

**Alternative Route Programs for Certification in
Special Education:
What We Know About Program Design,
Instructional Delivery, and Participant
Characteristics**

Michael S. Rosenberg
Johns Hopkins University
Paul T. Sindelar
University of Florida
TED Meeting
2006

COPSSE

- Collaborative venture
- Funded by the U. S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
- To conduct research on the supply and demand, preparation, and certification and licensure of special education teachers and related service providers.

COPSSE

- Reports on 10 teacher education topics and 9 related service disciplines
- Developed and validated teacher education and related services research agendas
- Undertaken studies on beginning teacher quality and the effectiveness of training alternatives
- All available on www.copsse.org

Background

- Traditional university degree programs are unable to meet the growing demand for teachers, especially high-demand special educators.
- Emergence and growth of alternative routes to certification.
- However, we know little about the nature and extent of programs that offer alternative routes to certification (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; 2005).

Purpose of Study

To index and describe the breadth and depth of alternative routes to certification (AR) programs currently being offered for the preparation of special education teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Definition

- An alternative certification program or licensing route is one that allows persons to acquire full licensure to teach without completing a traditional university-based program. It is designed to reduce the time and expense of obtaining teacher credentials through a streamlining of curriculum and intensive on-the-job supervision.

Method

- Survey Development
 - Factor I: Program Infrastructure
 - Factor II: Program Length/Intensity
 - Factor III: Program Characteristics
 - Factor IV: Participant Demographics

Method

- Development of Program Lists (n=235)
- Final Sample (n=101)
- Reasons for Non-Responses
 - Refusal; Contact attempts and no response
 - Program redundancy
 - No contact established

State Information

- 235 (n=101) Programs Located in 37 States and DC
- TX (16.83%; 17 of 39/43.59%)
- CA (15.84%; 16 of 77/20.78%)
- GA (9.90%; 10 of 18/ 55.60%)
- LA (7.92%; 8 of 8/100%)

State Information: AR and Shortages

- Overall percentage of special educators not fully certified 12.3%
- Percentage in States with no AR is 5.76%
- Percentage in High AR states
 - TX 12% GA 25.9%
 - CA 23.1% LA 29.4%

Program Infrastructure

- Most AR programs are fairly new, with 51% in operation 5 years or less
- IHEs are primary in design with 75.8 of programs, SEAs 71.7%, and LEAs 48.5%
- 31.6% received federal funding
- 26.7% of the programs “go it alone”
- 14.9% do not involve IHEs

Program Infrastructure (cont)

- IHE/SEA/LEA partnerships responsible for 1/3 of programs
- 87.8% use nationally recognized teaching standards
- 72.5% use CEC; 31.6% use INTASC; 30.6% use NBPTS
- 52.3% NCATE approved

Program Length/Intensity

- 84.2% require full time teaching in school
- 51.9% reported 3 months or less training before assuming teaching responsibilities
- 14.5% reported 0 months of training before assuming teaching responsibilities

Program Length/Intensity (cont)

- Program Duration
 - 13% required 10-12 months for full licensure
 - 31.2% required less than 18 months
 - 34.5 required 24 months

Extended/Fast-Track Analysis (n=80)

To Teach/Prog Length

- Extended (>4mos) /Extended 30%
- Extended /Fast (< 18 mos) 18.8%
- Fast(<3 mos) /Extended (>18 mos) 40%
- Fast/Fast 11.2%

Program Characteristics

Program Characteristics: Admission Selection

- 87.1 required Bachelors degree
- 86.1 required minimum GPA
- 42.3% accepted 81-100% of applicants
- 33.3% accepted 61-80% of applicants
- 93.7% view themselves as selective or very selective

Program Characteristics: Completion

- 40.6% of programs have 31 or more completers per year
- 65.9% of programs have a completion rate of 90-100%

Program Characteristics: Degrees and Licenses

- 47.5% of programs do NOT offer a degree; 52.5% do or provide an option
- Of those that do 61% offer only a graduate degree; 25% offer both
- Broad range of licenses
 - 90.1% initial
 - 42.6% add-on
 - 25% dual

Program Characteristics: Modes of Instruction

- Overwhelming majority have supervised field-work and university coursework
- 68% use distance learning
- Overwhelming use of mentors with 91% from LEAs and 58% using university supervision

Participant Profiles

- Females outnumber males 3-1
- 52.4% of participants over the age of 31; 26.4% ranged from 25-30
- Whites accounted for 70.5% of participants; A.A. 16.2%; Hispanic 10.2%

Participant Profiles

- Approximately 46% were mid-career changers
- 22.8% were general educators
- 28.7% had recent BA

Putting It All Together: Known and Unknown

- Shortages Associated with AR Growth in States
- Many Solid, Conceptually Sound Programs
- Program/Participant Interaction
- Heavy IHE Involvement

Putting It All Together

- Long-term Impact on Supply
- Relationship Among Those that are Most Risky Candidates to Reduced Length of Time Prior To Teaching
- Linking This Information To Project Invest
- Discussion of Future Issues