TEACHER SHORTAGES IN URBAN SCHOOLS
The Role of Traditional and Alternative Certification Routes in Filling the Voids

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Quality teachers have an impact on improving student learning and performance, but teacher shortages remain a significant problem for urban schools. This article examines the impact of traditional approaches in teacher recruitment through university-based certification programs as well as alternative certification routes. Each approach may have particular merit, but each also faces particular obstacles, such as overcoming preconceptions held by preservice teachers or demonstrating consistent quality in its trainees. These approaches are primarily concerned with aspects of recruitment and largely ignore the way systematically poor retention measures also contribute to staffing needs. The article argues that traditional and alternative certification efforts are by themselves limited in their potential to address the problem of teacher shortages in urban schools and that an organizational view of schools that looks beyond individual teachers as the lone indicators of instructional performance and educational equity might be a better guide to future research and policy formation endeavors.

Keywords: *teacher certification; alternative certification; teacher shortages; organizational theory*

In its report surveying 40 urban school districts, the Urban Teacher Collaborative (2000)—a partnership of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., the Council of the Great City Schools, and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education—conveyed the continued need for teachers in urban schools. The report found that in its member districts serving 6.5 million students, of whom 77% are racial minorities, more than 60% are eligible for free or reduced federal lunch programs, 21% are English language learners, and 11.4% are in special education, "almost 100% of districts expressed an immediate demand for teachers in certain subject fields" (p. 17). Although striking, this need illustrates Haberman's (1986) observation that no matter how many teachers are prepared nationally, there are shortages of professionally educated teachers in major urban areas.

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The Great City School districts, representing many of the largest urban schools in the United States, satisfied their need to staff classrooms with a variety of means. According to the report, “Sixty percent of responding districts allow individuals to teach under emergency permits, 60% use long-term substitutes, 37.5% hire teachers with certification waivers, and 35% of districts recognize internship programs or permits” (Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000, p. 17). The difficulty of recruiting new teachers to urban schools has also led many districts to incorporate strategies such as job fairs, on-the-spot contracts, online job-finding services, monetary incentives (Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000); early identification and mentoring of youth demonstrating an interest in teaching, scholarship, and loan forgiveness programs (Dorman, 1990); school-university partnerships (Cantor, 1998; Clewell & Villegas, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001); and alternative certification routes (Feistritzer, 1993; Shen, 1998; Stoddart, 1993).

A 1998 national poll conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (cited by the Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000, p. 7) captured public belief that improving the quality of teachers was the most important issue facing public schools, next to school safety. Research findings also substantiate the belief that quality teachers have an impact on improving student performance (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Haberman & Post, 1998), and recent federal policy measures such as George W. Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” bill allocate federal and state funds to the improvement of teacher quality (Bush, 2001). However, what attributes and accomplishments constitute a “quality” teacher for work in an urban context, and what work is being done to develop such a pool of teachers? Are these efforts demonstrably successful in addressing the problem of teacher shortages?

This article first examines traditional approaches to teacher education through university-based certification programs. The relatively homogeneous profile of preservice teachers trained in university programs can create an environment that sustains existing meritocratic, racist attitudes and preconceptions regarding urban schools. This has the effect of undermining urban school districts’ recruitment efforts because preservice teachers are reluctant to accept the challenges of working with predominantly minority, low-income children. Many of the struggles expressed by teacher educators exist around issues of diversity and developing multicultural competency in their students. This is a necessary quality for effective urban teachers (Haberman & Post, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rose, 1995). Some of these issues are being addressed by universities through curricular changes in teacher education as well as the development of university-urban school partnerships.

Despite the efforts of those in traditional certification routes to train and place qualified teachers in urban schools, the need remains. Alternative certification programs should receive thoughtful consideration as measures taken to remedy the problem of teacher shortages. The second part of this article examines the development of alternative certification programs as a means of establishing a larger pool of teachers and—perhaps more important—claims that alternatively certified teachers may possess qualities especially helpful to working in urban schools. It should be acknowledged, though, that the wide range of practices that all ultimately constitute alternative certification make these programs and their related successes or failures difficult to discuss as a single, coherent approach.

Although existing research on the outcomes of traditional and alternative certification programs remains admittedly mixed, both deserve continued assessment. Traditional and alternative certification efforts are, however, in themselves limited in their potential to fully remedy the problem. The third section of this article argues that an organizational view of schools can provide a more complex and accurate picture of the problem of teacher shortages. Drawing from theories of organizational justice, this section focuses attention on the procedural, interactional, and distributive domains of teacher preparation and schools as workplaces. Providing examples of these organizational functions and discussing how they have a psychological and professional impact on urban teachers makes it clear that the problem of teacher shortages cannot be adequately resolved by attending to individual, incoming teachers alone. Rather, issues of power differentials and conflict, alienation, inequitable resource allocation, hopelessness, and fear all take their toll on achieving the desired outcome of recruiting and retaining the necessary number of qualified teachers in urban classrooms.

How we conceive of the problem of teacher shortages is related to the policy recommendations we might develop to address it. In concluding, the article suggests that an organizational perspective that looks beyond the preparation and recruitment of individual teachers is a better guide to future research and policy formation endeavors. A commitment to sincerely understanding the complexity of teacher shortages in urban schools is necessary if we are to devise a thorough solution.

THE TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATION ROUTE: UNIVERSITY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

Data indicate that most preservice teachers trained in traditional, university-based programs are young, White, middle-class females who grew up in

small towns within 100 miles of their college and anticipate teaching in a small town or suburban school (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1987; Sleeter, 1993). This profile is significant for a few notable reasons. First, these students typically lack interaction with people different from themselves prior to entering their certification program. In Gilbert's (1995) study of rural preservice teachers, for example, approximately 40% indicated only slight personal or social interaction with someone from another race or culture. Another 25% responded that despite opportunities to do so given the diverse campus population, they had not interacted with people racially or culturally different from themselves. Of the students surveyed, 70% felt it was unnecessary and did not desire any direct experiences in urban, minority schools. The fact that students might not willingly venture to engage a diverse range of people is not all together surprising given experiences growing up in racially isolated neighborhoods fostering a "White habitus," a white-based reference structure shaping their cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic understanding of people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 146).

A second reason the homogeneous composition of traditional teacher education candidates is important is because their lack of understanding—both personal and academic—about racially and culturally different individuals is oftentimes substituted by stereotypes and pre- or misconceptions. Sleeter (1993) observed that White teachers often deny racial issues and differences all together, or they cast all of their students of color as "immigrants." She pointed out that ethnicity theory, a view of society as meritocratic and open for all, is a commonly held explanation for racial inequality. Ethnicity theory analogizes both the identities and experiences of European and non-European immigrants, "den[ying] the significance of visible, physiological marks of ancestry and of the history of colonization and harsh subjugation that Europeans and Euroamericans [have] extended over other peoples" (p. 161).

"What is it to construct an interpretation of race that denies it?" Sleeter (1993, p. 161) asked. For preservice teachers, research findings indicate several effects. Shultz, Neyhart, Reck, and Easter (1996, p. 31) documented their students attributing negative qualities to learning ability and behavior in students of color, minimizing and denigrating similarities that might be observable between racial minority individuals and themselves, understanding some of the factors inhibiting achievement for racial minority students (such as prejudice, stereotyping, insensitivity) but not recognizing themselves to be part of the problem, and expressing notions of urban education in the absence of direct experience. Dee and Henkin (2002) warned that the outcomes might also include "low expectations for students, inappropriate remediations, harsh discipline, and a readiness to attribute most academic and behavioral

problems to students' home environments" (p. 23). Educators who negatively evaluate differences are much less likely to develop or employ culturally sensitive curriculum and instructional practices (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). Preservice teachers may express an overconfidence in their ability to work with children in racially and culturally diverse settings (Reiff & Cannella and Weinstein as cited by Groulx, 2001) or feel that they are not prepared to do so at all (Gilbert, 1995). White preservice teachers frequently protect their own esteem by not exploring their membership in a privileged racial group (Kailin, 1999; Sleeter, 1993; Thompson, 1999) and see their interactions with students of color as a way of exercising individual care and protection from generalized social injustices (Hamovitch, 1996; McIntyre, 1997; Young & Laible, 2000).

Groulx's (2001) research on preservice teachers' perceptions of racial minority schools suggests that indeed, preservice teachers have difficulty envisioning themselves as teachers of urban, minority children. Using a survey to assess the significance of factors such as similarity to one's students, conceptions of ideal students, range of diversity, and feelings of school security, Groulx's measures regarding preservice teachers' preferences for particular work environments also get at underlying assumptions and perceptions of urban schools. These notions hinder the efforts of urban school districts to recruit new teachers from traditional university-based certification programs.

Jones and Sandidge (1997) maintained that too often, the public and educators blame urban schools themselves for teacher shortages. However, they argued, focus should not be diverted away from holding teacher preparation institutions accountable for their central role in preparing effective teachers for all of the nation's schools. Altering their curriculum and course offerings to include issues of multicultural education is a common approach by university certification programs. One can better evaluate the success of such modifications when assessing a program through its text and subtexts (Cochran-Smith, 2000). The text of a program consists of its explicit goals and procedures. Included in a program's text would be things such as course offerings and sequences, fieldwork experiences, reading and writing assignments, and certification procedures. The subtext of a program is located within the text but includes more subtle things such as messages conveyed by materials, discussion and activities, and how people's subjectivities and prior experiences affect them. The subtext is often unplanned and hidden from public view and conversation.

A distinction between the text and subtext of a program is useful when, for example, universities adopt an additive approach to multicultural education. This generally consists of tacking on a required diversity course to existing

certification coursework, affecting a program's text. Although this is clearly the dominant approach (Ladson-Billings, 1999), its negative repercussions can be felt in the program's subtext. As Ladson-Billings (1999) explained, students are left with the feeling that the diversity requirement is a "necessary evil" (p. 240) they must endure and that what they might learn in the course is only relevant to working with minority children for whom such differences might be problematic. It also conveys a "tolerance" model of dealing with differences in which everyone should be accepted and treated the same (Grant & Zozakiewicz, 1995, p. 267), and students can figure out how to superficially talk the talk of political correctness without developing a political stance on their work (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Sleeter, 1993, 1995a, 1995b).

Although this additive approach is primarily the design of university administrators and faculty, studies have found that White preservice teachers often agree such an arrangement provides them with a satisfactory degree of preparation for working with students different from themselves (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Many students in Gilbert's (1995) study expressed personal, economic motivations for teaching and would therefore be willing to teach in an urban school as a secondary option despite reservations that they might not be fully prepared. Gilbert stated, "Indeed, it is astonishing that some prospective teachers were willing to accept a position in an urban school even though they did not want to, or did not take the time, to develop cross-cultural associations during their college education" (p. 301). Beyond the additional multicultural course, most of the recommendations made by students in Gilbert's study regarding how they might be better prepared for teaching in an urban context included content additions such as conflict resolution and crisis management strategies, training in self-defense, and motivational techniques.

Dee and Henkin (2002) posited that teacher education programs using curriculum and instruction strategies "have not been shown to achieve the goal of preparing teachers who are successful in diverse classrooms over the long term" (p. 24). They argued that such efforts "may not have significant impact unless teachers are willing to explore beyond the familiar comfort zone of the cultural status quo" (p. 36). Given students' general lack of understanding and reluctance to interact with people different from themselves, traditional teacher education programs might fare better by actually forging partnerships with urban schools in which students could observe and work firsthand. Haberman and Post (1998) have suggested that preservice teachers' incoming predispositions are more important than any training they could be offered; they argued that teacher training cannot change one's ideology and that "people perceive what they believe" (Haberman as cited by Mason, 1999, p. 10). However, other researchers, such as Mason (1999), believe that preservice teachers might be energized by a deeper understanding of

children's educational needs and develop feelings of personal efficacy as a result of an urban school field experience. Mason pointed out that the key to a successful field experience is that it must be properly supervised. In his study, the urban field experience was integrated into the certification program itself, lasted for a duration of 8 weeks, and was supervised by a university instructor who was able to help the student link methods course content to field experiences.

As Mason (1999) acknowledged, the structure, duration, and supervision of university-school partnerships vary from program to program and may have a significant impact on the success of the experience. A survey of 99 university-urban school partnerships meant to support new teacher induction conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999, p. 34) cited growth in both the number and variety of collaborations since the mid-1980s. In addition, this survey found that the day-to-day responsibilities for managing and coordinating such exchanges fell overwhelmingly on the hosting school districts. When this is the case, the effectiveness of the partnership may be dependent on the district providing professional in-service seminars as well as exemplary mentors (King & Bey, 1995). The range of partnerships becomes evident when, for example, in documenting the relationship between the University of Rochester and its surrounding Rochester City School District, Kirschenbaum and Reagan (2001) found 57 different types of collaborations. These efforts varied from programs to support curricular enrichment, community support, school-linked services, school-to-work training, and tutoring and mentoring. As they pointed out,

> From the university's perspective, some partnerships are motivated by the desire for university personnel and students to make a positive contribution to the community around them. In other cases, working in the schools directly helps the university by providing meaningful field experiences for their students and research opportunities for faculty. (p. 480)

What may be key determinants of success in these wide-ranging partnerships are feelings of "real collaboration, including such elements of effective school-university communication, a shared mission, and joint program development" (p. 492). Kirschenbaum and Reagan also conveyed the desire of partnership participants to learn about other similar and effective programs, existing research on university-school collaboration, and tools or services useful for evaluating their own efforts.

After considering the effects and needs of a generally homogeneous pool of preservice teachers in traditional, university-based certification programs, it seems evident that more extensive steps must be taken to prepare these

candidates for effective work in urban schools. One avenue for continued study, I believe, is the context provided by university-school partnerships. As Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (as cited by Mason, 1999) urged, “The fixed nature of prospective teachers’ beliefs should remain an open question rather than an accepted assumption until the impact of the more robust programs of teacher education has been fully analyzed” (p. 13).

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS OF TEACHER CERTIFICATION

As discussed in the previous section, efforts have been made in traditional certification programs toward addressing the perceptions and preparation of a generally homogeneous preservice teacher pool. However, a movement for alternative certification remains strong due to the lingering reluctance of traditionally certified teachers to work in urban schools and overall chronic teacher shortages (Stoddart, 1993). The programs allow for certification through a variety of arrangements such as weekend and evening courses, accelerated programs, and on-the-job training (see Feistritzer 1993, pp. 26-27, for program classifications). They offer benefits to preservice teachers, such as less demanding time commitments for training, reduced financial cost, academic and social support services, and assistance with or minimizing existing certification standards (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Clewell & Villegas, 1999; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1990). Drawing on data from the National Center for Education Information, Feistritzer (1993) documented that in the years between 1985 and 1990, only about 20,000 people were certified through alternative routes. That number increased to an estimated 40,000 individuals in 40 states by 1992 (Feistritzer, 1993, p. 20).

Routes for alternative certification can go beyond simply counting the total number of available teachers and instead focus on critical issues and patterns related to staffing urban schools (Gitomer & Latham, 2000). Advocates argue that they generally attract older, more racially diverse individuals who have experience living and/or working in urban areas into the teaching force (Clewell & Villegas, 1999; Shen, 1998; Stoddart, 1993). Citing a growing interest in the teaching profession, Feistritzer (1993) also pointed out the occupational diversity of many alternative certification route teachers who come from former military or other career backgrounds. This varied pool of teachers may possess the desire to teach in an urban setting because they have

more developed personal maturity and life experiences conducive to success. Haberman and Post (1998) contended,

> in order to perform the sophisticated expectations of multicultural teaching, selecting those predisposed to do it is a necessary condition. Training, while vital, is only of value to teacher candidates whose ideology and predispositions reflect those of outstanding, practicing teachers. (p. 96)

According to this belief, they identify the following elements as being essential to potentially "star" teachers: (a) self-knowledge, a deep understanding of one's own cultural group and group affiliations; (b) self-acceptance, a strong self-esteem emerging from knowing one's identity; (c) relationship skills, respectful and caring ways of working effectively with diverse people; (d) community knowledge, a sense of the children's families and communities; (e) empathy, a sincere appreciation and sensitivity to the way children and their families perceive, understand, and explain their world; (f) cultural human development, an understanding of how the local community influences children's development; (g) cultural conflicts, an ability to recognize the discrepancies between local groups and traditional American values emphasized in schools; (h) relevant curriculum, an ability to connect general values to the specific ones in the community; (i) generating sustained effort, the strength to engage and motivate students in their schoolwork; (j) coping with violence, skills to prevent and de-escalate violent situations; (k) self-analysis, the capacity for reflection and growth; and (l) functioning in chaos, the skills necessary to function in a disorganized environment. Consideration of these essential elements may be of importance not only to make the recruitment of new teachers easier but also in an effort to ensure retention.

Yet although there are understandable reasons to consider alternative certification programs as a means of teacher education and urban school reform, "experiential and research evidence indicate that this solution for improving the quality and quantity of the teaching force is neither definitely positive nor negative" (Zumwalt, 1996). One major reason for inconclusive or even contradictory evaluation of programs is because there is little consistency regarding what counts as an alternative certification program. Some programs function more as emergency certification options than teacher training; others resemble quite closely 1- and 2-year master's-level programs (Feistritzer, 1993; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1990; Zumwalt, 1996). Given the widely ranging types of alternative certification programs in existence, criticisms have been voiced. For example, although alternatively certified teachers are more likely than the traditional teacher pool to be racial minorities and/or male, they do not consistently appear to be

academically stronger than traditionally certified teachers. Zumwalt (1996) stated,

> It is assumed that 16 years of being a student, some minimal training before teaching, on-the-job supervision, and sometimes training after school can more than adequately prepare one to teach, even in the nation's most challenging schools. Such an assumption is based on the belief that the knowledge base of teaching is minimal, that schools can supply the needed mentoring and supervision, and that teaching is basically a craft that is best learned on the job. (p. 42)

In her review of certification status and teacher quality, Darling-Hammond (1999) found that

> studies of teachers admitted with less than full preparation—with no teacher preparation or through very short alternative routes—have found that such recruits tend to be less satisfied with their training, and they tend to have greater difficulties planning curriculum, teaching, managing the classroom, and diagnosing students' learning needs. (p. 11)

Perhaps resulting from varying degrees of preparation, data on retention of alternatively certified teachers is also mixed. Some studies indicate that teachers licensed through alternative measures tend to migrate out of low-socioeconomic schools just as traditionally certified teachers do (Zumwalt, 1996). According to Shen's (1998) research on teacher retention, alternatively certified minority teachers were most likely to express a desire to "continue until something better comes along," "definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as possible," or state that they were "undecided at this time." These teachers were the least likely to articulate that they intended to teach "until I am eligible for retirement" (p. 37).

Hearing such statements from alternatively certified teachers may not be entirely surprising given that even teachers trained explicitly with a progressive, liberal approach to teaching can resort to skills of survival and be resocialized in a context that contradicts their earlier training (Cantor, 1998). Haberman and Rickards (1990) established that of 12 common reasons expressed by teachers who quit their work in urban schools, only 3 of the 12—discipline, underachieving students, and dealing with students of diverse cultural backgrounds—are within the teacher's own control to learn about and change. The other conditions—including support from administrators and supervisors, work load, lack of parental support, clerical burdens, inadequate support staff, inadequate resource and supplies, low salaries,

class size, and communication with staff of different cultural backgrounds—reflect more the conditions under which teachers find themselves having to work. Haberman and Rickards (1990) stated,

> Before teaching, there seems to be greater anticipation that underachieving students will be a greater problem than they prove to be. On the other hand, before teaching there seems to be a down-playing of the issues of heavy load and inadequate support from administrators. Both of these problems increase in intensity with actual experience. (p. 301)

AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The issues surrounding teacher shortages in urban schools are more complicated than each teacher's adequate preparation. Educational reforms meant to transform preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions such that they better satisfy the needs of urban, minority children or attempt to target individuals seemingly predisposed to teaching in urban classrooms have great merit. However, neither traditional nor alternative methods of teacher certification can be entirely successful to the staffing needs of urban schools without additional considerations.

Both modifications to traditional certification and suggested alternative licensure reforms tend to focus on preparing individual teachers for work in urban schools. This emphasis contributes to the prevalent notion that teacher shortages and teacher quality issues arise from the individual characteristics of teachers themselves. In accordance with this perspective, policy efforts fall on recruiting higher quality individuals into the teaching force and concerted efforts to better train and evaluate those already teaching. The tremendous assumption or oversight of this view is that high-quality teachers will be equally likely to teach at a variety of schools once they are trained and that no child will be left in a classroom with a poor-quality teacher. Significantly less attention is given to the impact of social- and organizational-level issues surrounding recruitment and retention of quality teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). An analysis of the struggles in urban schools to recruit and retain qualified teachers illustrates how policy efforts must take into consideration organizational issues obstructing desired outcomes.

From an organizational perspective, individual teachers are not the lone indicators of instructional performance and educational quality. Rather, examining the character and conditions of the organization within which teachers work is essential. According to Ingersoll (2001),

> Among the most important of these organizational conditions are the compensation structure for employees; the level of administrative support, especially for new employees; the degree of conflict and strife within the organization; and the degree of employee input into and influence over organizational policies. (p. 506)

These factors affect the fluid functioning of an organization and have reciprocal impact on both the individuals who make up the system as well as the system itself. Drawing from theories of organizational justice, which focus particular attention to the procedural, interactional, and distributive nature of organizations (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001), can provide a more complex and accurate picture of the problem of teacher shortages in urban schools as well as the limitations of current solutions.

The procedural justice of an organization is characterized by the fairness—or lack of fairness—of its processes and is a critical lens through which to view the traditional system of certification. Examining the crucial tensions of what knowledge matters or how it matters in teacher education (Britzman, 2000), existing research documents the power differentials of stakeholders in the process of articulating and enforcing teacher education goals. Not only are there great variations on standards and licensure requirements from state to state (Darling-Hammond, 1999), Sindelar and Rosenberg (2000) pointed out that "although teacher educators are held accountable for supplying an adequately large and competent teaching force, we have little say in deciding how that job might get done" (p. 188). They argued that traditional teacher education programs increasingly feel the pressure from outside sources such as state boards and professional organizations to raise standards as measured by course credit counts or standardized test scores. Meeting these requirements while maintaining the integrity of teacher education is not only difficult but sometimes also results in working under contradictory mandates that teacher educators themselves are powerless to resolve. Furthermore, individuals interested in teaching are more frequently approaching the traditional certification process from a consumerist perspective, knowing that they can opt for certification through a wide spectrum of other options. Gitomer and Latham (2000) concluded, "For the academic teaching fields, it does not appear that there is an unlimited supply of academically exceptional individuals who pursue, or will pursue, teaching careers" (p. 218). If the deregulation and removal of certification requirements functions as a primary incentive to prospective teachers (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000), it does not necessarily bode well for improving the quality of the teacher work force (Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b), nor does it guarantee an increased number of certified candidates from which urban schools can select.

The issue of retention is often overlooked or oversimplified in analyses of teacher shortages emphasizing individual practitioners, but assessment of interactional justice within an organization yields essential considerations of urban schools as places of social and interpersonal dynamics. As Ingersoll (2001) pointed out, “From an organizational perspective, high turnover of teachers from schools is of concern not simply because it may be an indicator of sites of potential staffing problems, but because of its relationship to school cohesion and, in turn, performance” (p. 505). The demand for more teachers is mostly a result of new teachers transferring out of their schools to other schools or districts (migration) or leaving the profession entirely due to better career options and/or dissatisfaction with teaching as a profession (attrition) (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 1997; Murnane & Vegas, 1997). In other words, shortages of qualified teachers in the field are due to new teacher’s early exiting through a “revolving door” and not because there are insufficient numbers of qualified candidates interested in and entering the teaching profession in general. Initiatives to boost retention would do well to investigate and consider the contextual reasons urban teachers struggle and ultimately leave their jobs. For example, McNeil (2000) provided evidence of how the extrinsic sanctions of high-stakes testing can alter teachers’ relationships to their students by fostering low expectations and resorting to an impersonal, basic-skills type of classroom environment. Also documented in McNeil’s study was the clear hierarchical structure of authority and accountability in school management, which eroded trust, morale, and mutually supportive practices between district and building-level instructors and teachers. Such a rigid, controlling school structure has many similarities to other custodial institutions that regularly use compulsory or coercive means to ensure compliance and thereby undermine any spontaneity, cooperation, or good will that could have existed (Hurn, 1993, p. 231). Ingersoll (1996) related the powerlessness teachers express feeling in a highly regulated school to increased levels of school conflict. The school organization McNeil (2000) described is particularly troubling in light of Lee, Dedrick, and Smith’s (1991) survey of teachers, which found that a strong sense of community developed through shared objectives and goals was the strongest predictor of teacher efficacy and job satisfaction.

It can be reasoned that more qualified teachers would have greater opportunities open to them in “nicer” schools or other career paths. Gitomer and Latham (2000) observed that “the most academically able teachers tend to leave the field first, that academic ability is not highly valued in the hiring process, and that supply shortages are circumvented by issuing emergency credentials” (p. 218). Suggested reforms targeting only recruitment and retention through salary increases, for example, fall short of remedying the

problem of teacher quality because pay is only one factor in morale, and a general increase in teacher pay would also benefit ineffective teachers rather than sorting and differentially rewarding outstanding teachers. The current system of teacher pay reflects mainly years of experience, degrees, and type of school district rather than individually demonstrated effectiveness. Therefore, as Grissmer and Kirby (1997) explained,

> Although pay alone is often higher in some inner-city districts, the combination of pay and working conditions often means that better teachers will migrate to schools districts with good pay and better students. . . . However, this also means that districts with poorer students will bear the brunt of a disproportionate share of lower-quality teachers. If compensation differentials were based strictly on quality, then a more proportionate distribution of quality teachers would occur across different types of school districts. (p. 54)

It has also been my observation that high salaries offered to attract new teachers to urban schools can quickly plateau over time such that despite having accumulated greater experience, these teachers' salaries become successively more like other districts.

Insight into alternative certification programs can also be improved through an organizational analysis of distributive justice, or the extent to which systems of allocation and outcomes are deemed fair. To illustrate, a point central to the argument for alternative certification is that hands-on training for inexperienced teachers in conjunction with supervision and guidance from site-based advisers can provide preparation enough for classroom instruction. This understanding of teacher preparation seems to focus on a teacher's individual preparation rather than on an organizational view of how alternatively certified teachers become integrated into the school's systematic effort to ensure high instructional performance. An organizational perspective illuminates an ironic turn in this argument for alternative certification. As Zumwalt (1996) noted, "It . . . assumes that the very school staffs that have been criticized for not meeting the needs of students have the time, energy, resources, and competencies to meet the needs of unprepared or minimally prepared novice teachers" (p. 42). Ingersoll (1999, p. 29) provided an example of this point by identifying the disturbingly frequent use of out-of-field teaching assignments in schools faced with perpetual teacher shortages. The shortage or uneven distribution of qualified teachers across schools leads to negative consequences for student learning such as more textbook-dependent instruction emphasizing basic skills, and the burdensome teaching load decreases teachers' morale and commitment to their work. Ingersoll (1999) also importantly speculated about the effects of such staffing practices

on student perceptions of teacher legitimacy and authority necessary for maintaining a classroom conducive to effective instruction. Policy recommendations that add to an already strained staff the responsibility of mentoring new teachers—especially without providing the material resources or compensation necessary to do so—are arguably unfair and unrealistic. The particular context of urban schools as the intersecting site of multiple inequalities is well documented (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991; powell, Kearney, & Kay, 2001; Rose, 1995), and these circumstances cannot be ignored. Researchers and policy makers should not expect that any cadre of exceptional teachers could single-handedly eradicate such tremendous social problems; to do so would be to slight the political nature of educational and social policy, which often leads to partial implementation as well as the existence of simultaneously contradictory reforms that take place in urban schools (McDermott, 2000).

Researchers intent on the procedural, interactional, and distributive domains of an organization argue that understanding how these systems function gives some indication of individuals' commitment to the group and predictions of future behavior. In other words, the processes, relationships, and outcomes that cumulatively define an organization contribute to the multiple human needs of its members. Williams (1997) suggested that as many as four interrelated psychological needs of individuals—control, belonging, self-esteem, and meaningful existence—are affected by organizational justice. Applying these needs to the conditions of teacher education and professional work, we can begin to understand the significance of power differentials, alienation, inequitable resource allocation, hopelessness, and fear that may take a serious toll on efforts to recruit and retain the necessary number of qualified teachers for urban classrooms. Remedies for teacher shortages must not only be concerned with adequately preparing new cohorts of teachers but also address deep-seated problems in the organizational structure of schools, which prospective teachers evidence a reluctance to engage and many current teachers seek to escape.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, adopting an organizational perspective to the problem of teacher shortages in urban schools has potential to broaden not just the scope of educational research but also expectations for policy reform efforts. As Levin (2001) asserted, "Policies are linked to goals by a set of assumptions about cause and effect. A given policy measure embodies, whether explicitly

or not, a theory about how one or more goals of education can be attained" (p. 171). Focusing only on certification routes and standards or recruitment of new teachers oversimplifies the problem of staffing urban schools. Such an approach suggests that the effectiveness of individual teachers will help them embrace the challenge of working in low-income, minority schools and that the personal rewards of their success will be satisfying enough to keep them. Arguably, this explanation yields generally immediate, short-term policies and diminishes the impact of reform by making it dependent on the quality or choices of individual teachers. This explanation hides the more deeply rooted characteristics and inequalities of the school system such that policy makers cannot be held accountable to resolving them and the role of values as well as multiple—and sometimes unintended, uncontrollable—effects that make educational reform a contested field (Shavelson & Towne, 2002) become neutralized. The symbolic considerations of policy makers alter the language used to discuss the issue at hand and are oftentimes less invested in actual effects (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). According to Levin (2001),

> People tend to overestimate the influence of immediate or visible causal agents, to give credence to the obvious instead of the important. We tend not to see the importance of subtle and long-term changes, to infer causality when events are connected only fortuitously, to give too much weight to what we have seen or been told most recently, and to be powerfully influenced by preconceptions and stereotypes. (p. 27)

This in itself hinders our capacity to understand the problem or devise a sufficient solution. A commitment to understanding the complexity of schools as organizations is a necessary condition for sincere policy making and thoroughly effective educational reforms.

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