, it was discovered that some who were familiar with the name of the program did not understand how it was set up. This phenomenon is explored further in chapter 5.

Lastly, this study was strictly voluntary. The researcher had no control of the participation and response rate.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodology for the study was detailed. The instrumentation was included along with sampling procedures. Procedures for data collection and data analysis were also included. In chapter four, the results of the data analysis are presented.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter provides an overview of the research study. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of alternatively certified individuals from the Teach for America program as perceived by traditionally certified teachers and administrators. A social constructionism framework was used for this study. The indicators utilized in this study for the survey questions came from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Descriptive Statistics

The population for this study consisted of educators from the Kansas City metropolitan area who had a working knowledge of the Teach for America program. A total of 21 surveys were completed and 9 individuals participated in one of the focus group interviews. The SurveyMonkey program was used to gather the survey data and the Dedoose program was used to transcribe and analyze the focus group data and open response items on the survey from this study.

The following graph shows the focus group participants, title (administrator or teacher) and their most recent K-12 educational type (whether charter or public), particularly where they encountered Teach for America corps members. No other identifying information was collected to protect participant anonymity as the sample size was very limited. Participants have all been assigned a pseudonym for the data reporting.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Title	K-12 Type
Admin Kappa	Principal	Charter
Admin Omega	Central Office – HR	Public
Admin Phi	Vice-Principal	Public
Admin Zeta	Dean of Students	Charter
Admin Upsilon	Principal	Public
Admin Alpha	Central Office – HR	Public
Teach Iota	Teacher	Charter
Teach Sigma	Teacher	Public
Teach Delta	Teacher	Public

Research Question 1: What strengths can be derived from Teach for America corps members in regards to the Teach for America program?

The interview data yielded the following two themes under this research question: content knowledge and none. When it comes to content knowledge, five of the focus group participants mentioned a positive correlation between Teach for America corps members and content knowledge. All teacher participants noted this area as a strength whereas only two of the administrators did. Many reported that the individual had a thorough subject matter knowledge, due to their diverse backgrounds.

On the other hand, many interviewees hesitated to give a strength from the program. When this specific question was asked, many participants paused, sighed, or

took a long pause before answering the question. As Admin Kappa noted "I struggle to give a strength…for any that I've worked directly with. Which is why I don't hire Teach for America [corps members]."

Research Question 2: What weaknesses do traditionally certified educators perceive from the Teach for America program as evidenced by Teach for America corps members?

The interview data yielded several themes related to this question. The six themes revealed were: *Length of tenure, Motives for Entering Teach for America, Classroom Skill Sets, Youth, Training, and Support.*

Length of Tenure. Several of the interview respondents commented on the length of time that the Teach for America individuals they had encountered stay within the classroom. All respondents commented that many do not stay for long. In each focus group, it was revealed that Teach for America individuals left before the two-year commitment, and some did not make it to the end of the school year. As Admin Zeta noted, at her school, the longest tenure of a Teach for America individual has been three years.

Motives for Entering Teach for America. Several interviewees questioned the motivating force driving individuals to choose Teach for America. As Admin Phi stated, "Why not go the traditional route in the first place?" As this sentiment emerged from three separate respondents, three additional sub-themes emerged as well: *Financial, Community Service, and Resume' Builder.*

Eight of the nine interviewees stated that they felt many individuals had entered the Teach for America program for financial reasons. All eight stated that the program

does offer some type of loan forgiveness for participants and speculated that this was a major factor that attracted many corps members to the program. Admin Kappa stated that she "Resented the fact that others use this program to pay off their loans where she had to go in debt to build her career and pay her loans back."

Forty-four percent of interviewees stated that they felt another motivator for corps members to enter the Teach for America program was their desire to perform a duty of service to the community. This "good deed" as Admin Phi classified it, often turns into a mere conversational piece rather than a lifetime career. In other words, individuals are utilizing the opportunity to educate youth as their chance to give back to the community. As one respondent stated "They __ don't see the ap___"

Closely aligned to community service, another theme that emerged from the interview data was that of resume' building. Less than half of interviewees responded that the corps members they had encountered were purely there for the short-term until the next opportunity presented itself. Admin Kappa stated that often times Teach for America corps members wanted to know "How does this [classroom teaching experience] fit onto my resume?" These individuals wanted to add a valuable life experience to their own experiences and the Teach for America program allowed them to do just that.

Classroom Skill Sets. All focus group participants mentioned some form of classroom skills as a weakness within the Teach for America program. Within classroom skill sets, two subthemes emerged: behavior management and instructional delivery. For this study, behavior management is defined in the terms of the management of student

behavior within the classroom. Instructional delivery became defined as the way in which the teacher delivers instruction to students.

Every participant mentioned a lack of behavior management as a weakness from Teach for America corps members. Administrator participants discussed how this weakness became the responsibility of them as the volume of times they (the administrators) had to assist with behavior issues in corps members' classrooms was high and notably more intensified than that of traditionally certified teachers with similar years of experience. Admins Alpha, Upsilon, and Zeta noted how they spent substantial amounts of time in corps members' classrooms dealing with behavior issues. Teach Iota stated how "out of control" the classrooms were of corps members. As several participants noted, corps members were not trained in managing student behavior and therefore the administrator is left with handling the behavior issues of corps members' students at a greater volume than any other type of teacher.

Another subtheme that arose was that of instructional delivery. Consistently, interviewees stated that corps members had the content knowledge, but that they lacked the ability to transmit knowledge to students. As two administrators noted, corps members expect to stand and deliver a message, but they are not equipped with the skills to make that content meaningful to students. Three interviewees pointed out how corps members have no knowledge of instructional strategies, differentiation, learning strategies, and interpreting data for instructional decisions.

Youth. Four participants noted how the young age of Teach for America corps members was a weakness of the program. For many participants, this youth often caused corps members to have troubles setting boundaries with students. In one instance noted

by Teacher Iota, a corps member was involved in an inappropriate relationship with a student. This corps member was only a couple years older than the student and thus did not see herself as an authoritative figure, but more of a peer to the students she taught. Admin Zeta noted how a corps member would send inappropriate text messages to the principal of the school. Again, this was attributed to the age of the individual as she too was a youthful corps member.

Training. Many of the shortcomings participants mentioned related to a lack of training. All nine stated in some way that corps members were not given adequate training before entering the classroom. In addition, nine surveys indicated that the overall program does not provide adequate training for participants. When further dissected, the survey data also revealed that in the areas of behavior management, curriculum, child development, and classroom experience, survey respondents indicated that incoming teachers need at least a year or more experience in each of those domains. With the Teach for America program only lasting five weeks, it is evident that the program does not meet the demands requested by these traditionally certified educators.

Support. The last theme that emerged under this research question was supported. All of the administrator participants stated that they had not witnessed any support for Teach for America corps members that were supposed to be provided through the program. The only support mentioned by two administrators was that which was provided by the district that the corps member worked in. Otherwise, the ongoing support from Teach for America provided mentors was non-existent.

Research Question 3: What concerns do traditionally certified educators have regarding the Teach for America program?

For this research question, three major themes emerged: stability, culture, and affects. Both the survey open-response items and focus group interviews yielded this data. Under stability, the following subthemes emerged: classroom environment and staffing arose. Under affect, the following subthemes arose: school culture and student learning.

Stability. Many focus group respondents indicated a concern regarding the lack of stability that the Teach for America program created in the schools. When it comes to stability in a classroom environment, all administrator participants noted how the lack of classroom management had an adverse effect on the learning environment. As Admin Kappa noted, Teach for America corps members lacked "the ability to run regular routines or procedures or see the importance of that." She continued to state how this lack of structure then manifested in disorganized and dysfunctioning classrooms. Admin Upsilon further stated how the bulk of her time as an administrator was spent in Teach for America corps members' classrooms controlling behaviors so that learning could occur. She reported how in essence she was charged with preparing corps members for a four-year teaching degree instead of leading trained teachers.

In terms of staffing, the term "revolving door" emerged in response to the instability that the Teach for America creates in the schools where it is placed. As Admin Zeta mentioned, out of 30 teachers in her building, 25 are Teach for America corps members with less than three years of teaching experience. This constant turnover has adversely affected programming for students, support for parents, and relationships amongst staff and students. Admin Upsilon also echoed this sentiment.

Culture. A concern raised in every focus group addressed the characteristics and backgrounds of Teach for America corps members. Participants noted that corps members they had encountered tended to be Caucasian and middle-class to affluent. This concerned respondents as they noted that the schools in which Teach for America corps members are placed tend to have high poverty rates and predominately minority students. As Admin Kappa stated "Each of them that I knew, saw themselves as the white, saying, 'I'm going to come in and rescue,' change and do all of these things. And also as a white educator in an urban area I had a really hard time relating to those teachers because I felt like they were personifying the very image I try not to be a part of."

Affect. In terms of the lasting impressions that the Teach for America program leaves on the school environments where it is found, many participants commented on the affect the program has. Under this theme, a couple of subthemes were discovered. School culture and student learning were two subthemes that emerged during many of the focus group interviews. While school culture for two administrators was directly correlated to the instability in staffing, the dimension participants presented warranted a separate theme.

As Admin Omega noted, the culture of the building suffers largely when individuals are not invested. This investment was noted by the nature of corps members not staying, or in essence abandoning the community at the conclusion of the work day. This phenomenon was referred to as "Drive-in, Drive-out teachers." Such teachers are not concerned with the lasting impact on the school culture as they are not invested in the long-term success of the community.

Admin Zeta stated that the revolving nature of the corps members has created a culture of chaos and unrest, one that was not present prior to the arrival of such a substantial amount of Teach for America corps members. She further stated how the culture is now very hostile, staff have become segregated out of a need for survival and micromanaged discipline procedures have been instituted.

Student learning was another subtheme that emerged under affect. Admin Alpha noted that placing corps members in the classroom as teachers shortchanges the learning outcomes for students in the long run. "We're just teaching them about a subject matter. Everything else gets lost." The education of the whole child does not occur when corps members are placed in classrooms.

As Admin Kappa stated that "because they have limited experience with teaching or instructional methods, even knowing what the curriculum is, the ability to change lessons or adjust instruction to meet the needs of the kids in the room was very much lacking." According to Admin Kappa, student learning suffered as a result of every student's needs not being properly met nor addressed. This affect was then carried over into the next year as next year's teacher had to accommodate the areas that had not been addressed by the previous teacher.

Research Question 4: How do Teach for America corps members compare to traditionally certified teachers when assessed by traditionally certified educators on quality indicators derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

To answer this research question, a survey was created using the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards indicators as the framework through which teacher

quality was defined. This survey was divided into three sections. The first section utilized the indicators to examine Teach for America corps members. The second section utilized the same indicators as section one but in the examination of traditionally certified teachers. The third and final section asked open-response questions as to the amount of training respondents felt new teachers needed in several key domains the researcher identified as important to classroom success.

On every measure, traditionally certified teachers scored higher than Teach for America corps members on the same standard/indicator. The following graphs show the distribution and the range of differences for each survey question.

On the survey question to what extent is each group dedicated to the students they teach, 29% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 57% rated them as moderately, and 14% rated them as slightly. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 62% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 38% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than they scored Teach for America corps members.
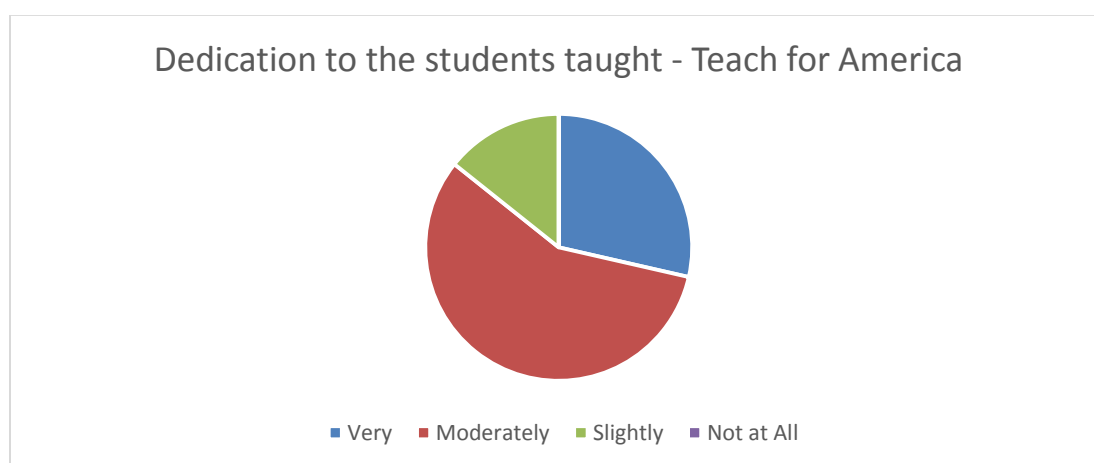

Figure 1. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members are dedicated to the students they teach?
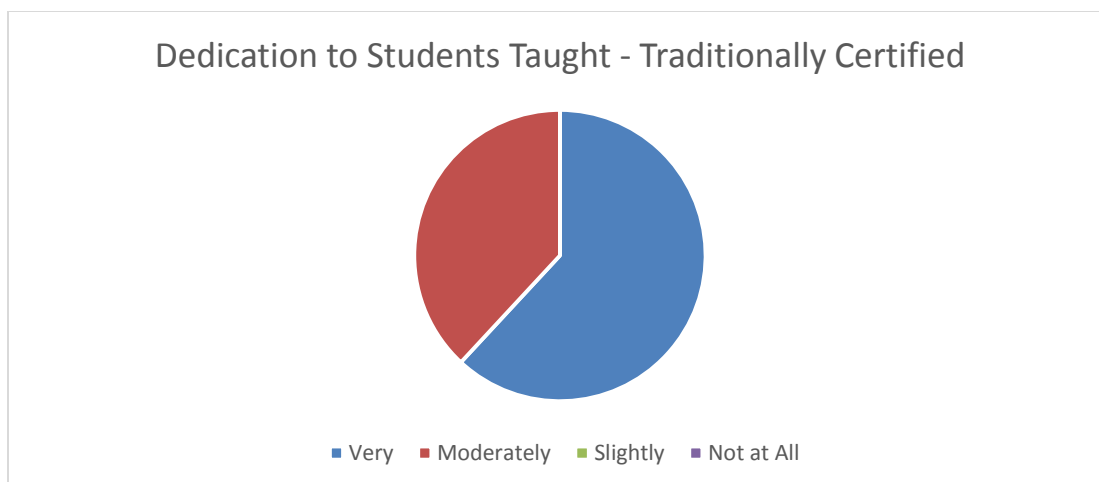
Figure 2. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers are dedicated to the students they teach?

On the survey question to what extent is each group dedicated to student learning, 29% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 57% rated them as moderately, and 14% rated them as slightly. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 62% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 38% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than they scored Teach for America corps members.
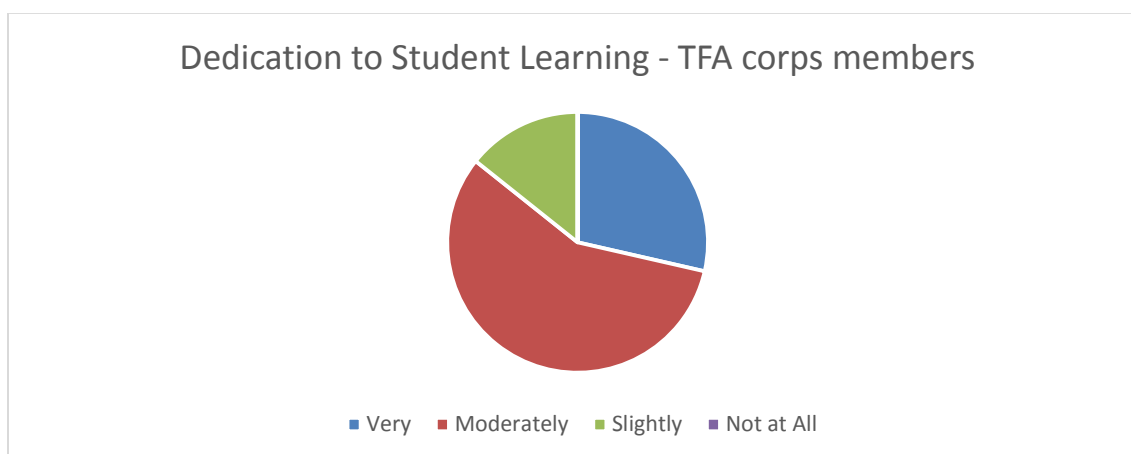

Figure 3. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members are dedicated to student learning?
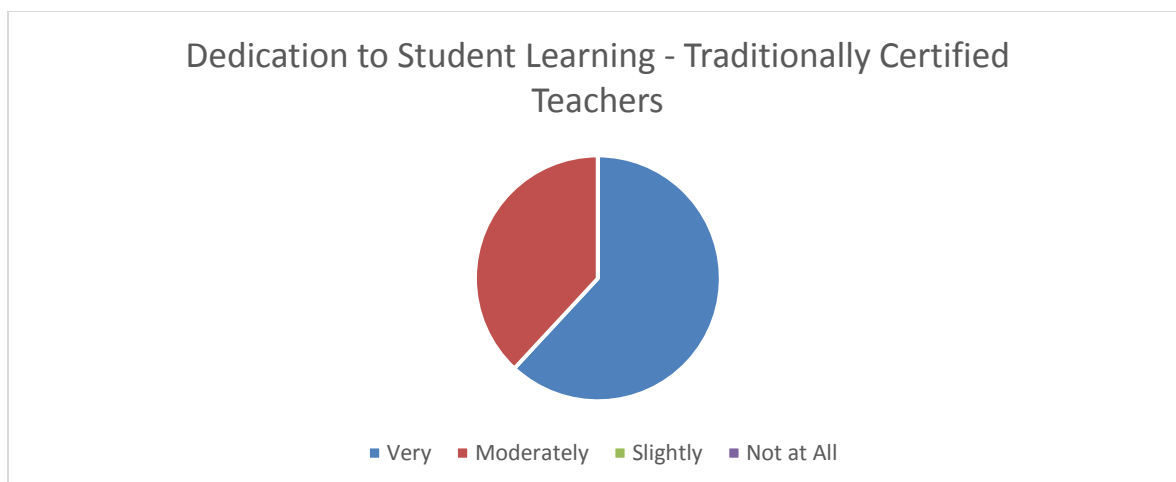
Figure 4. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers are dedicated to student learning?

On the survey question to what extent does each group demonstrate a knowledge of the subject they teach, 19% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 43% rated them as moderately, and 38% rated them as slightly. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 62% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 38% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
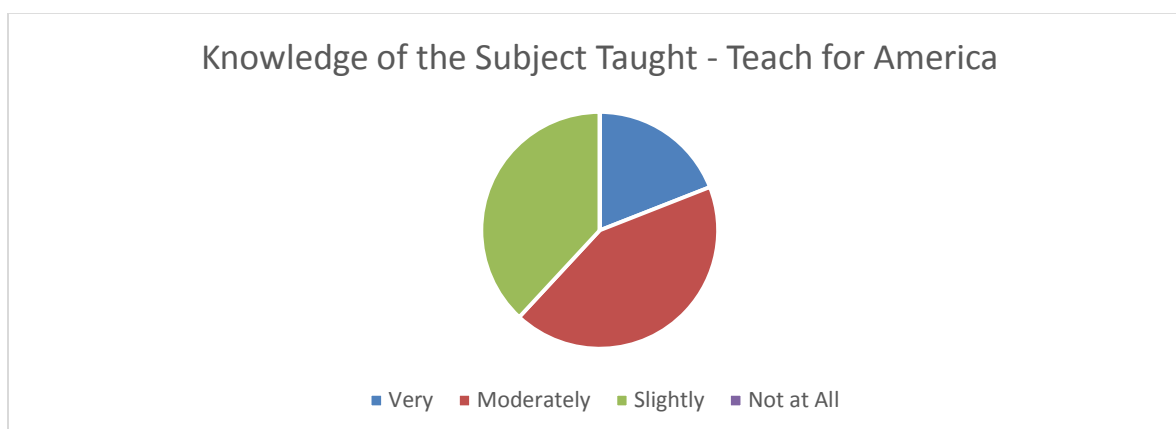

Figure 5. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members are knowledgeable in the subject(s) they teach?

Knowledge of Subject Taught - Traditionally Certified Teachers

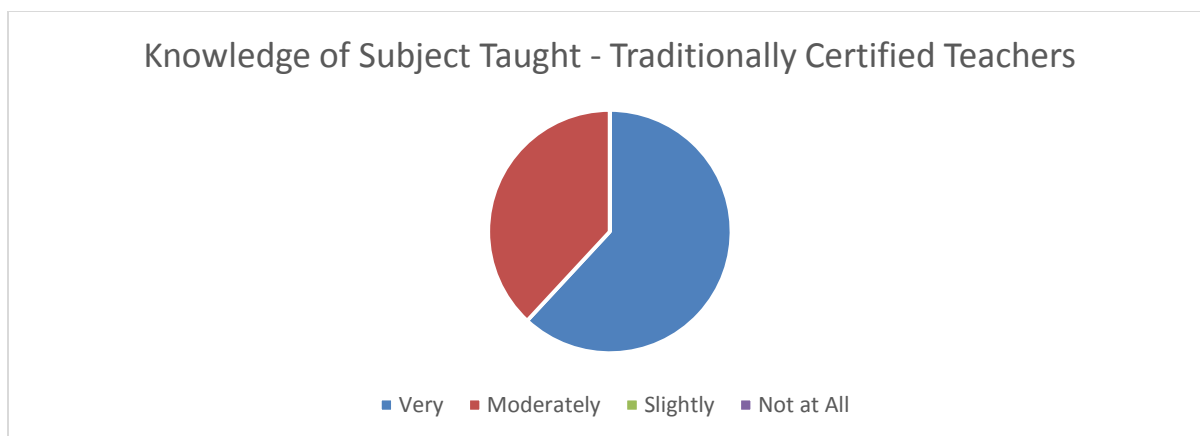■ Very   ■ Moderately   ■ Slightly   ■ Not at All

Figure 6. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers are knowledgeable in the subject(s) they teach?

On the survey question to what extent does each group demonstrate an understanding of the curriculum they teach, 5% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 45% rated them as moderately, 45% rated them as slightly, and 5% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 57% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 43% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
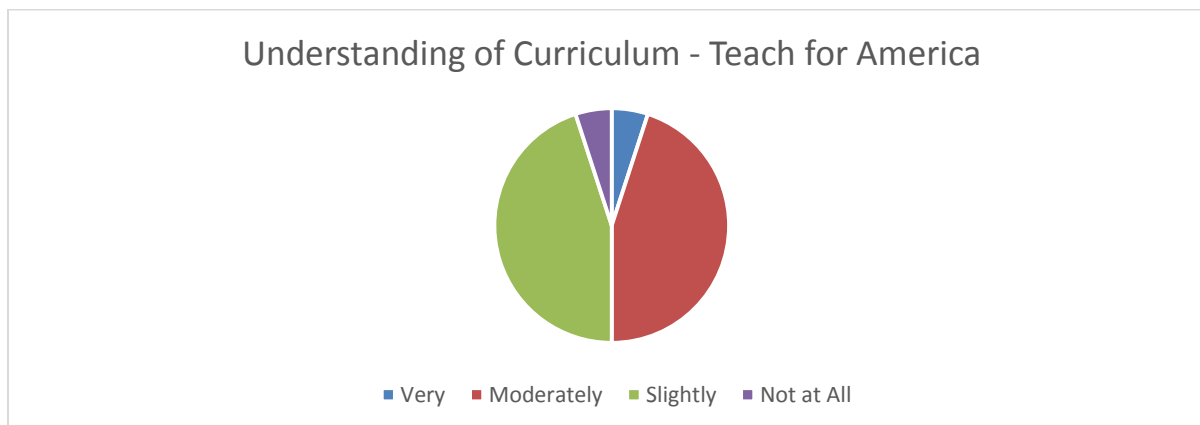

Understanding of Curriculum - Teach for America

■ Very   ■ Moderately   ■ Slightly   ■ Not at All

Figure 7. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members understand the curriculum they teach?
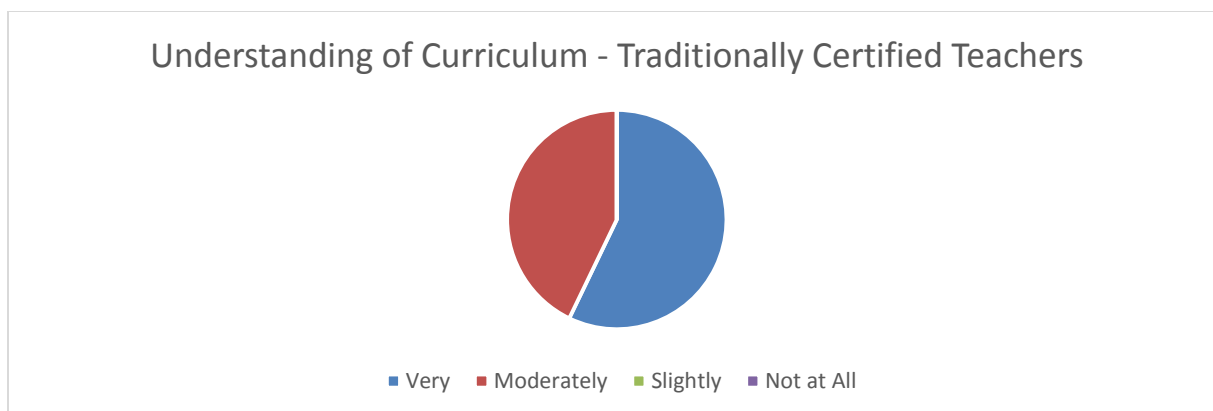
Figure 8. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers understand the curriculum they teach?

On the survey question to what extent does each group demonstrate a knowledge of the learning standards they are accountable for, 5% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 45% rated them as moderately, 45% rated them as slightly, and 5% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 62% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 38% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
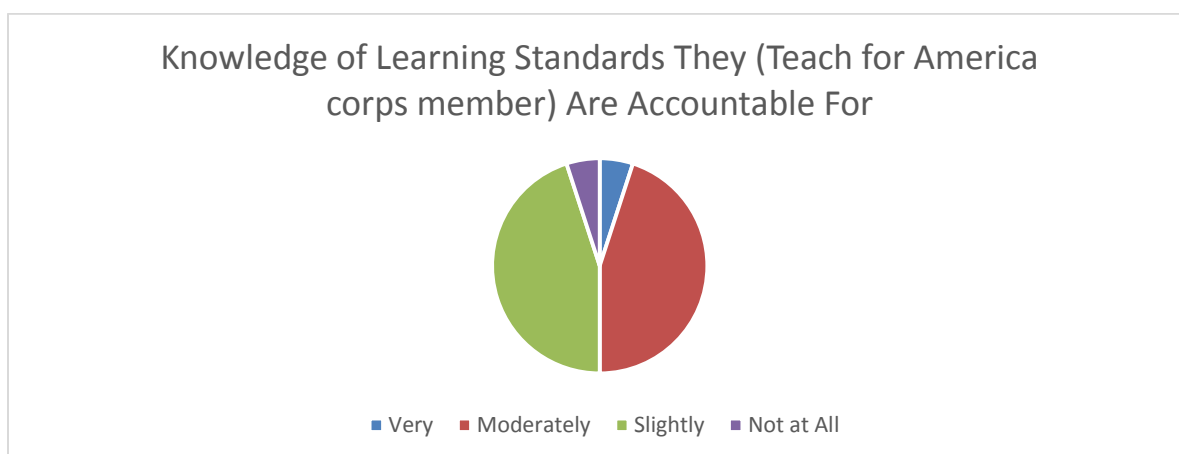

Figure 9. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members are knowledgeable in the learning standards they are held accountable for?
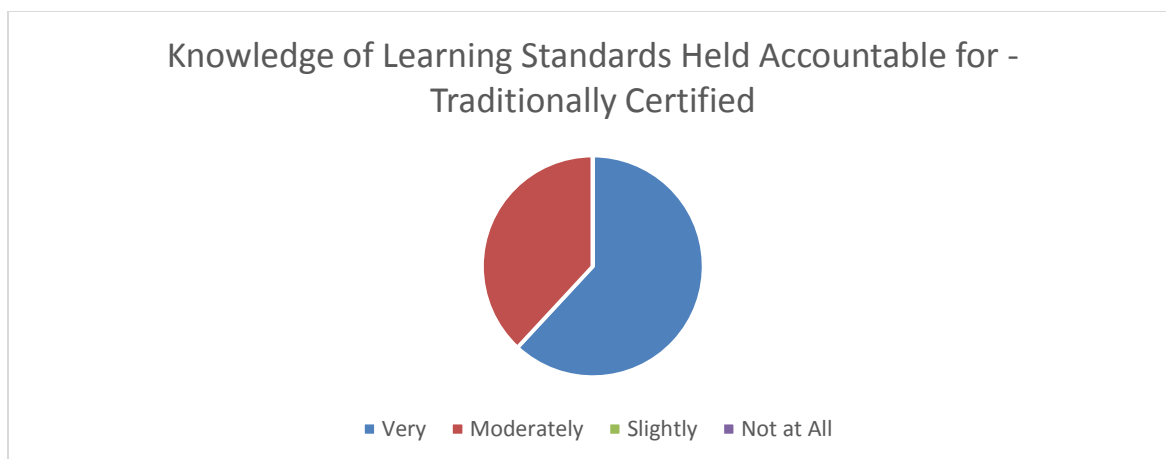
Figure 10. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers are knowledgeable of the learning standards they are accountable for?

On the survey question to what extent does each group integrate technology in the classroom, 15% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 70% rated them as moderately, 10% rated them as slightly, and 5% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 43% rated traditionally certified teachers as very, 52% rated them as moderately, and 5% rated them as slightly. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.

Figure 11. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members integrate technology into the classroom?

Technology Integration in the Classroom - Traditionally Certified Teachers

■ Very   ■ Moderately   ■ Slightly   ■ Not at All

Figure 12. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers integrate technology into the classroom?

On the survey question to what extent does each group monitor student learning, 10% of respondents rated Teach for America corps members as very, 30% rated them as moderately, 55% rated them as slightly, and 5% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 48% rated traditionally certified teachers as very, 48% rated them as moderately, and 4% rated them as slightly. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
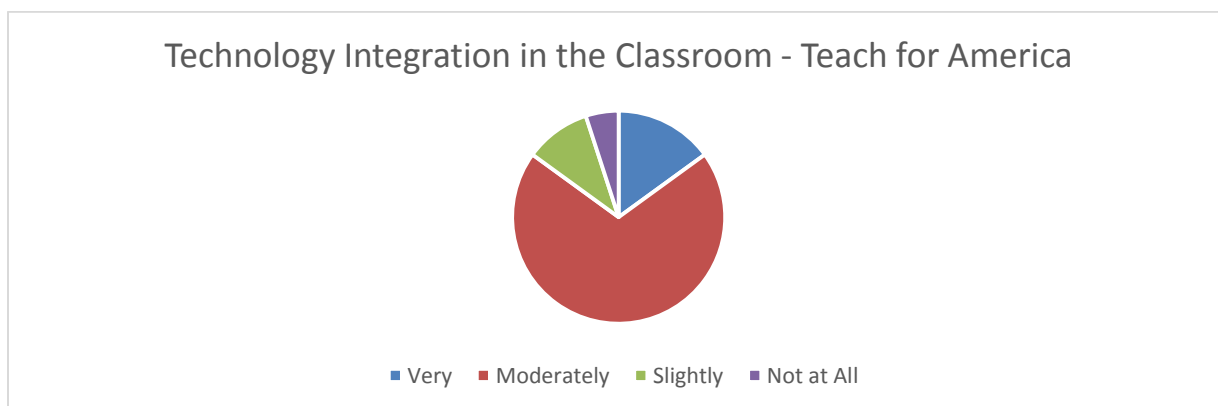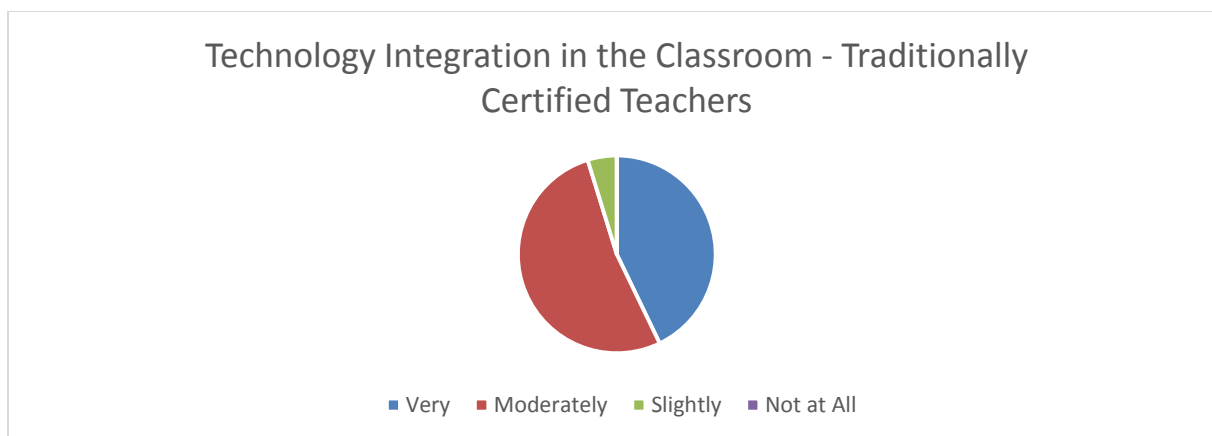

Monitoring of Student Learning - Teach for America

■ Very   ■ Moderately   ■ Slightly   ■ Not at All

Figure 13. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps monitor student learning?

Figure 14. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers monitor student learning?

On the survey question to what extent does each group demonstrate management of student behavior, 25% rated them as moderately, 60% rated them as slightly, and 15% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 24% rated traditionally certified teachers as very, 71% rated them as moderately, and 5% rated them as slightly. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
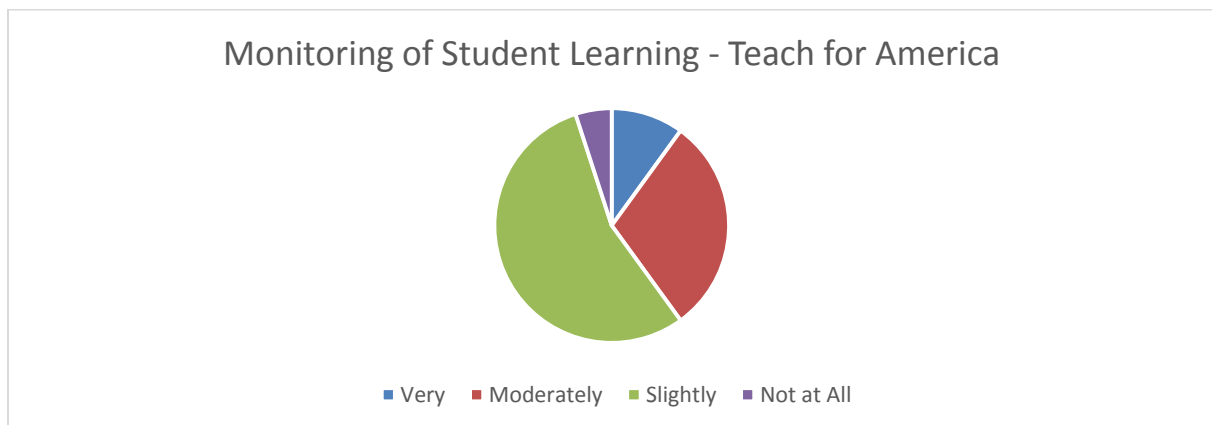

Figure 15. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps manage student behavior?
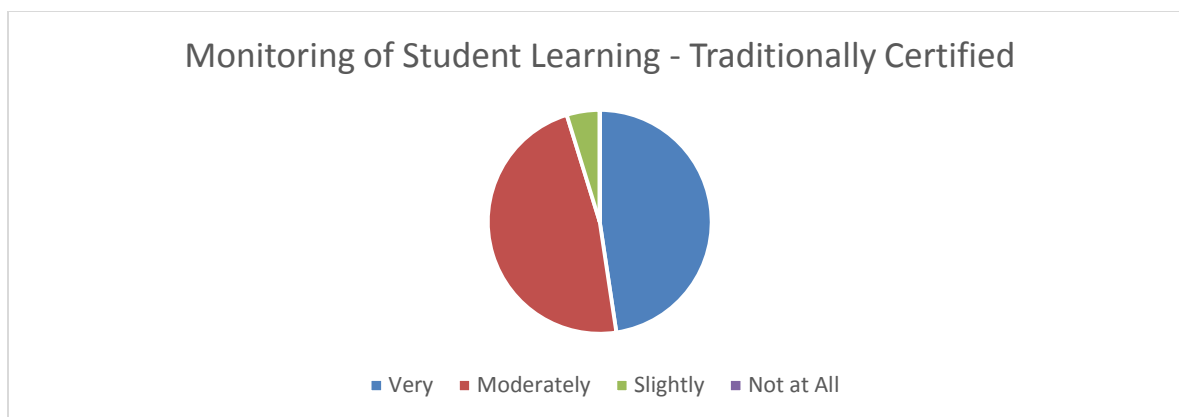
Figure 16. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers manage student behavior?

On the survey question to what extent does each group demonstrate an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, 40% rated them as moderately, 45% rated them as slightly, and 15% rated them as not at all. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, 67% rated traditionally certified teachers as very and 33% rated them as moderately. On this indicator, survey respondents scored traditionally certified teachers higher than Teach for America corps members.
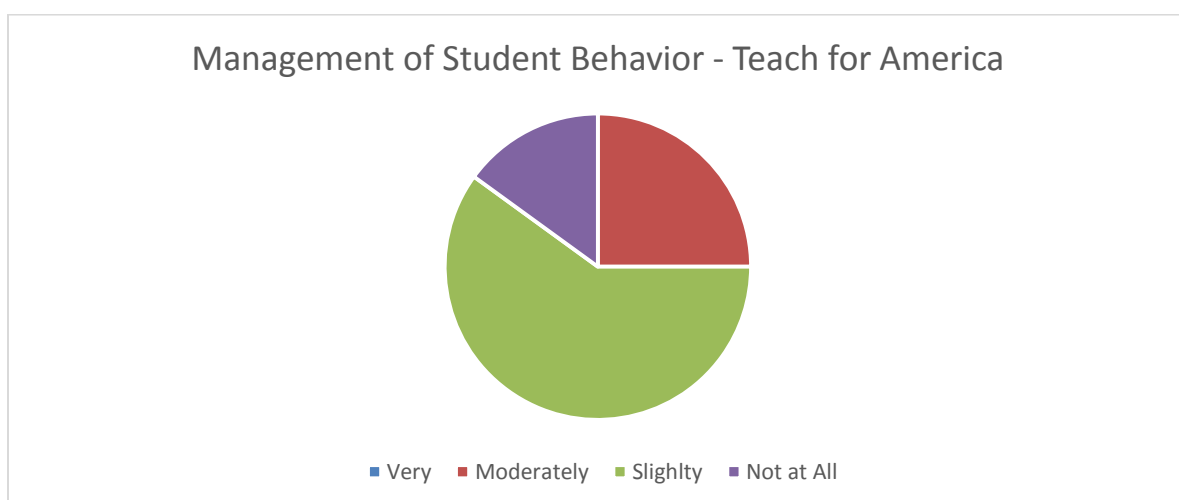

Figure 17. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel Teach for America corps members understand developmentally appropriate practices?
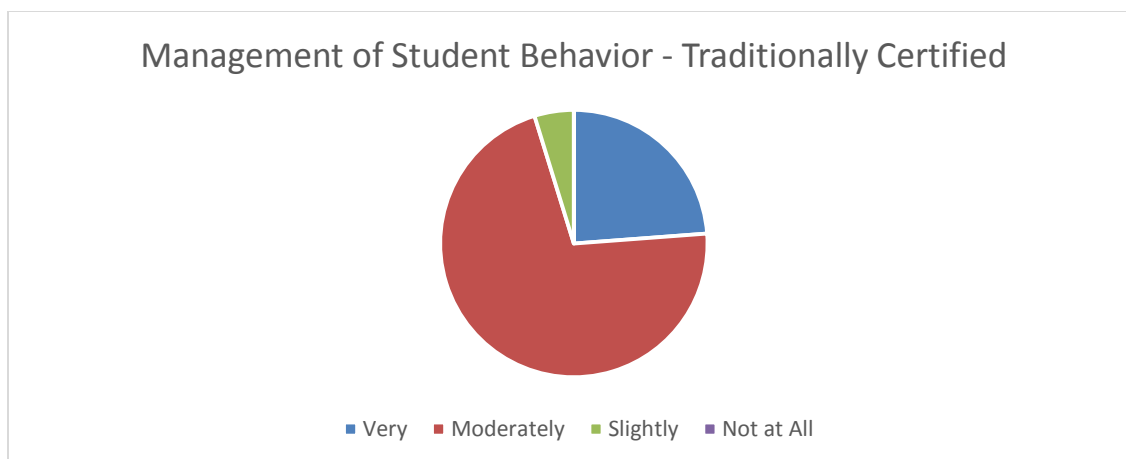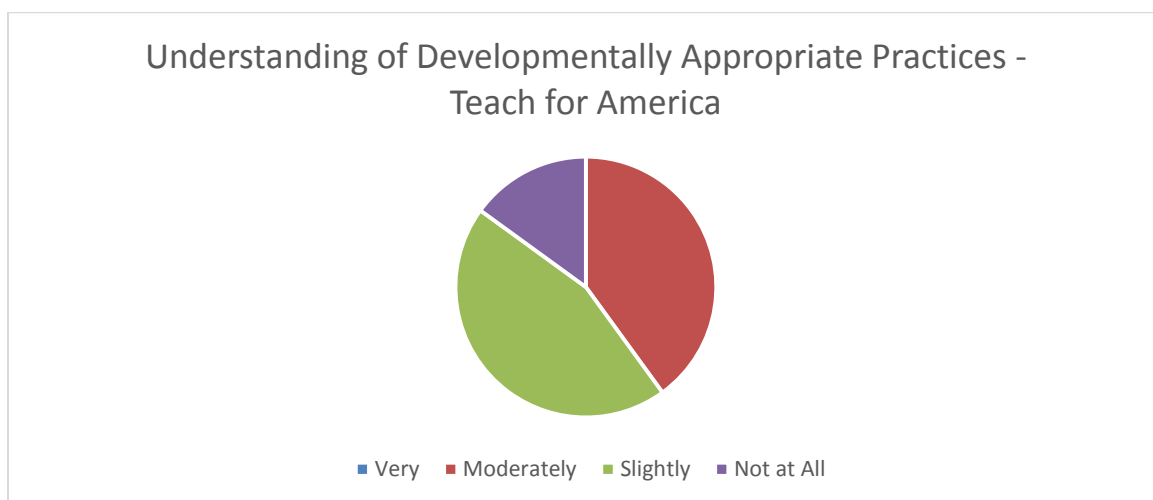
Understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practices - Traditionally Certified

■ Very   ■ Moderately   ■ Slightly   ■ Not at All
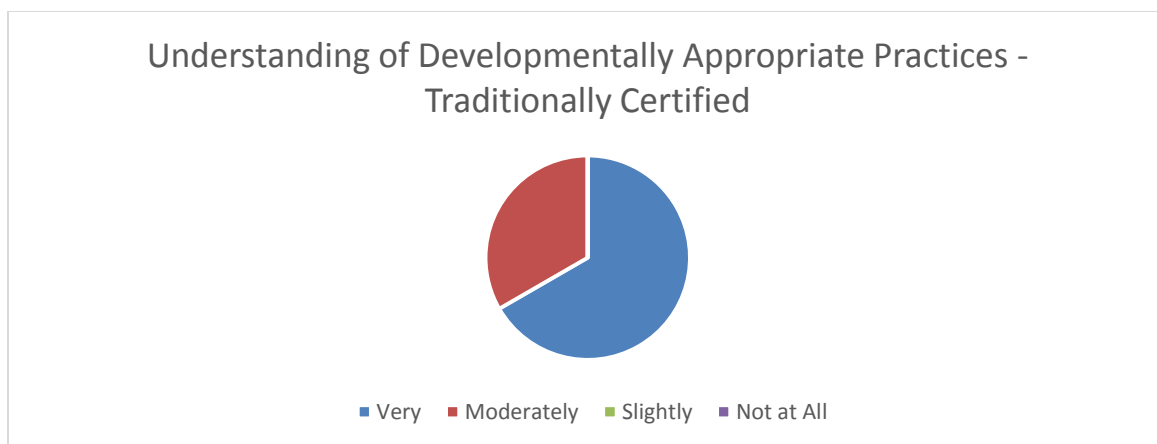
Figure 18. Survey Question – To what extent do you feel traditionally certified teachers understand developmentally appropriate practices?

The indicator that Teach for America corps members scored the lowest on were Management of Student Behavior. The indicator traditionally certified educators scored lowest on was also Management of Student Behavior. The indicators Teach for America corps members scored highest on were Dedication to Students Taught and Dedication to Student Learning. The indicator traditionally certified educators scored highest on was Understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practices.

Additional Analyses

As survey and focus group data were analyzed, it was surprising how on the indicator about dedication to students, the survey yielded a positive relationship while the interviews cited this area as a concern. A possible explanation for this could be that the perception educators held was merely for having a *liking* or mere *desire* to work around children. This makes sense that an individual who works around children must have some desire to work with children, including school nurses, cafeteria workers, school therapists, and even volunteers who work specifically in the school outreach division. However, having a *liking* for children is not the same as having the ability to *educate*

students. As the focus group respondents revealed, oftentimes the corps members were good-natured individuals but were grossly misplaced as a classroom teachers for they lacked the ability to transmit their *liking* or maybe even *tolerance* of children into teaching.

Summary

In this chapter, the research results were presented. A total of 21 surveys were completed and 9 individuals participated in focus group interviews. An examination of the major themes the research yielded was presented. In chapter five, a presentation of the findings related to the literature, implications for action, and recommendations for future research will occur.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

Alternative certification is a movement that has saturated American culture and is attempting to dominate the way in which teachers are certified in this country. On the forefront of this movement is the Teach for America program. With the growing support this program receives and the impact it has on the communities it serves and the future of teacher certification, it is imperative to study this program from an outside lens to ensure that it is serving the purpose it was created for back in 1990. This study provided an examination of this program from the perspective of traditionally certified educators. This chapter begins with a summary of the study, an overview of the problem, statement of the purpose, review of the methodology, hypothesis testing, and reveals findings related to the literature. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and implications for action.

Study Summary

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of teaching effectiveness traditionally certified educators held toward individuals trained under the Teach for America program. This study utilized both survey and focus group interview data. Roberts (2004) described this section as a "mini-version" (p. 175) of the previous chapters. The section headings listed below aid in the organization of this material. She also indicated that though it is a summary, enough detail should be provided so that a clear picture of the entire study is presented. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) indicated that the major findings (the hypothesis test results) are the most important portion of the research report and should receive the heaviest emphasis in this summary of the study.

Overview of the Problem. As more districts look to supply the teaching force with cost-effective alternatives, a growing trend in alternative certification has become prevalent. Districts across the nation are attempting to staff teaching vacancies with individuals who may not come from colleges and schools of education, but rather individuals who sought an alternate path to teacher certification. While one of the lesser sources, Teach for America is one of the most notable suppliers of alternatively certified educators. The program continues to grow in the monetary sense as a growing collaborative with various districts and stakeholders across the nation prevails. Therefore, it is critical for a study to occur that measures the effectiveness of this program, which holds the potential to alter the teacher preparation landscape for years to come.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions that traditionally certified educators held regarding the Teach for America program. With the rapid growth of the alternative certification movement and the visibility of the Teach for America program, the need existed for a critical examination of the program from an external source. Four research questions guided this study.

Review of the Methodology. A qualitative research approach was used for this study. Both a survey and three focus groups were used for data collection. The population for this study consisted of educators within the Kansas City metropolitan area who had a working knowledge of the Teach for America program. The survey sample contained 21 respondents while the focus groups contained a total of 9 participants. With overlapping participants in both groups, the grand total for the study was 24.

Survey data was analyzed within the SurveyMonkey program and interview data and open response survey answers were uploaded and transcribed within the Dedoose research analysis program. Codes were generated based on responses. Major themes and subthemes were developed based on code frequencies. The findings of this analysis were presented in chapter four of this study.

Major Findings

There were nine major themes that emerged from the data within this study. Participants noted content knowledge as a strength while many struggled to identify anything as a strength of the program. The length of tenure of the corps members in the schools served, the motive for entering teaching through the program, classroom skill sets of corps members, program training, and program support were themes that participants noted as weaknesses of the program. Instability, culture of corps members versus students served, and lasting affect were concerns that respondents voiced in the study. The results of the survey indicate that traditionally certified educators scored higher than Teach for America corps members on every quality indicator derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The main findings from this study suggest that traditionally certified educators identified more weaknesses than strengths within the Teach for America program. The data further suggests that traditionally certified educators have indicated considerable concerns regarding the impact that the program is having on the communities it serves. The concerns and weaknesses educators have identified are worthy of examination before additional public funding goes towards this program.

Findings Related to the Literature

When relating findings to those predicted by theory or reported in other research, order the discussion according to the order of the research questions (in chapter one) and the hypothesis testing results (chapter four). Carefully describe the results of the current study, as well as those in the relevant theory or research, and then compare and contrast the two. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) cautioned that it is not necessary to revisit the technical details presented in chapter four. They suggested that instead, the discussion should focus on the study's contribution by supporting, contradicting, or extending the current knowledge.

The mis-education of the Negro and other historically ignored populations. The research concluded that while the program claims that it serves rural areas, all of the data showed that the program was found in urban districts. It was also reported that Teach for America was highly visible in many charter schools. Urban districts and charter schools are the primary educator of minority students, educating over 92% of the nation's African American student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). With the data of the ineffectiveness of the program, this further perpetuates the Mis-education of historically marginalized populations.

Supply and demand. The data from the research contradict the claim that there is a teacher shortage in urban areas. In fact, the research suggested that many times the Teach for America program acts more like a contracted service, requiring that districts reserve a set amount of spaces for Teach for America corps members. This reservation of space could argue that better-qualified individuals are unable to pursue employment in these areas

The application and training of "the solution." As noted in this section, many critics of the program question the training that corps members receive and cite it as inadequate. As Kee's study found, an increase in the pedagogical study had a positive correlation to a feeling of preparedness in novice teachers (2012). The data supports this claim by Kee. Respondents noted how corps members were not prepared for the demands of the classroom. It was further discovered that successful corps members were those who chose to seek additional training through the obtainment of a Master's degree in education.

How long does "the solution" last. In this section of the literature review, the concern that Teach for America creates a "Revolving door" was discussed. The findings of this study support this concern of Teach for America critics. As focus group participants stated, Teach for America corps members do not remain in the classroom very long. Many struggle to complete the first year of their tenure, let alone the two years. This constant turnover in teaching staff does not create structure and consistency for students who most need stability in their lives.

Conclusions

Implications for action. The data from this study suggests that the Teach for America program needs to consider immediate restructuring if not even a moratorium. As it currently exists, the 5-week program timeframe is not adequate time to prepare an individual to enter the nation's neediest schools as a classroom teacher. Individuals wishing to become teachers need a good, solid foundation in child development, behavior management, curriculum development and implementation, and education theory.

The data further suggests that individuals wishing to become teachers need to ensure that this decision is a long-term desire. An individual should not enter the classroom under the assumption that there will be something better in a little while or in order to pay off educational debt. If one wishes to assist youth, other options besides serving as a classroom teacher are available. One could simply become a teaching assistant at an area school district, tutor struggling readers, join a non-profit, or mentor through another organization. Teaching is not charity work; it is a calling into a profession unlike any other. Individuals who enter this profession need to respect this mantra and whole-heartedly commit if one is to do what is best for students. The data also indicates that the program is not bringing in the diverse teaching force it had originally set forth to do.

When Teach for America was founded, another need it was attempting to address was the need to place individuals into America's classrooms at a rapid pace. Essentially, this is the essence of alternative certification. At its creation, many of America's classrooms needed immediate filling. However, as the data from this study suggests, filling a need at a rapid pace often comes at the expense of proper training and preparedness. Furthermore, with over 1500 colleges and universities offering and producing education majors (The College Board, 2016) and even online certification programs available, teacher certification is now more accessible than ever. With such an abundant amount of education programs and thus teacher candidates available, the need for programs like Teach for America must come in to question.

With the growing financial status of the organization, it is critical for educators to stand up and voice concerns against this program. As private investors and government

entities continue to pour money into this program, educational systems across the nation are struggling. As recent as 2015, the Kansas legislature could not reach an agreement on school funding and thus, several school districts had to end the school year early (Wilkie, 2015). The financial stability of Teach for America juxtaposed against the instability of several of our nation's school systems is troubling.

Recommendations for Future Research

Ideally, this study could be replicated utilizing a larger sample. It would also be interesting to see if the results could be replicated in different settings. Is the Teach for America program producing better results in different parts of the country? Surveying and interviewing parents, community members, and even students would be an interesting sample to utilize for this study as well.

An additional idea for further research would be to conduct a longitudinal study on the data that Teach for America self-reports, as indicated by the inconsistencies discovered during the review of the literature. It might also be interesting to conduct an outside examination of archival data and see if the data from Teach for America can withstand scrutiny from an external force. Another idea is to study Teach for America corps members who had an initial desire to teach and discern what prevented them from traditional certification and encouraged the alternate certification and specifically Teach for America.

Concluding Remarks

As our nation looks to improve the educational quality of our schools, we need to ensure that individuals who are serving as teachers are thoroughly prepared as instructional leaders. We cannot shortchange the training of those who are educating our

future. The Teach for America program was originally created to serve a need in areas where quality teaching was hard to obtain. However, decades after this initial development, the program has developed into a multi-billion dollar industry that seems more concerned with pushing a social agenda rather than educating students. At the same time, the education landscape has drastically changed and the original void that Teach for America was created for does not exist. It is now time for this program to disband and for our nation to focus our efforts, energies, and resources on college and university programs that are invested in creating life-long educators and not resumé building volunteers.

References

Alternate routes to teacher certification. (2005). Retrieved January 23, 2015, from

    National center for education information: ncei.com/Alt-Teacher-Cert.htm

Baines, L. A. (2010, spring). The disintegration of teacher preparation. *educational*

    horizons, 152-163.

Balkin, J. M. (2001). *What brown v. board of education should have said: the nation's*

    top legal experts rewrite America's landmark civil rights decision. New York:

    New York University Press.

Best, J. H., & Sidwell, R. T. (1967). *The American legacy of learning.* Philadelphia: J.B.

    Lippincott Company.

Blanchard, O. (2013, September). *I Quit Teach for America.* Retrieved February 3, 2015,

    from The Atlantic: http://www.theatlantic.com/education/print/2013/09/i-quit-

    teach-for-america/279724/

Blazer, C. (2012). What the research says about alternative teacher certification

    programs. *Information Capsule Research Services, 1104*.

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: a road*

    map from beginning to end. Los Angeles: Sage.

Bowe, A., Braam, M., Lawrenz, F., & Kirchoff, A. (2011). Comparison of alternative and

    traditional teacher certification programs in terms of effectiveness in encouraging

    STEM pre-service teachers to teach in high-need schools. *Journal of the national*

    association for alternative certification, 6 (1), 26-45.

Boyd, D., Goldhaber, D., Lankford, H., & Wyckoff, J. (2007, Spring). The effect of

    certification and preparation on teacher quality. *Future of children, 17* (1), pp.

45-68.

Brill, S. (2011). *Class Warfare.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Bull, B. L., Fruehling, R. T., & Chattergy, V. (1992). *The Ethics of Multicultural and Bilingual Education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Cancino, A. (2010, September 27). Teach for America supplies charter schools. *Chicago Tribune* .

Carroll, J. A., Hayes, J. L., Mercer, D., Neuenswander, B., & Drake, S. (2006). State-Wide collaborative partnerships for alternative certification the Kansas transition to teaching the program. *Journal of the national association for alternative certification, 1* (2), 4-18.

Committee, T. E.-R. (2008). *At-Risk Student Intervention Implementation Guide.*

Croasmun, J., Hampton, D., & Herrmann, S. (2006). *Teacher Attrition: Is time running out?* Retrieved February 20, 2015, from HORIZON site: horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Hampton.asp

Cubberley, E. P. (1948). *The History of Education.* Cambridge: The Riverside Press.

Decker, P., Mayer, D. P., & Glazerman, S. (2004). *The Effects of Teach for America on Students: Findings from a National Evaluation.* Princeton: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Edelfelt, R. A., & Raths, J. D. (1998, June 1). A brief history of standards in teacher education. *Association of teacher education*, 1-26.

Ellis, B. (2010, May 4). *CNN.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from Cnn.com.

Follo, E. J., & Rivard, J. J. (2009). Effectiveness of an alternative certification program for the preparation of elementary teachers. *ERS Spectrum, 27* (3), 11-18.

Fowler, R. C. (2009). Educators without borders: addressing new England's teacher shortages. *New England Journal of Higher Education*, 10-11.

French, R. (2013, October 14). Building a better teacher: Michigan classrooms loaded with rookie teachers who soon wash out. *Bridge Magazine*.

Friedman, M. I. (2005). *No School Left Behind: How to Increase student achievement.* Columbia: The Institute for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Education, Inc.

Gabriel, R. (2011). A practice-based theory of professional education: Teach for America's professional development model. *Urban education*, 975-986.

Gray, C., & Behan, S. (2005, September). Current and predicted staffing patterns in post-primary schools: the perception and experience of school principals. *Oxford Review of Education, 31* (3), pp. 443-458.

Hall Bio. (n.d.). Retrieved February 9, 2015, from Old Stone House Museum: oldstonehousemuseum.org/hall-bio/

Higgins, M., Hess, F. M., Weiner, J., & Robinson, W. (2011). Creating a corps of change agents. *Education next*, 18-25.

Hootnick, A. (2014, April 21). *Teachers are losing their jobs but teach for America's expanding. What's wrong with that?* Retrieved February 23, 2015, from

Hechinger Report: http://hechingerreport.org/teachers-losing-jobs-teach-americas-expanding-whats-wrong/

Irwin, V. (1985, August 26). Teacher shortage erodes US hope for education reform. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Jackson, C. L. (2001). *African American Education: A Reference Handbook.* Santa

Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Jacob, B. A. (2007, Spring). The challenges of staffing urban schools with effective teachers. *The future of children, 17* (1), pp. 129-153.

James, C. (2012 йил September). *Teach for America to bring a record 10,000 teachers*. From Teach for America: http://www.teachforamerica.org/press-room/press-releases/2012/teach-america-bring-record-10000-teachers-nation%E2%80%99s-highest-need

Kee, A. N. (2012). Feelings of preparedness among alternatively certified teachers: what is the role of program features? *Journal of Teacher Education* , 23-38.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2004, Winter). The knowledge of teacher education: developing a critical complex epistemology. *Teacher education quarterly* , 49-66.

Kluger, R. (2004). *Simple Justice.* New York: Alred A. Knopf.

Lahann, R., & Reagan, E. M. (2011, Winter). Teach for America and the politics of progressive neoliberalism. *Teacher education quarterly* , 7-27.

Leachman, M. (2012, August 3). *K-12 Schools Continue to Shed Jobs.* Retrieved February 23, 2015, from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: http://www.offthechartsblog.org/k-12-schools-continue-to-shed-jobs/

Mconney, A., Price, A., & Woods-McConney, A. (2011). *Fast Track Teacher Education a Review of the Reseach Literature on Teach for All Schemes.* Center for Learning, Change, and Development.

Mirci, P., Loomis, C., & Hensley, P. (2011, September). Social justice, self-systems, and engagement in learning: what students labeled as "at risk" can teach us. 57-74.

Monroe, p. (1911). A cyclopedia of education. *2.* New York.

Murray, C. (2008). *Real Education.* New York: Crown forum.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (1989). *What Teachers Should be able to Do?* Retrieved June 2, 2015, from NBPTS: www.nbpts.org/sites/files/what_teachers_should_know.pdf

National Center for Education Information. (2005). *Alternative Teacher Certification*. Retrieved January 26, 2015, from NCEI: http://ncei.com/Alt-Teacher-Cert.htm

National Governors Association. (2000, January 24). *Teacher Supply and Demand; Is There a Shortage.* Retrieved March 4, 2015, from National Governors Association: http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publication/page-archive/col2-content/title_teacher-supply-and-demand-is-there-a-shortage.html

Oliff, P., Mai, C., & Leachman, M. (2012, September 4). *New School Year Brings More Cuts in State Funding for Schools.* Retrieved February 23, 2015, from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3825#

Osgood, K. (2013, June 30). *An Open Letter to New Teach for America Recruits*. Retrieved April 1, 2015, from At the Chalk Face: http://atthechalkface.com/2013/06/30/an-open-letter-to-new-teach-for-america-recruits/

Popham, W. J. (1999). Why standardized tests don't measure educational quality. *Educational Leadership, 56* (6), 8-15.

Provasnik, S., & Shafer, L. L. (2004). *Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976 to 2001.* National Center for Education Statistics.

Pushkin, D. (2001). *Teacher training: a reference handbook.* Santa Barbara: ABC Clio.

(2014). *Quality at Risk: Impact of education cuts.* Kansas center for economic growth, Topeka.

Rhodes, J. H. (2012). *An Education in Politics.* Ithica: Cornell University.

Schlechty, P. C. (2005). *Creating Great Schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Scribner, J. P., & Heimen, E. (2009, Spring). Alternative teacher certification: a program theory analysis. *Teacher education quarterly*, pp. 179-197.

Simon, S. (2012, August 16). Teach for America: Has it betrayed its mission to save poor, struggling schools? *Huffington Post*.

Strauss, V. (2013, February 28). *It's time for teach for America to fold - former TFAer.* Retrieved January 26, 2015, from Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/02/28/its-time-for-teach-for-america-to-fold-former-tfaer/

Teach for America. (2015). *Do We Create a Revolving Door*? Retrieved May 29, 2015, from Teach for America: www.teachforamerica.org/no-display/do-we-create-revolving-door-teachers

Teach for America Profile for Young Professionals. (2007). *BusinessWeek* .

Teach for America. (2015). *Teach for America: Our History*. Retrieved May 28, 2015, from Teach for America: www.teachforamerica.org/about-us/our-story/our-history

Teach for America: our organization. (2012). Retrieved January 31, 2015, from Teach for America website: teachforamerica.org/our-organization

The National Academy of Education. (2005). *A Good teacher in every classroom.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thomas, S. (2006). *A Second Home: Missouri's Early Schools.* Columbia: University of Missouri.

Thornton, H. J. (2004). What we can learn about retaining teachers from PDS teacher voices. *Middle school journal*, 5-12.

Toppo, G. (2009, July 29). Teach for America: elite corps or costing older teachers jobs? *USA Today* .

Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage" problem: Teacher Retention is the Key. (2002). *A Symposium of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.* Washington DC.

Virginia Wesleyan College - Preservice Teaching. (2015). Retrieved May 28, 2015, from Virginia Wesleyan College: www.vwc.edu/education/field-experiences/preservice-teaching.php

White, P., & Smith, E. (2005). What can PISA tell us about teacher shortages? *European journal of education, 40* (1), 93-112.

Wilgoren, J. (2000, November 12). *Wendy Kopp, leader of Teach for America.* Retrieved March 30, 2015, from The New York Times on the Web: partners.nytimes.com/library/national/111200edlife-kopp-edu.html

World Book Encyclopedia (Vol. 19). (2015). Chicago: World Book.

Wright, R. O. (2006). *Chronology of education in the united states.* Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc.

Xu, Z., Hannaway, J., & Taylor, C. (2011). Making a difference? the effects of Teach for America in high school. *Journal of policy analysis and management*, 447-469.

Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Form

BAKER
UNIVERSITY

Date:

School of Education   IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
Graduate department   (irb USE ONLY)

IRB Request
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I.   Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s)   School of Education Graduate Department

      Name   Signature

1. Harold Frye   _____,   Major Advisor

2. Phil Messner   _____,   Research Analyst

3.   University Committee Member

4.   External Committee Member

Principal Investigator: Ashley Hall
Phone: 816-853-5000
Email: ahall@nkcschools.org
Mailing address: 4328 NE Courtney Drive
Lee's Summit, MO 64064

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Harold Frye
Phone: 913-344-1220
Email: Harold.frye@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ___Exempt _X_ Expedited _ __Full

II: Protocol: (Type the title of your study)

Teach for America: Perceptions of Dedication, Commitment, Content Knowledge, and
Instructional Competence

Summary

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the perceptions that traditionally trained educators hold towards alternate certification programs, specifically the Teach for America program and the teachers it produces. This study will add to the limited body of knowledge that exists on the Teach for America program by looking at it through non-participant lenses (i.e. through the eyes of someone not affiliated with the Teach for America program).

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There are no conditions or manipulations included in this study

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Study subjects will complete a 20-25-question survey via a GoogleDocs document (see attached document). Administrators wishing to provide further feedback will complete an additional 15-question interview via phone or in-person.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

There is no psychological, social, physical, or legal risk for subjects.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There will be no stress to subjects.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be misled or deceived in any way.

Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

There is no request for information which subjects may consider personal or sensitive.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be presented with materials that might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

The survey should take between 10-20 minutes to complete. The interviews should take about 45 minutes.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

Purposive sampling will be used to gather participants. The subjects will come from a pool in the following school districts: Center, Raytown, Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, Columbia, North Kansas City, Hickman Mills, Kansas City, Grandview, and Jefferson City. In addition, subjects will be pooled from the following charter schools: Allen Village, African Centered Education, and Hogan Preparatory Academy. Subjects will be solicited via personal communication.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

The solicitation sent to each participant will state that participation is strictly voluntary. In this invitation, it will be explicitly stated that voluntary participation means full, partial, or rejection of any survey or interview item at any time without consequence. There will not be any inducements for subject participation. There is also no penalty for non-completion of a survey or interview.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

A statement at the beginning of the survey and interview will inform participants that completing the survey is their consent to participate. A second statement will state that participation in the study is voluntary and explain their rights as a study participant.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No aspect of the data will be made part of any permanent record that could identify the subjects. All data will be compiled numerically and only presented by major groups (i.e. teachers or teachers in Raytown School District). No individual or school will be identified.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

Subject non-participation will not be made part of any permanent record available to any supervisor, teacher, or employer.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is completed?

The data will be collected and stored via the GoogleDocs website. All notes from the raw data compiled by the principal investigator will either be stored electronically on the principal investigator's password-protected home computer furnished by Baker University. Any written notes will be locked inside the principal investigator's residence. Data will only be stored for the duration of the study.

All focus group interviews will either be conducted in person or via phone. In-person interviews will be conducted in a public place with private meeting space (i.e. at public libraries). Phone interviews will occur with the principal investigator in a secure location to accurately record notes and protect confidentiality. Any interviews will be conducted over the principal investigator's personal cellular phone. Data from the interviews will then be uploaded into the DeDoose web service.

Upon completion of the actual defense, all data will be destroyed.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved within this study.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

No files from archival data will be used.

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

Baker University Institutional Review Board

11/15/2015

Dear Ashley Hall and Dr. Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at CTodden@BakerU.edu or 785.594.8440.

Sincerely,

Chris Todden EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
    Verneda Edwards EdD
    Sara Crump PhD
    Erin Morris PhD
    Scott Crenshaw

Appendix C: Invitations to Participate in the Study

Invitation to Participate in Focus Group (sent via e-mail):

Hello,

My name is Ashley Hall. I am a Doctoral candidate in the Education Leadership program at

Baker University. I am currently in the process of conducting research for my dissertation. The

subject of my study is the perceptions that traditionally prepared educators have regarding

individuals trained through the Teach for America program. Your participation for this study is

being solicited because you qualify under the following criteria:

1. You have served as a classroom teacher at some point in your career
2. You have at least one degree in the field of education
3. You assumed full classroom teaching responsibilities upon completion of certification for which a degree was required.

The focus group will be held in the conference room at the North Independence branch of the

Mid-Continent Public Library on Monday, December 28th, 2015, at 10:30 am. The focus group

should be completed by noon. The link in this e-mail is your official invitation. Please indicate

your RSVP by responding to the invitation. Light refreshments will be provided.

If you are able to participate in the study, I ask that you begin to reflect on your experiences and

encounters with Teach for America individuals to prepare you for the focus group. If at any time

during the session you would prefer to not respond to a question, you may decline. If at any point

during the session you wish to withdraw from the study, you are welcome to do so and answers

that you have provided but wish to not be included in the study will be removed from the data.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and anonymous. No identifying information will be used

in the final data reporting. None of the collected data will be stored or shared with anyone once

the study is complete. Participation in the study is strictly voluntary. This means that voluntary

participation includes full, partial, or rejection of any survey item without consequence.

YOU'RE INVITED

FOCUS GROUP - ADMINISTRATORS

Host: Ashley Hall

Phone: 816-853-5000

When: Saturday, February 6 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Where:
Johnson County Library Central Resource Location

9875 West 87th Street
Overland Park, KS 66212

MESSAGE FROM HOST

Hide

Greetings! I would like to extend an offer to you to participate in a research focus group for doctoral dissertation completion. This focus group will focus on the perceptions that traditionally certified educators have towards the Teach for America program. Please indicate your participation by replying accordingly. Thank you for your time and participation!

Ashley Hall

FOCUS GROUP - ADMINISTRATORS PART II

host: Ashley Hall 816-853-5000

when: Monday, February 15 from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

where: Baker University 7301 College Boulevard Overland Park, KS 66210

MESSAGE FROM HOST   (Hide)

Greetings! I would like to extend an offer to you to participate in a research focus group for doctoral dissertation completion. This focus group will focus on the perceptions that traditionally certified educators have towards the Teach for America program. Please indicate your participation by replying accordingly. Thank you for your time and participation!

Ashley Hall

Appendix D: Thank You for Participating Notes

I truly appreciate your time and participation. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via e-mail (Ashley.hall@nkcschools.org) or phone (816-853-5000). I look forward to seeing you during the focus group!

Happy Holidays!

*This focus group was unable to occur due to the weather. Therefore, it was rescheduled.

Thank you for Survey Respondents (sent via the SurveyMonkey website)

Sent thank you

FROM: orange_gal_03@yahoo.com via surveymonkey.com

DATE: Saturday, March 05, 2016 7:24 PM

SENT TO: 15 recipients

SUBJECT: Thank you for taking the survey

MESSAGE:

Traditionally Prepared Educators' Perceptions of the Teach for America program

Thank you for taking my survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated as it is a pivotal step towards my degree completion. Thank you for your participation and have a wonderful day.

Ashley Hall, EdD Candidate

Thank You Note to Focus Group Participants (sent via e-mail)

Hello,

Thank you for participating in the focus group interview portion of this research project. Your responses are greatly appreciated and are pivotal in providing additional information on the Teach for America program which has very little information available and that which is available is predominantly internal. By providing an outside perspective, you have assisted in creating a new lens for this program to be examined through. Thank you again and have a wonderful day!

Sincerely,

Ashley Hall

EdD Candidate

Appendix G: The Survey

Traditionally Prepared Educators' Perceptions of the Teach for America program

Welcome fellow educators!

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey is divided into three parts. The first part will ask you to look at Teach for America corps members and the extent at which they demonstrate the given indicators. The second part will ask you to look at Traditionally certified educators and the extent at which they demonstrate the same indicators. For the purpose of this study, a traditionally certified teacher is defined as one who completed a college or school of education program prior to becoming a teacher (most commonly, those who majored in education as an undergraduate). The third and final part will ask a few open ended questions. If at any point you choose to discontinue the survey, you may do so. Thank you for your participation and contribution to this innovative research project.

* 1. When it comes to Teach for America corps members, to what extent do they demonstrate the following:

	very	moderately	slightly	not at all
a dedication to the students teach	○	○	○	○
a dedication to student learning	○	○	○	○
knowledge of the subject they teach	○	○	○	○
understanding of the curriculum they are accountable for	○	○	○	○
knowledge of the learning standards they are accountable for	○	○	○	○
technology integration in the classroom	○	○	○	○
monitoring of student learning	○	○	○	○
management of student behavior	○	○	○	○
understanding of developmentally appropriate practices	○	○	○	○

* 2. When it comes to traditionally prepared teachers, to what extent do they demonstrate the following:

	very	moderately	slightly	not at all
a dedication to students	○	○	○	○
a dedication to student learning	○	○	○	○
knowledge of the subject they teach	○	○	○	○
understanding of the curriculum they are accountable for	○	○	○	○
knowledge of the learning standards they are accountable for	○	○	○	○
technology integration in the classroom	○	○	○	○
monitoring of student learning	○	○	○	○
management of student behavior	○	○	○	○
understanding of developmentally appropriate practices	○	○	○	○

3. How much classroom experience do you feel a new teacher should have prior to entering the classroom?

[ ]

4. How much training do you feel a new teacher needs in curriculum prior to entering the classroom as a teacher?

[ ]

5. How much training do you feel a new teacher needs in child development prior to entering the classroom as a teacher?

[ ]

6. How much training do you feel a new teacher needs in behavior management prior to entering the classroom as a teacher?

[ ]

7. Overall, how effective do you feel the Teach for America program is in preparing corps members for the responsibilities of a classroom teacher?

[ ]

8. Please elaborate on your response to question 7.

[ ]

Appendix G: Focus Group Interview Script

<u>Focus Group Script</u>

Hello! Welcome to this focus group session. This session is designed to gather data for doctoral research. I am looking at the perceptions that traditionally certified educators have towards the Teach for America program. All answers are based on your opinion and beliefs. You are welcome at any time to decline to answer part or all of a question. Your participation is strictly confidential. No identifying information will be utilized in the final data reporting. Our session should not exceed one and a half hours. Do you have any questions?

1. What are your overall thoughts on the Teach for America program?

2. Describe the dedication to students as individuals you have observed from Teach for America members.

3. Describe the content knowledge/skill set you have observed that Teach for America corps members bring to the table for their classroom and then elaborate on how that knowledge is transmitted into classroom teaching

4. Describe the management of student behavior and monitoring of student learning you have observed from Teach for America corps members.

5. What strengths have you witnessed from Teach for America corps members as it relates to education?

6. What weaknesses have you witnessed from Teach for America corps members as it relates to teaching?

7. Describe the collaboration with other educators you have observed from corps members. Was this collaboration with non-TFA teachers or mostly done with TFA-supplied mentors?

8. Describe the self-reflections you have observed from Teach for America individuals in terms of their own classroom instruction and behavior management

9. In your opinion, how effective is Teach for America in preparing corps members to become certified classroom teachers? Please elaborate on your opinion.

10. Final thoughts on Teach for America: