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A Grounded Theory Study of the Professional Preparation Process of Alabama Urban High School Alternative Certified Teachers

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A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION
PROCESS OF ALABAMA URBAN HIGH SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE CERTIFIED
TEACHERS

by

SHERENE CARPENTER

JERRY PATTERSON, COMMITTEE CHAIR
NATALIYA IVANKOVA
MARGARET RICE
BOYD ROGAN
LINDA SEARBY

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the graduate faculty of The University of Alabama at Birmingham,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative grounded theory study explored the preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. This study addressed the significance of finding and preparing candidates to become highly qualified teachers to ensure the academic success of students in every public school classroom. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandates that all teachers be highly qualified and that all students are 100% proficient in Reading and Math by the year 2014. States are fervently trying to accomplish this goal. Outstanding certified teachers are needed to ensure the success of our students. However, colleges and universities are producing fewer teacher candidates. There is also a need for greater ethnic and gender diversity among the teaching staffs in American public schools. As a result, states have turned to alternative certification to persuade candidates to enter the teaching field. Alternative certification allows for candidates with degrees in specific areas such as business, accounting, communications, engineering, etc. to begin teaching while they work on obtaining teacher certification. The purpose is to try to recruit mature candidates who are more diversified and have expertise in a related field. However, there has been some debate over whether or not alternatively certified teachers are truly highly qualified. Questions have been raised regarding whether or not students' achievement rates are altered as a result of alternatively certified teachers. This qualitative study will explore principal and teacher perceptions regarding the type of leadership styles that develop

alternative certified teachers into outstanding teachers who promote growth in student

achievement.

DEDICATION

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

— Marianne Williamson

This dissertation is dedicated to a wonderful, beautiful, talented, and courageous mother who instilled in me the words above.

I love you mom!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This process has taught me how learn, how to seek, how to question, how to find, how to gather a better understanding, and how to think more profoundly. This was not accomplished as a solo effort. There were many people who assisted and supported me along the way.

It is with sincerest appreciation that I acknowledge the many friends and family members who encouraged and motivated me to reach my final destination. They believed in me and routed for me to be successful. They also frequently, lovingly referred to me as the "eternal student".

As a school principal, I had to balance both work and school. Therefore, I would like to thank all of my assistant principals, teachers, and students for being supportive and 'stepping up' in their leadership roles and continuing with the business of educating children.

The learning experience at the University of Alabama at Birmingham has been very rewarding throughout my educational career. The professors have been outstanding by serving as role models, mentors, and expert in their fields. I would especially like to thank all of my dissertation committee members: Dr. Nataliya Ivankova, Dr. Jerry Patterson (Chair), Dr. Margaret Rice, Dr. Boyd Rogan, and Dr. Linda Searby for pushing me to the very limits of perfection by stretching my thinking and my writing. They served as encouragers, motivators, and counselors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, teacher shortages exist in American public schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Howard, 2003; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education estimates that approximately 2.2 million teachers will be needed over the next decade, an average of more than 200,000 new teachers annually (Howard, 2003). Nevertheless, *The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001* mandated that all teaching positions be staffed with highly qualified teachers in each subject area in all classrooms by the end of the 2007-2008 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). There is a critical dilemma in staffing highly qualified teachers in American classrooms.

Schools are faced with the overwhelming task of finding qualified candidates to fill vacancies in the growing number of classrooms. Of the graduates from traditional teacher preparation programs who are qualified to teach, 30% to 40% do not go into teaching and approximately one-third leave within the first five years (Feistritzer, 2004). Some contributing factors to the teacher shortage include class size reduction mandates and rising student enrollments. Adding to this dilemma is high retirement and high attrition rates among K-12 teachers and a burgeoning student population nation wide (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Moreover, Dean, Gimbert, and Wallace (2005) stated, "…high–need secondary schools remain understaffed in terms of quality and quantity of teachers" (p. 54). Ingersoll (2002) indicated that urban secondary schools

educate a high number of special needs and minority students from high poverty areas with teachers who have little experience and/or are not highly qualified. More qualified teachers are needed to replace teachers who leave the profession and to provide each child with a high quality education, especially in urban school settings.

Research indicates that the teacher shortage is not evenly distributed nor is it uniform across American schools (Howard, 2003; Murphy, DeArmond & Guinn, 2003; Zhao, 2005). Historically, urban schools have experienced a persistent shortage of professionally educated teachers, no matter how many teachers were being prepared nationally (Topolka, 2002). Schools in poverty stricken areas often times do not get the best teachers. There is also usually a high turn over rate in high poverty schools as compared to wealthy schools. As Gollnick and Chinn (2006) stated, "In high–income schools, families have greater influence on their schools. Parents are able to financially contribute to the hiring of teachers…They will not tolerate the hiring of unqualified or poor teachers" (p. 57).

Schools in urban poor districts hire alternative certified teachers as a means of addressing the teacher shortage. An alternative certified teacher is a teacher who obtains teacher certification through an alternative teacher certification program. Feistritzer (2000) defines alternative teacher certification programs as non-traditional methods (other than graduating from a college or university with a major in education) one undertakes in order to become licensed to teach. The alternative teacher certification option allows people with experience and education in their professional areas to teach in those content areas. Alternative certified teachers are described as second-career professionals with at least a bachelor's degree in their chosen content areas and may have

their degrees in an unrelated field (Tissington & Grow, 2007). The purpose of alternative teacher certification is to attract more candidates to the field of education. States have been very innovative in their plans to provide a certified teacher for every classroom by allowing for alternative routes to teacher certification.

Forty-six states, including the District of Columbia, have some type of alternative certification program serving approximately 175,000 teachers (Feistritzer, 2003; Feistritzer & Chester, 2000). Conversely, there is continuous controversy regarding the effectiveness and quality of alternative teacher certification. As a demonstration of this, Dean et al. (2005) stated, "A continuous debate addresses an essential question: Which teacher preparation programs best prepare future educators for the challenges of instructing students in their core subject classes—those grounded in the conceptual framework of traditional college teacher preparation or those guided by the premises of alternative teacher preparation programs?" (p. 54). Research studies have been conducted in attempts to provide an answer.

The research studies reviewed related to the comparisons of teacher quality and success between alternative and traditional certified teachers. These studies have produced varied and conflicting results (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003; Miller, McKenna & McKenna, 1998; Suell & Piotrowski, 2006). There seems to be a continuous debate as to whether the traditional route or alternative route to teacher certification is best for student achievement. The following studies are representative of the conflicting views of researchers.

Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) conducted a study to explore the impact of traditional versus alternative certified teachers and the impact each type of teacher has on

student achievement. A review of teachers' academic records was implemented to see if the type of teacher certification was a strong determiner of academic success in the classroom. The results supported the fact that traditionally certified teachers produced better academic results. According to Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003), "It is concluded that students achieve better when they have certified teachers as instructors" (p. 35).

Miller, McKenna and McKenna (1998) completed a three-part study that explored the comparisons of traditional certification program graduates with individuals completing a carefully constructed alternative certification program. The first study examined the differences in teaching practices between alternative and traditional certified teachers. The second study examined the effects of alternative versus traditional certified teachers on the achievement levels of their students. The third study examined alternative and traditional certified teachers' perceptions of their teaching abilities. All three studies conducted by Miller et al. (1998) revealed that there are no distinctive differences between alternative and traditional certified teachers' perceived preparation levels, competence levels, or problems after three years of teaching. The research concluded that time on the job, job related experiences, and professional support of traditional and alternative certified teachers develop them well into their careers.

Suell and Piotrowski (2006) conducted a study regarding alternative teacher certification programs in Florida. The purpose of the study was to compare alternative versus traditional teacher certification programs. More specifically, the study looked at confidence in instructional skills as it relates to both types of teachers. The results of the study indicated that there were no significant differences between alternative and traditional certified teachers. However, the study stated, "…traditional teachers noted

that their internship experience enhanced their sense of teaching proficiency across the 12 practice areas" (p. 312). The study suggested that future research be conducted that compares the various types of alternative teacher certification programs as well as the efficacy of the programs.

Research indicates that an overwhelming number of alternative certified teachers exist in urban secondary schools (Clewell & Forcier, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Howard, 2003). Previous studies also state that about one third of new teachers leave the teaching profession within five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The statistics are even higher in inner-city schools (Smith & Smith, 2006). Urban schools, especially, have a difficult time finding qualified candidates to fill teaching positions. Feistritzer (2002) stated that middle and high schools from urban systems with low socioeconomic status have higher teacher shortages than their suburban counterparts. According to the research, the students who have the greatest need for highly qualified teachers usually receive under prepared and/or under certified teachers (Howard, 2003). Research (Clewell & Forcier, 2000) documented that it is especially hard to find highly qualified teachers in the subject areas of math, science, technology, special education, and foreign languages in urban secondary schools. As a result, urban schools are often faced with hiring a high number of alternative certified teachers.

The purpose of alternative teacher certification is to attract more candidates to the field of education. It is expected that candidates will be more diverse (men, older adults, and people of ethnic origin), willing to work in rural or urban poor districts, and extremely skilled in their background field – such as accounting, communication, marketing, and journalism. Alternative route programs cast a broader net, making efforts

to attract older, nontraditional candidates who come to the program already well-versed in the content they want to teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Unfortunately, candidates from non-traditional programs (alternative certified teachers) do not come readily equipped with the skills to handle the diversity of learning levels in addition to teaching strategies and assessment methods. Teachers who have obtained alternative teaching certification arrive at their new teaching positions with different and varying educational preparation, expectations, and needs. Alternative certified teachers are essentially training on the job (Steadman & Simmons, 2007). In order to ensure that students receive the best quality education, strong instructional leadership is needed to provide professional preparation and development for non-traditional teachers.

It has been concluded that, since the achievement of public school students appears to be related to the quality of teaching, one of the quickest ways to improve student achievement has been to improve the quality of teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2004). There is a need to examine the teacher development processes used in schools to prepare alternative certified teachers to be successful in the classroom. Moir and Bloom (2003) stated, "Teacher development is the key to student success" (p. 60). However, no research was located that analyzed the preparation processes of alternative certified teachers in order to uncover any common themes in those experiences. The exploration of the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers is crucial for the success of teachers, students, and schools. The need to bring to light the dynamics that go into preparing these teachers to be successful in the classroom was a major impetus for this qualitative research study.

Purpose of the Study

State Boards of Education and other agencies across the country continue to push for greater accountability measures within schools. In Alabama, principals, teachers, and students feel the pressures that result from greater accountability measures relating to state assessments. High quality teachers are needed to meet the demands of high accountability. However, urban high schools are staffed with many inexperienced alternative certified teachers. Yet, the expectations of meeting and exceeding state standards still exist for these schools. There has not been a study to explain or describe a theory of the preparation process of alternative certified teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a theory grounded in the views of the participants that described the professional process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. Specifically, the professional preparation experiences of third year alternative certified teachers were explored using qualitative interviews as a means of data collection. Furthermore, to provide different perspectives of the preparation process of alternative certified teachers, school administrators, and formal mentor teachers also participated in the study.

Central Research Question

To address the central phenomenon of professional preparation of alternative certified teachers in urban high school settings in Central Alabama, the study answered the following central research question: How does professional preparation occur for urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama?

Sub-questions

This central research question was further supported by the following sub-questions to better understand the various aspects of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama:

1. How does planned professional preparation of alternative certified teachers occur within the school setting?

2. What is the role of the school principal in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

3. What is the role of formal mentor teachers in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

4. What is the role of informal mentor teachers in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

5. How does the school's organizational culture contribute to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may benefit a number of audiences. Primary audiences include students, parents, alternative certified teachers, administrators, mentor teachers, policy makers, school leadership teams, and alternative certification programs, as these efforts may promote teacher alternative certified teacher growth, teacher retention, and teacher job satisfaction that may lead to better student achievement and quality education in urban high schools.

This grounded theory qualitative research study adds to the current literature by exploring the actual processes of alternative certified teachers' professional preparation

growth and development in urban high school settings. Examining the process of alternative certified teacher preparation in urban high schools offers a better understanding of how to provide professional support to foster teacher growth. Administrators, mentor teachers, as well as other faculty and staff members gain a better understanding of what alternative certified teachers value in terms of professional development, what they need, and how they learn. In addition, alternative certified teachers develop meaningful insights into the preparation process of becoming a high quality teacher. Administrators and teachers experience a greater understanding of the various roles of formal and informal leaders as it relates to professional preparation. Furthermore, alternative teacher certification programs are provided with research-based information on how to provide training and support for teachers in urban high schools. The significance of conducting this study is to provide a road map for alternative certified teachers, their programs, and urban high schools for the training, support, and success of these teachers. Examining school culture gave insight into the real values of what the

organization actually believed about professional preparation. Research indicated that school leadership determined the instructional practices as well as the culture within schools (Dufour, 2002; Sparks, 2002). Schools have many formal as well as informal rules, procedures, routines, and customs that all teachers are expected to know and follow. Expectations of other stakeholders (parents, other teachers, students, and administrators) add significant pressure on new teachers (Fisher, 2002). A school's culture is very distinct. It consists of unspoken and unwritten rules as to how things operate within the system.

This qualitative research study operated from a framework of studying the process of professional preparation of alternative certified teachers in urban high schools. The purpose was to determine what the organizations truly believe about the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. The researcher also wanted to know what the organizations value within the systems, as well as what they actually do as it relates to professional preparation.

Definition of Terms

Alternative Certified Teacher: a teacher who obtained teacher certification through an alternative teacher certification program.

Alternative Certification Program: a non-traditional method/program used to become licensed to teach other than graduating from a college or university with a degree in education. The program (that may or may not include course work, mentors, and/or internships) gives teacher candidates a fast track avenue to obtain certification while working as a classroom teacher. Candidates usually have a bachelor's degree or advanced degrees in other areas of specialization.

Axial Coding: the process of interconnecting the categories by relating categories to their subcategories. Coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

First Year Induction Programs: Programs that address the individual needs of new teachers relating to classroom procedures, lesson planning, teaching methods, and decisions about discipline through mentoring and professional development.

Formal Mentor Teacher: a teacher who has completed clinical educator training and is teaching a similar subject or grade level as the teacher he/she is assigned by the

building administrator to mentor. The mentor serves as an advisor and helps the new teacher locate information, find resources, as well as problem solve. (Suell & Piotrowski, 2006)

Grounded Theory: the process of deriving 'theory' from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Highly Qualified Teacher: an educator holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree, passing of a state test of competency in the subjects that he/she is teaching, and hold full state licensure or certification.

Informal Mentor Teacher: a building teacher, who may or may not teach the same grade level or subject as the new teacher and has not been formally assigned by the building administrator to assist the new teacher. The informal mentor is one in which the new teacher has developed a bond and/or a special relationship for one reason or another in order to seek needed advice.

Open Coding: the procedure for developing categories of information. The analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101).

School Administrator: the head(s) of the school responsible for curriculum, finances, discipline, safety, teacher performance, and student achievement of the school. Usually the principal and/or assistant principal are considered as school administrators.

Selective Coding: the process of building a 'story' that connects the categories. It is the process of integrating and refining the theory (Srauss & Corbin 1998).

Teacher Attrition: the turnover rate of teachers who leave the classroom for various reasons that may include but not be limited to retirement, low salaries, and teacher burnout.

Troops To Teachers: an alternative teacher certification program that recruits military personnel to teach in urban school settings.

Teach For America: a high profile, nationwide alternative teacher certification program that recruit corps and require a two-year commitment to teaching.

Urban High School: a high school located in an inner-city that serves predominately minority students with low socioeconomic status and limited resources.

Assumptions

The following assumptions formed the basis for data collection, analysis, and reporting:

1. All participants were willing to participate in the study.

2. All participants gave honest, reflective answers during interviews and observations based on their beliefs and experiences related to professional preparation of alternative certified teachers.

3. The data gathered from this study will be useful to urban high schools that employ a high number of alternative certified teachers.

4. All alternative certified teachers were assigned a mentor by the school principal.

Limitations

This study was subject to the following limitations:

1. The study investigated only five urban high schools in Central Alabama

2. The study explored only the perspectives of third year alternative certified teachers.

3. Due to the interpretive nature of qualitative research, the researcher may have introduced biases into the analysis and interpretations of findings.

4. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, the results of this study are not generalizable, but can be transferred to similar settings.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, purpose of study, central research question, sub-questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions of the study, limitations of the study, organization of the study, and a summary. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature. Research will be presented as it relates to establishing the need for alternative certified teachers, history of teacher certification, alternative teacher certification, Alabama teacher certification, other states and teacher certification, teacher shortages, history of alternative teacher certification programs, alternative teacher certification research studies, national alternative teacher certification programs, needs for all beginning teachers, specific needs for alternative certified teachers, and contributions of school culture on mentoring and induction. Chapter 3 provides a description of the grounded theory research design and procedures for conducting the study. Chapter 4 describes the findings and analysis of data gathered from the research instruments as well as categories and themes that emerged from the data. Chapter 5 gives a summary of conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

Summary

Research has indicated that teacher shortages are on the rise. There is a high need for teachers of mathematics, science, foreign language, and special education. The needs are especially acute in urban secondary schools. As a result, alternative teacher certification programs have been implemented in states across the country to try to meet the high demands of putting qualified teachers in classrooms and meeting the requirements of NCLB. However, there is a continuous debate regarding the effectiveness of alternative certified teachers and programs as it relates to student achievement and teacher preparedness. Research on the topic is inconclusive. Results do not conclusively prove if teachers from traditional certification programs fair better than teachers from alternative certification programs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of the literature is to foster a deeper understanding of the variables relating to the professional preparation processes of alternative certified teachers in urban high schools. In this section, research will be presented as it relates to establishing the need for alternative certified teachers, describing alternative teacher certification, understanding mentoring and induction programs as it relates to providing professional growth to new teachers, as well as determining the contributions of school culture on mentoring and induction procedures. This review will provide the reader an in-depth overview of the research necessary to understand the components of this study.

Establishing the Need for Alternative Certified Teachers

Public education has been considered as being in a state of emergency. Education reform is a recurring issue. In 1983, "A Nation At Risk" was introduced to public schools. The report stated that the state of American education is in serious trouble as a result of overwhelming mediocrity (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Its findings as it relates to teaching revealed the following:

1. Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students.

2. The teacher preparation curriculum is weighted heavily with courses in "educational methods" at the expense of courses in subjects to be taught.

3. The average salary after 12 years of teaching is only $17, 000 per year, and many teachers are required to supplement their income with part – time and summer employment. In addition, individual teachers have little influence in such critical professional decisions as, for example, textbook selection.

4. Despite widespread publicity about overpopulation of teachers, severe shortages of certain kinds of teachers exist: in fields of mathematics, science, and foreign languages; and among specialists in education for gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)

More recently, in efforts to address the quality of education public school students receive, in 2001, President George Bush signed Public Law 107 – 110, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).

NCLB mandated that all children achieve at the same levels without any significant achievement gaps among them based on certain criteria. This law requires schools to gather specific, objective data using tests aligned to state standards, identify achievement gaps among students in six subgroups, and to develop strategies for closing those gaps. NCLB holds schools accountable under the state accountability system for making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in closing achievement gaps. Title I, Section 1111 of NCLB states,

Data shall be disaggregated with each state, local education agency, and school by gender, by each major racial and ethnic group, by English proficiency status, by migrant status, by students with disabilities…and by economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not

economically disadvantaged. (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006).

Teacher accountability is high for meeting state and federal mandates of closing achievement gaps between white and minority students, as well as gaps between affluent and poor students. Strong, highly qualified teachers are needed, especially in poor urban schools. Unfortunately, urban schools have a difficult time finding qualified candidates to fill teaching positions. Feistritzer (2002) states that middle and high schools from urban systems with low socioeconomic status have higher teacher shortages than their suburban counterparts. Overall, it is estimated that over 2 million teachers will need to be replaced over the next decade (Howard, 2003). An even greater number will be needed in poor and urban schools. Research indicates that of the 2 million teachers needed in American classrooms, only 15% (345,000) will be hired in inner cities, and in schools with high numbers of poor students (Lankford, Loeb & Wycoff, 2002).

NCLB requires that all students must be proficient in reading and math, as well as increase their skills in science and technology. The U.S. government has targeted public schools for immediate improvement. However, many states are struggling to meet these mandates as a result of teacher shortages (Tissington & Grow, 2007). Many school systems, especially in urban areas, find it difficult to attract qualified certified teachers and are forced to hire under certified teachers. As a result, there is a dire need for alternative teacher certification.

In addition to experiencing difficulties hiring new teachers for urban classrooms, it is also difficult retaining new teachers. Nearly half of all new teachers leave within the first five years of teaching (Dean et al., 2005; Howard, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002). Reasons

for leaving the classroom, especially urban classrooms include reasons of growing student population, low salaries, poor facilities, student discipline, lack of resources (Ingersoll, 2003). Schools have to find ways to retain teachers, especially those serving in urban schools. One of the most popular and successful ways has been alternative teacher certification. Howard (2003) states,

> Some of the more appealing approaches that many districts are using in an attempt to attract new teachers and retain non certified teachers are alternate certification programs. As more beginning teachers experience difficulty obtaining certification through traditional means, the use of alternate programs has increased. (p. 157)

Alternative certification programs have been a means to recruit teachers, especially minority, for poor and urban schools.

History of Teacher Certification

American public schools have been in existence for slightly over 370 years (Angus, 2001; Ogden, 2006). Teacher education preparation programs for public school teachers began in the mid 1800's. This was known as the common school movement promoted by Horace Mann (McNergney & Herbert, 2001; Ogden, 2006). Mann is also credited with the concept of 'normal schools'. Normal schools were teacher training schools. The first normal schools were organized as private, tuition–charging academies (Ogden, 2006). This concept was developed as a result of an increased need for classroom teachers. Normal schools were defined as public teachers' colleges that required candidates to fulfill the following criteria: declare an intention to teach; pass an entrance examination covering primary school subject areas; and document good moral

character before acceptance (Lucas, 1997). Having a high school diploma was not a requirement. Furthermore, only one year of training was required before participants were allowed to teach in public elementary schools. The normal school concept began in 1838 when it was introduced to the Massachusetts state legislature (McNergney & Herbert, 2001). The first state normal school was established in Lexington in 1839 and two others were opened by 1840. Between 1860 and 1900 the concept of training teachers in specialized tax-supported institutions spread throughout New England and into the Midwest (Angus, 2001). Since then, the training and certification of teachers has advanced from normal schools to fully accredited colleges and universities.

Several authorities have had the responsibility of certifying teachers over the years. In colonial America, it was common for communities to require that prospective teachers exhibit good and moral character and be approved by the local minister (Angus, 2001). However, in the nineteenth century, the responsibility passed from ecclesiastical to civil authorities. Teaching certificates began to be issued by state officials. In 1843, New York authorized its state superintendent to set examinations and issue certificates. New York became the first state to have a uniform system of certification and state control (Angus, 2001). Other states soon followed. A movement to centralize state authority over certification of teachers was well underway. Certification was awarded to teachers if they could demonstrate knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of pedagogy. The vast majority of U.S. teachers received their first certificate to teach from local officials on the basis of performance on an exam.

Today, teacher candidates have choices regarding teacher certification. Teacher candidates can be certified traditionally or alternatively. Traditional teacher certification

entails attending a four-year college or university and declaring an education major in a specific field of study. This training involves taking formal course work in pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and child/adolescent psychology. Teacher candidates also take part in conducting classroom observations of master teachers. In addition, an extensive student-teaching internship is a vital component of the traditional route to certification (Ogden, 2006). Feisrtitzer and Chester (2000) estimate that over 100,000 teacher candidates graduate from colleges of education each year through traditional certification programs. However, teachers who receive alternative certification can begin teaching if they have earned at least a bachelor's degree, without any formal training (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006). The number of alternative certification programs has grown to approximately 85 programs throughout 48 states. Over 125,000 people have been certified through these programs since alternative teacher certification programs began (Feistritzer & Chester, 2000; Howard, 2003).

<center>Alternative Teacher Certification</center>

States have been very innovative in their plans to address teacher shortages by allowing alternative routes to teacher certification. The purpose of alternative teacher certification is to attract more candidates to the field of education. Laczko-Kerr & Berliner (2003) state some advantages of alternative teacher certification:

1. To attract teachers who are more willing than traditionally trained teachers to work in rural or poor school districts

2. To attract individuals with majors in mathematics and science who are interested in teaching, but not interested in traditional certification

3   To attract a more diverse group of candidates, specifically men, older

adults, minorities, and retired military personnel (p. 36).

The alternative teacher certification option allows people with experience and

education in their professional areas to teach in their content areas. Alternative certified

teachers are described as second-career professionals with at least a bachelor's degree in

their chosen content areas and may have their degrees in an unrelated field (Tissington &

Grow, 2007). It is expected that candidates will be more diverse (men, older adults, and

people of ethnic origin), willing to work in rural or urban poor districts, and extremely

skilled in their background field – such as accounting, communication, marketing, and

journalism. Alternative route programs cast a broader net, making efforts to attract older,

nontraditional candidates who come to the program already well-versed in the content

they want to teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Alabama Teacher Certification

Teacher certification in Alabama follows a model for identifying highly qualified

teachers in accordance with criteria provided by NCLB. According to NCLB, to be

deemed highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree; 2) full state

certification or licensure; and 3) proof that they know each subject they teach (U.S.

Department of Education, 2006). In Alabama, candidates must have completed a state

approved teacher education program (through a traditional or alternative approach) and

earned a degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education (Alabama

State Department of Education, 2002). Teacher certificates are issued at three levels in

Alabama: 1) Class B at the baccalaureate level; 2) Class A at the master's level; or 3)

Class AA at the sixth year or education specialist level.

However, Alabama also issues three alternative route certificates that meet NCLB criteria for full state certification (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006). Alabama allows for three routes to alternative teacher certification: 1) Alternative Baccalaureate 2) Special Alternative Certificate and 3) Preliminary Certificate (Alabama Department of Education, 2006). Each certificate requires at least a baccalaureate from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.

The Alternative Baccalaureate allows a local board of education to employ teachers who have earned at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university in any field. This degree is issued at the bachelor's level only and is valid for one scholastic year. However, it may be reissued for two more consecutive years at the request of the same school system. An individual with this type of certification may not be employed for more than three years (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006).

The Special Alternative Certificate allows a local board of education to employ an individual who is in the process of completing requirements for a master's degree level professional educator certificate through an Alabama Fifth-Year Program. This certificate is valid for one year and may be reissued two times. An individual may not be employed for more than three years. The university applies for the certificate and maps out a plan of course work for the individual (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006).

The Preliminary Certificate allows the local school superintendents to request permission to employ individuals who currently hold at least an earned master's degree from an accredited college or university in the positions of counseling, library-media, and

speech and language impaired. Candidates for the Preliminary Certificate must hold a master's degree in the required field. The certificate is valid for two years and may be reissued one time only with a valid period of one year. Individuals who have held two Preliminary Certificates but have not completed all requirements for full certification shall no longer be eligible for certification through this approach (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006).

There are 131 school systems in Alabama. The vast majority of these systems report teacher shortages in every subject area, especially in math and science. In efforts to curtail the teacher shortage and provide teachers for classrooms, the state presently has approximately 1027 alternative certified teachers serving in Alabama classrooms (Alabama State Department of Education, 2007). A high number of these teachers serve in math and science classrooms. These teachers enter Alabama classrooms through alternative certification programs such as Troops to Teachers, Teach For America, as well as college or university programs that have partnerships with school systems, such as the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP).

Other States and Alternative Teacher Certification

Many states are dramatically changing or loosening the requirements for teacher certification by offering alternative routes for teacher certification. For example, Massachusetts has a program entitled, "Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers" (MINT). This program focuses on statewide shortages as well as building a diverse pool of candidates (Zhao, 2005). Another example in Los Angeles, California, is the "Los Angeles Unified School District's alternate route". This program focuses on specific shortages of teachers, especially in urban areas (Zhao, 2005). These programs tend to

focus on candidates who already have a bachelor's degree and are employed as teachers while earning a regular teaching license. Consequently, more and more teachers are becoming certified through alternative than traditional routes of teacher certification.

To show this growing trend, a study was conducted. Baines (2006) gathered data from more than 1,000 institutions and agencies that certify teachers in the United States. The purpose of the study was to take a look at the details and requirements of alternative teacher certification programs across states, as well as the number of candidates who become certified. In order to seek comparable results, only secondary English teachers were compared. Baines' (2006) findings were two-fold. He found that some programs have rigorous requirements regarding admission, internship, and graduation while other programs required little more than a completion of a checklist. Consequently, he also found that the number of teachers who were certified alternatively in secondary English were far greater than those who were certified in most traditional programs at colleges and/or universities in some states. The numbers are as follows:

- California certified 168 alternative certified English teachers, while the University of California at Berkley graduated 22 and Stanford graduated 11.

- Texas certified 168 alternative certified English teachers, while the University of Texas, Austin graduated 27.

- Georgia certified 75 alternative certified English teachers, while the University of Georgia graduated 26.

- Colorado certified 51 alternative certified English teachers, while the University of Colorado, Boulder graduated 36.

- Louisiana certified 22 alternative certified English teachers, while LSU graduated 14.

- Florida certified 39 alternative certified English teachers, while Florida State University graduated 23.

- New Jersey certified 101 alternative certified English teachers, while Rutgers University graduated 39. (Baines, 2006, p. 327)

This study shows that alternative teacher certification is on the rise. States have varying histories, goals, and purposes for implementing alternative teacher certification.

New Jersey began to experience a teacher shortage in 1985. Many teachers taught out of field. "Emergency Certificates" were frequently issued to teacher candidates who lacked a degree or the required pedagogy. As a result, the state began to issue certificates based on alternative certification programs. The goal was to achieve three objectives: 1) to allow thousands of bright and energetic liberal arts graduates and people from other professions (biologists, mathematicians, and journalists) to consider teaching; 2) to raise standards for teacher training and ensure that the people coming into the classrooms would be of higher quality; and 3) to end the school of education's total control of teacher preparation by introducing a competitive alternative (Cooperman, 2000).

From 1994-1996, 29 percent of new teachers in New Jersey completed alternative routes to teacher certification. From 1998 to 2000 the number has increased to 52 percent (Cooperman, 2000). Currently, Baines (2006) indicates that one in four teachers in the state of New Jersey entered the field of education through alternative teacher certification. The state of New Jersey lists some advantages for implementing alternative routes to teacher certification. Since its inception, a total elimination of the issuing of

"emergency teaching certificates" has occurred. All core academic teachers teach within their area of certification (Cooperman, 2000). In addition, the state has found that there is a deeper pool of minority teacher candidates than traditional teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, the state finds that teachers who enter the field through alternative certification remain in the profession longer than traditional certified teachers (Cooperman 2000).

> According to Suell & Piotrowski (2006),
>
> Florida will need more than 162,000 new teachers and paraprofessionals by the year 2010. It is also estimated that the state will need 16,000 teachers every year for the next 8 years as a result of the high teacher retirement rates, attrition in the field, and lack of interest in recent graduates of college teacher preparation programs (p. 310).

As a result, Florida allows alternative routes for teacher certification. Currently, seven school systems have alternative teacher certification programs in place. Hillsborough, Orange, Manatee, Broward, Escambia, Santa Rosa, and the Florida State University Research school all employee teachers through alternative routes to teacher certification.

Teacher Shortages

World War I brought about the first teacher shortage (Angus, 2001). Women were forced to leave the occupation in search of better wages to compensate for the men who had gone into the armed forces. The shortage affected both urban and rural school systems. These school systems were forced to hire under-trained people to replace the vast amount of women teachers who left the field. It was during this time that alternative routes to certification first appeared as a result of short teacher supply.

Nationally, the demand for teachers has averaged about 230,000 per year (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). School systems are trying to recruit high quality teachers and prevent high teacher turnover rates. Great efforts are being made to try to understand why teachers leave the profession in such alarming numbers. This creates a high demand for teachers. Of the graduates from traditional teacher preparation programs who are "fully qualified to teach," approximately one-third leaves within the first five years (Feistritzer, 2004). Close to 16 percent of beginning teachers leave without making it through their first year (Alabama School Journal, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Yeager, 1998).

Teachers are in demand for a variety of reasons. Four commonly cited reasons are: 1) Teacher Retirement; 2) Increasing Student Population; 3) Classroom Policies; and 4) Teacher Attrition (Howard, 2003; Zhao, 2005).

A huge wave of teacher retirements, as a result of the 'baby boom' generation reaching retirement age, will bring about teacher shortages. Dean et al. (2005) state, "within the next 10 years nearly 700,000 teachers will retire" (p. 53). Furthermore, approximately one quarter of public school teachers are over age 50, almost one third have been in the profession for more than 20 years, and close to half of all current teachers are expected to retire with the next decade (Kronholz, 1997). When systems are able to replace these teachers, they are often replaced with new, inexperienced, and often under qualified teachers (Howard, 2003). There is an increase of student population (Clewell & Forcier, 2000; Howard, 2003). In 2003, the total K-12 public school population equaled 47.7 million. The public school population is projected to reach 53.7 million by 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). In addition, the

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. also indicates that the student population in the United States is anticipated to be more than 54 million by 2008. Research projects the need for an estimated 2.4 million teachers, a yearly need of 210,000 teachers until the 2013-2014 school year, and then a leveling off as student population growth slows (Fiestritzer, 2003).

Classroom policies affect teacher shortages (Howard, 2003). In attempts to improve the quality of teaching and raise student achievement, federal and state departments of education continue to mandate new classroom policies. One of the prevalent classroom policies that affect teacher shortages is class size reduction. Class size reductions cause school systems to need more teachers in order to offer smaller class sizes (Tissington & Grow, 2007). As a result, either teaching positions remain unfulfilled or uncertified or under prepared teachers are hired to teach children. Howard (2003) states, "once again, the effects are more profound for urban schools, because many of their students are already academically below grade level, and poorly prepared teachers reduce the likelihood of closing the achievement gap" (p.148).

Teacher attrition is also a common factor related to teacher shortages (Smith & Smith, 2006; Steadman & Simmons, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Howard, 2003). School systems have a charge to recruit high quality teachers. However, many school systems are recognizing the need and importance of putting forth stronger efforts to prevent high turnover rates. Teacher turnover has been believed to be the result of the following factors: 1) low salaries, 2) low support from administrators, 3) student discipline, and 4) limited input into decision-making processes (Ingersoll, 2001 & 2003). Teacher retirements, pregnancy/child rearing, and family/personal move have also been

reported as primary reasons for teacher turnover rates. Schools and school systems are beginning to place strong emphasis on providing support and addressing the needs of new teachers in order to prevent high turnover rates.

Teacher Shortages in Alabama

The teacher shortage problem in Alabama directly correlates to the research across the United States. Alabama documentation shows that within the decade, approximately one in four Alabama teachers will have 25 or more years in the classroom, making them eligible for retirement. During that same period the student population will increase at a measured rate. Consequently, Alabama anticipates a difficult time addressing teacher shortages (Alabama School Journal, 2007).

The Alabama State Department of Education conducted a recent survey of all 131 school systems regarding teacher shortages. One hundred of the 131 school systems responded. The results are as follows: 1) All but two systems reported that they have a teacher shortage and 2) at midpoint last semester there were more than 400 teacher vacancies unfilled statewide (Alabama School Journal, 2007). The report also found other significant concerns regarding teacher shortages in specific grade levels and subject areas. For example, the report found that 90 systems lacked middle and high school math teachers, 85 needed middle and high school science teachers, and 85 had a shortage of special education teachers (Alabama School Journal, 2007).

Teacher Shortages in Urban Schools

Research indicates that the teacher shortage is not evenly distributed nor is it uniform across American schools (Howard, 2003; Murphy et al., 2003; U.S. Department of Education Planning & Evaluation Service, 2000; Zhao, 2005). There are

approximately 88,000 public schools in 15, 000 school districts. One - fourth of these students are enrolled in urban schools (Zhao, 2005). High quality teachers are needed to adequately educate children of poverty to provide them with a high quality education. It is imperative to select teachers who will be more successful in urban schools. Haberman (1995) states,

> The odds of selecting effective urban teachers for children and youth of poverty are approximately 10 times better if a) the candidates are over 30 than under 25 years of age; b) there is no problem whatsoever in selecting more teachers of color, or more males, or more Hispanics, or more of any other 'minority' constituency if training begins at the post baccalaureate level; and c) the selection and training of successful urban teachers is best accomplished in the worst schools and under the poorest condition of practice. (p. 778)

These characteristics are often found in teachers who receive their training through alternative routes of teacher certification. Haberman (1995) believes that teacher selection is more important than training for teachers of urban school settings. He believes that teachers should be "guided by a coherent vision" that is characterized by humane, respectful, caring and nonviolent form of "gentle teaching" (p. 777).

However, the best and brightest teachers often times gravitate towards schools and school systems with better resources and few children of poverty. These are oftentimes the schools in wealthy areas and not a part of an urban school system. Unfortunately, Ingersoll (1996) observed that children in high poverty schools were significantly more likely to be taught by unqualified teachers. Furthermore, white

teachers from middle class life experiences were found to have a tendency to engage low-income urban students in classroom activities that make little sense to them. Little achievement is reached as a result of poor teaching (Follo, Hoerr, & Vorheis-Saregent, 2002).

In order to address this problem and provide quality educational experiences for various ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, school systems must address these issues. Minority students of urban school systems need to see teachers who resemble them and who have an in-depth knowledge of their experiences away from school (Haberman, 1995; Howard, 2003). There is a high demand for teachers who fit these descriptions to fill vacancies in urban schools.

Research has revealed that urban schools, especially in low - income areas, experience higher degrees of teacher turnover (Howard, 2003). In addition, Howard (2003) also states that over crowded classrooms, lack of teacher resources, and discipline problems have been listed as reasons that teachers leave or choose not to teach in urban school settings. Students from inner-city schools, especially minority students, fall far behind their white suburban counterparts in their academic studies. The lack of qualified teachers and high turnover rates has been listed as a factor to low student achievement.

Urban schools are in need of professionally trained qualified teachers, especially in the subjects of math and science. Research indicates that urban schools severely lack qualified teachers in these areas. A report released in 2001 by the Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., the Council of the Great City Schools, and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education indicates that teacher shortages are most prevalent in math and science in urban high schools. In addition, Clewell and Forcier (2000) found:

…these schools have a much higher percentage of out-of field teachers in mathematics and science than the general population. In high minority schools-- that is, schools with over 50 percent minority enrollment--24 percent of mathematics teachers and 19 percent of science teachers teach out-of-field. In high poverty schools--where 60 percent or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch--31 percent of mathematics teachers and 17 percent of science teachers do not have either an undergraduate or graduate major or minor in their teaching assignment field. (p. 4)

Urban schools are considered to be "hard to staff" because of the negative aspects associated with them (Zhao, 2005). Teachers who work in these situations should be equipped with the necessary skills to be successful in the classroom (Haberman, 1995). If schools are to accommodate students of various ethnic, cultural, demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, they need the support of local communities and the provision of qualified teaching and administrative staffs that share the cultural characteristics of the students and can emphasize with them (Howard, 2003; Murphy et al., 2003; Zhao, 2005). This leads to the demand for teachers who are prepared for the various aspects that go along with working with minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In a study conducted in 2006 by the researcher (Carpenter, 2006), the lived experiences of five secondary urban school principals as they supervised and trained alternative certified teachers were explored. The study was devoted to understanding the principals' roles and relationships in providing instructional support and guidance to alternative certified teachers in an urban city school system in the Southeastern United

States. The school system studied consisted of 14 middle schools and eight high schools.

At the time, the school system served approximately 30,000 students with 70% receiving

free and reduced lunch. The racial make up of the student population was approximately

90% African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Caucasian, and 1% other.

Three middle school and two high school principals participated in the study. The

common characteristic among the participants was that they all shared an array of

experiences of supervising a number of alternative certified teachers in their buildings. It

was found that the school principals had a minimum of 7 to a maximum of 22 alternative

certified teachers on their campuses. Each principal had varied experiences and

perceptions as it related to this group of teachers.

The study sought to answer the central research question of "What are principals'

experiences in developing alternative certified teachers?" The study used a

phenomenological methodology with interviews as the main data source. Six major

themes emerged from the research: 1) Positive Perceptions-Good characteristics and

aspects of having alternative certified teachers; 2) Significance of Proper Training-The

importance of receiving training in areas such as classroom organization and

management, lesson planning, and pedagogy before entering the classroom or

immediately after being hired; 3) Principal Characteristics-The common characteristics

principals displayed when supervising and providing support to alternative certified

teachers; 4) Challenges of Alternative Certified Teachers-Specific challenges alternative

certified teachers face during their first two years as teachers 5) Frustrations-The

frustrations of principals regarding the number of alternative certified teachers in their

schools and the intensity of the support provided; and 6) Professional Development-

Topics and training provided to alternative certified teachers that targeted areas of improvement.

The major findings of the study expressed the belief systems of urban secondary school principals as they related to alternative teacher certification. Both positive and negative aspects of having alternative certified teachers emerged from the study. Some of the positive aspects included, but were not limited to, mature/older teachers, strong work ethic, ability to bring real life experiences into the classroom, and a very thorough knowledge of subject matter. Some of the negative aspects included, but were not limited to, a strong need to develop the use of pedagogy, control student discipline, use of a variety of teaching styles, and having a sense of child/ adolescent development.

A thorough description was gathered relating to how principals train and support alternative certified teachers. The study described how principals rely heavily on human resources for training and support of alternative certified teachers. For instance, every principal in the study gave strong references to the use of mentor teachers in providing support to these new teachers. In addition, principals gave references of the importance of providing demonstration lessons (performed by principals, curriculum coaches, or department chairs) for alternative certified teachers. Participants expressed their frustrations related to the matter, as well as how they provided intense professional development in order to overcome teacher obstacles of having no classroom experiences. The results of the studied concluded that principals valued having alternative certified teachers in the classrooms. However, principals believed that more training and support could be offered in alternative certified teacher programs.

History of Alternative Teacher Certification Programs

Oliver and McKibbin (1985) define alternative teacher certification as any significant

departure from the traditional undergraduate route through teacher education programs in

universities and colleges. Feistritzer & Chester (2002) state,

> The term 'alternative teacher certification' historically has been used to refer to
>
> every avenue becoming licensed to teach, from emergency certification to very
>
> sophisticated and well designed programs that address the professional
>
> preparation needs of the growing population of individuals who already have at
>
> least a bachelor's degree and considerable life experience and want to become
>
> teachers. (p.3)

Alternative routes to teacher certification have been in existence since the 1980's.

According to the research, the state of Virginia established the first statewide program in

1982. California followed in 1983, and Texas and New Jersey instituted their programs

in 1984 (Zetchner & Schulte, 2001). Research indicates that over 200,000 individuals

have been certified through alternative certification programs across the country since

1985 (Chester, 2003).

The purpose of instituting alternative teacher certification programs was to

address teacher shortages in poor urban and rural areas, especially in the areas of math,

science, and special education (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1998).

Texas and New Jersey were two states to implement well known alternative certification

programs (Zhao, 2005). According to the National Center for Education Information

(NCEI), 48 states and the District of Columbia have alternative teacher certification

programs and 50,000 teachers became certified through alternative routes in 2004-2005

(Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2007, p. 60). It has been reported that these states combined have a total of 144 routes to teacher certification other than traditional approved teacher certification programs. Currently, there are an estimated 200,000 people who have been certified through alternative certification programs (Feistritzer, 2003; Feistritzer & Chester, 2000; Zhao, 2005). Alternative teacher certification programs vary, especially across states. Laczko-Kerr & Berliner (2003) state, "some of these under certified teachers come from short alternative teacher training programs; some come from the national program Teach for America; and some hold bachelor's degrees and enter classrooms without any training at all" (p. 34). There are variations in routes to alternative certification as it relates to program duration, program content, program training approaches, characteristics of program teacher candidates, as well as program effectiveness.

<center>Alternative Teacher Certification Research Studies</center>

There are limited studies exploring the topic of alternative certified teachers. However, since there is a growing trend of alternative teacher certification programs derived to meet the needs of teacher shortages in specific areas, some studies have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of these programs (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003; Miller et. al., 1998; Suell & Piotrowski, 2006). Alternative teacher certification programs are difficult to define and vary in structure and implementation. The findings from these studies are mixed and even contradictory from one to the next. There is a continuous debate over the effectiveness of alternative versus traditional certified teaching programs and teachers.

Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) completed a study that explored the performance of elementary school students in the classes of under-certified and certified teachers in five urban, poor school districts in Arizona. The participants included emergency certified teachers, holders of bachelor's degrees with little or no education course work, and provisional teachers, individuals who have had some teacher education training but have not fulfilled requirements for standard certification. Some of the under-certified teachers were from the Teach for America Program. All emergency and provisional teachers were matched with traditional certified teachers on the basis of grade level and highest degree attained. They were matched within schools first, within districts next, and across districts lastly.

Standardized testing data were used for comparisons when rating student achievement. For example, "To ascertain whether the effectiveness of teachers in the Teach for America program was different from that of other under certified teachers, we analyzed the SAT 9 scores of the two groups in reading, mathematics, and language in two data sets (1998-1999 and 1999-2000)…"(Laczko-Kerr &Berliner, p. 38). The results were two fold. No statistical differences were found when looking at SAT 9 scores of the two groups. "Those in the Teach for America Program have no special advantage when entering the classroom as untrained teachers" (p. 38). However, when looking to discover if students taught by certified teachers outscore students taught by under-certified, there was a difference. "…the students of certified teachers had higher scores than did the students of under-certified teachers" (p. 38). The conclusion was that having a certified teacher in the classroom is worth about two months on a grade equivalent

scale. Laczko- Kerr and Berliner (2003) state, "…students pay a 20 percent penalty in academic growth for each year of placement with under-certified teachers" (p.38).

Miller et al. (1998) completed a three part study that explored the comparisons of traditional certification program graduates with individuals completing a carefully constructed alternative certification program. The first study examined the differences in teaching practices between alternative and traditional certified teachers. The second study examined the effects of alternative versus traditional certified teachers on the achievement levels of their students. The third study examined alternative and traditional certified teachers' perceptions of their teaching abilities.

The first study consisted of participants who received their first teaching assignment in 1989. Forty-one alternative certified teachers and 41 traditionally certified teachers served as the sample. The alternative certified teachers were matched with traditional certified teachers who began teaching in the same year and had three years of teaching experience. All participants were matched as it related to subject area, grade level, and school. The purpose was to look at the teaching practices of the teachers from both groups.

The first study used a 15-item, 4 node rating scale to evaluate the observed lessons for Effective Lesson and Effective Pupil-Teacher Interaction Components. Both components consisted of the following categories: 1) Focus 2) Objective and Purpose 3) Goal Direction 4) Exposition 5) Modeling 6) Practice 7) Monitoring 8) Feedback and Adjustment 9) Closure 10) Questioning Strategies 11) High Pupil Participation 12) Creative and Enthusiastic Presentation 13) Appropriate Reinforcement 14) Appropriate Constructive Criticism and 15) Appropriate Negative Consequences. Observers

completed unannounced observations of all participants and were not apprised of which participants were alternative or traditional certified teachers. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to report findings. Miller et al. (1998) state, "there appear to be no reliably important differences between alternative and traditional teaching groups for the behavior examined in this study" (p. 26). The teaching behaviors of participants did not vary greatly relating to teaching behaviors.

The second study consisted of the same participants from Study one. However, only those participants who taught in self-contained fifth and sixth grade classrooms were selected. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of alternative versus traditional certified teachers as it relates to student achievement. A total of 18 classrooms were involved in this study. One hundred eighty-eight students of alternative certified teachers and 157 students of traditional certified teachers were used in this study.

Students took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). The total reading and total math subtest normal curve equivalent scores were the primary basis of analysis. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was also conducted in this study to report findings. Miller et al. (1998) state, "there was no difference in average student achievement test score levels, based upon whether students had been taught by AC or TC teachers…There appeared to be no effect of the type of teacher training on student achievement" (p. 28). According to this study, student achievement levels are the same of alternative and traditional certified teachers.

The third study was a qualitative study. The participants were the same as in the previous studies. This study sought to explore the alternative and traditional certified teachers' perceptions of their teaching abilities. An interview protocol was used to gather

data from three categories: 1) Teachers' Perceptions of their First Year of Teaching Preparation Levels, 2) Teachers' Level of their Current Level of Competency, and 3) Teachers' Perceptions of their Problems During Their Teaching Career.

The third study revealed that there were some differences, related to the three categories, between alternative and traditional certified teachers. For example, the study states that neither alternative nor traditional certified teachers felt well prepared at the beginning of their careers. The study states, "TC teachers sometimes tried to explain this more as the natural tendency to feel inadequate at the beginning of a career, whereas AC teachers felt that something was missing" (p. 29). Moreover, the study also states that there was very little difference, if any, as it relates to the teachers' current level of competence. For example, the study states, "Both TC and AC teachers, after had experience, felt competent. At the end of the 3-year experimental period, TC and AC teachers were not distinguishable based upon their comments concerning their competence" (p. 29). However, the study showed a difference between alternative and traditional certified teachers' competence at the beginning of their careers. Alternative certified teachers were less confident.

The combination of the three studies conducted by Miller et al. (1998) reveal that there are no distinctive differences between alternative and traditional certified teachers' perceived preparation levels, competence levels, or problems after three years of teaching. Time, experience, and professional support of both types of teachers develop them well into their careers.

Suell and Piotrowski (2006) conducted a study regarding alternative teacher certification programs in Florida. Escambia County was the site of the study. The

participants were all first year teachers with no previous teaching experience. There were a total of 43 participants, including both alternative and traditional certified teachers. The purpose of the study was to compare alternative versus traditional teacher certification programs. More specifically, the study looked at confidence in instructional skills as it relates to both types of teachers.

The study used a Likert Rating Scale with 12 categories and 44 items. The Likert scale measured the following: 1) Assessment, 2) Communication, 3) Continuous Improvement, 4) Critical Thinking, 5) Diversity, 6) Ethics, 7) Human Development, 8) Knowledge of Subject, 9) Learning Environment, 10) Planning, 11) Role of the Teacher, and 12) Technology. All of the participants rated each question indicating strongly, agree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

The results of the study indicate that there were no significant differences between alternative and traditional certified teachers as it related to the items measured on the Likert scale. However, the study states, "…traditional teachers noted that their internship experience enhanced their sense of teaching proficiency across the 12 practice areas" (Suell & Piotrowski, 2006, p. 312). The study suggests that future research be conducted that compares the various types of alternative teacher certification programs as well as the efficacy of the programs.

The studies all have differing and varying results when comparing alternative versus traditional certified teachers and programs. The results seemed to surmise that there exist no real differences between the two types of teachers in student achievement or teacher effectiveness after a number of years of teaching experience. However, there seem to be differences in the preparation and effectiveness between the types of teachers

when they first enter the classroom as new teachers. Nevertheless the controversy seems to continue as to whether alternative teacher certification is as effective or better than traditional teacher certification.

<div align="center">National Alternative Teacher Certification Programs</div>

Alternative teacher certification programs are considered by the government to be a viable remedy to teacher shortages across America. More than 4.1 million dollars have been spent to support these programs within the United States (National Center for Education Information, 2004). Alternative teacher certification programs allow teacher candidates to become certified through an array of alternative routes. The goals of alternative teacher certification programs are designed to address the teacher shortage. Kwiatkowski (2002) lists some goals:

1) To increase the teaching pool of those competent in high-demand educational specialties (e.g. math, science, special education)

2) To increase the participation of underrepresented teachers (e.g. minority)

3) To increase staffing levels of urban schools or difficult settings

4) To decrease the need for emergency credentialing to meet teacher shortages (p. 1).

Two alternative teacher certification programs meet these goals: Teach For America and Troops to Teachers.

Teach For America

Teach For America is a nationally recognized alternative teacher certification program. It is one of the most familiar and popular alternative certification programs with a mission that calls for placing energetic, bright, and qualified teachers into poor

urban school districts. The program consists of recruiting a corps of college graduates who have at least a 2.50 GPA and are willing to commit to two years of teaching in a high poverty urban or rural public school. The training consists of five weeks of intensive course work that is facilitated by a master teacher. After all training and commitments have been conducted, candidates move into an urban or rural classroom and become classroom teachers. There are fifteen geographical locations participating in this program. More than 1,500 teachers from this program serve more than 100,000 students each year (Roth & Swail, 2000).

Troops to Teachers

Troops to Teachers was established on April 5, 1993, under Public Law 102-484, as a result of military downsizing (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). "The objectives of Troops to Teachers are to help recruit quality teachers for schools serving low-income families, help relieve teacher shortages, especially in math, science, special education, and to assist military personnel in making successful transitions to second careers in teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 3). Currently, there are 33 states with Troops to Teachers offices and 9 states with support agreements. To be eligible a candidate must have the following: 1) Be separated from active duty after September 30, 1990, 2) Had at least 6 years of service or are in a selected reserve with 6 years total service, and 3) Hold a BA or BS degree or higher from an accredited institution. Teacher candidates receive a stipend up to $5,000 to assist with teacher certification costs. However, the teacher must teach in a high needs district. Furthermore, candidates can receive a $10,000 bonus if they teach in a high needs school. However, a 3-year teaching commitment is required. A teacher candidate who enlists in this alternative teacher

certification program must obtain full certification within 3 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In addition to the national alternative teacher certification programs, state departments of educations may implement their own programs for alternative routes to teacher certification. For example, many school systems in Alabama collaborate with colleges and universities to provide training and support to alternative certified teachers. Examples of this include the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP). Also, the state of Massachusetts implements the Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers (MINT). No matter how teachers become certified, whether through traditional or alternative routes, all new teachers incur specific challenges when they enter the classroom.

<div align="center">Needs of All Beginning Teachers</div>

One of the quickest ways to improve student achievement has been to improve the quality of teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2004). All new teachers need proper training and support in order to be successful. Moir and Bloom (2003) state, "Teacher development is the key to student success" (p. 60). All new teachers need proper guidance and resources to address their specific needs.

All beginning teachers have specific needs. Gordon & Maxey (2000) give some specific needs of novice teachers:

1) Managing the classroom

2) Acquiring information about the school system

3) Obtaining instructional resources and materials

4) Planning, organizing, and managing instruction as well as other professional responsibilities

5) Assessing students and evaluating student progress

6) Motivating students

7) Using effective teaching methods

8) Dealing with individual student needs, interests, abilities, and problems

9) Communicating with colleagues including administrators, supervisors, and other teachers

10) Communicating with parents

11) Adjusting to the teaching environment and role

12) Receiving emotional support.(p.5)

Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser (2003) lists concerns of new teachers as being relating to curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, school culture, and the community. Teachers need guidance and support in order to navigate through the in-depth job description of a classroom teacher. In addition to this long list of needs, there are other determinants associated with developing and keeping good teachers. Teaching students takes more than an adequate knowledge of subject matter or field knowledge. Teachers must be counselors, reporting agents for the state in cases of abuse, disciplinarians, skilled in making accommodations for students with learning disabilities, curriculum writers, club advisors, athletic coaches, as well as record keepers (Heller, 2004). Teachers should also be well aware of and equipped with the needed skills to implement a variety of teaching strategies to reach kinesthetic, auditory, as well as visual learners.

A thorough knowledge of the curriculum, student body, and school is imperative for a teacher to be successful. Cooperman (2002) states, "the beginning teacher should know the special content to be taught…the ability to determine what has been learned…the skill to choose materials" (p. 66). Teachers must know the curriculum - the

skills, objects, and standards to be taught relating to their subject matter. In addition, they must know how to properly assess and evaluate individual students. Teachers must also be aware of the diversity and various cultures of the student body. Cooperman (2002) states, "the beginning teacher should know about the students, their characteristics as individuals, and the ways in which they learn" (p.66). The teacher must know the students - their interests, personalities, and learning styles in order to make the lessons meaningful and engaging for the students. Cooperman (2002) also states that the teacher must know something about the classroom as a social unit and about the management of the classroom. The teacher has to make informed decisions relating to accountability, classroom organization, as well as school priorities. Feiman-Nemser (2003) supports this by reporting that everything is new to the new teacher. They are unsure of what to do on the first day of school, the students, what the families and communities are like, as well as the interests, resources, and backgrounds that the students bring into the classroom. Expectations of other stakeholders (parents, other teachers, students, and administrators) add significant pressure for new teachers as well (Fisher, 2002).

New teachers, especially in urban school settings, need to be aware of the social ills and living realities of their students. Therefore, it is imperative that the teacher is well aware of the school culture, urban community, urban economics, and social services of the urban community (Cooperman, 2006).

Teacher education and professional development programs for new teachers in challenging school settings can help reduce teacher attrition by being realistic about how they prepare teachers (Howard, 2003). New teachers in urban areas should be aware of the following: high student absenteeism, high teacher turnover, and a high number of

inexperienced teachers (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004). Students benefit from having well-trained teachers who come from similar ethnic backgrounds and who can contribute to the students' sense of belonging and ultimately their academic achievement. Alternative certified teachers make it possible for school systems to develop a pool of candidates from various ethnic backgrounds. However, they need to be properly prepared to be successful in the classroom.

<div align="center">Specific Needs of Alternative Certified Teachers</div>

Alternative certified teachers often find themselves in need of professional support as a result of lacking student teaching experiences and classroom observations. Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) state,

> Alternatively certified teachers tend to have a limited view of the curriculum; lack understandings of student ability and motivation; experience difficulty translating content knowledge into meaningful information for students to understand; plan instruction less effectively; and tend not to learn about teaching through experiences. (p.36)

In a review of literature of alternative teacher certification programs, Darling-Hammond (1992) state, "studies of teachers admitted through quick - entry alternate routes frequently note that the candidates have difficulty with curriculum development, pedagogical content knowledge, attending to students' differing learning styles and levels, classroom management and student motivation" (p.131).

Alternative certified teachers often have questions and struggles related to classroom management, planning, student assessment, human development, student diversity, and learning styles (Steadman & Simmons, 2007). Both traditional and

alternative certified teacher programs produce quality teachers when the following components are a major part of the training program: course work in pedagogy and content knowledge, field-based experiences/internships, program standards, state certification requirements, on-going professional development, and individual mentors (Dean et al., 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003; Tissington & Grow, 2007). Mentoring and induction are vital elements to new teacher programs.

<div align="center">Contributions of School Culture on Mentoring and Induction</div>

School Culture

Schools have many formal and informal rules, procedures, routines, and customs that new teachers are expected to learn. This is known as the school's culture (Richards, 2005). Deal and Peterson (1999) provide the following definition of school culture:

> We believe the term *culture* provides a more accurate and intuitively appealing way to help school leaders better understand their school's own unwritten rules, traditions, norms and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students. (pp. 2-3)

A school's culture is very distinct. It serves as the unspoken or unwritten rules as to how things operate within the system. Patterson and Kelehear (2003) provide a three-part definition of organization culture. Organizational culture involves looking at what the people within the organization actually believe (What we say compared to what we actually value). Then, a comparison of the people's beliefs is made to what they actually do. Following, a comparison of what the people within the organization actually do is

made to what they say they believe and what they say they do- the true values. The culture of an organization actually gives a true picture of what is valued within the organization. Richards (2005) found, "Teachers and principals are a partnership that create the school's culture" (p. 10).

School culture is a combination of its vision, mission, beliefs, and values. What the members of the school community actually believe can be documented by observing the actual activities that take place on a daily basis within the school. School culture is reflected in how the school looks, how teachers teach, how students experience their learning, attitudes towards work, stories told to visitors as well as newcomers, and celebrations of teacher and student achievements (National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), 2001).

There is not a step by step process for enriching the learning culture. It has been stated, "Good school atmosphere has to start with the teachers and the principal" (Littky, 2004, p. 48). However, there are some common threads that exist in schools that have a positive school culture as it relates to teacher and student learning. First, strong learning cultures are nourished and cultivated by visionary leaders. Secondly, the norms and values supporting the vision and culture are meaningfully connected to the communities served by the school. Thirdly, ordinary events are transformed to extraordinary and memorable levels. Fourth, tangible signs, symbols, routines, and rituals are adapted to represent and reinforce intangible norms and shared values. Lastly, the community comes together to celebrate one another and individual and collective accomplishments (Walsh & Sattes, 2000). The attitudes of the teachers, principals, and everyone who

works in the building have an effect on the students' everyday experiences. Positive school culture also has an effect on the learning experiences of adults.

As the instructional leader, the principal sets the tone for providing the climate for continued adult learning and professional development in the school. Principals demonstrate this by the following: 1) Providing time for reflection as an important part of improving teaching and learning, 2) investing in teacher learning, 3) connecting professional development to school learning goals, 4) providing opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and think together, and 5) recognizing the need to continually improve principals' own professional practice (NAESP, 2001, p. 42). These things are considered a part of a school's culture. In addition, the school's mentoring and induction programs are a part of the school's culture as it relates to what the organization believes about supporting new teachers and developing teacher leaders.

Mentoring and Induction (Formal)

Sullivan (2004) provides the following vignette relating to the relevance of how we often use the term of "mentoring".

> The origins of mentoring are as ancient as Homer, who recounted how Odysseus, before leaving home for the Trojan War, turned to his trusted friend, Mentor, to provide care and guidance in his absence for his young son, Telemachus. Thus, the word *mentor* is one that we associate with wisdom and counseling. (p. 3)

Mentoring is an important aspect of a school's culture that benefits novice teachers, veteran teachers, and students. To implement a mentoring program, school administrators assign new teachers to a mentor. Mentor teachers are veteran teachers who usually teach the same grade level or subject area as the new teacher. The mentor's

job is to help the new teacher acclimate to the rules, routines, and culture of the school. In addition, the mentor's job description consists of helping the new teacher work through problems associated with discipline, lesson planning, classroom organization, analyzing student data, and differentiating instruction. As a result of high attrition rates, many schools and systems have turned to mentoring programs as a means of retaining teachers (Dean et al., 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003; Tissington & Grow, 2007). Carr, Herman and Harris (2005) state, "…mentoring programs enable and encourage novice teachers to grow and change as they create their own questions and find their own answers in a supportive environment" (p. 17).

A comprehensive induction program in Santa Cruz, California focuses on the benefits of mentoring. The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project researched by Moir and Bloom (2003) provides documentation of how mentoring provides professional growth for teachers that leads to better service for students. The project began in 1988. The purpose was to provide a comprehensive, structured support system for new teachers who otherwise were left to fend for themselves. To support this, Feistritzer and Chester (2000) state that teachers who are supported through their first year are more likely to stay in teaching. Teachers whose training included a comprehensive induction program were significantly more likely to stay in teaching than those who matriculated through a program that did not include first-year support. The Santa Cruz Project provided the needed support by training veteran teachers to foster in the professional growth of new teachers. To accomplish this, mentors worked with new teachers a minimum of one to two hours weekly. Furthermore, mentors provide training and support by observing teacher instruction, providing feedback, conducting demonstration lessons, assisting with

lesson planning, as well as analyzing student work and achievement data. Mentors are teacher leaders who are dedicated to the process of professional growth.

To become a mentor teacher in the Santa Cruz project, candidates must have a minimum of 7 years as a classroom teacher, have experience in coaching peers, and must have supervised student teachers. In addition, candidates must provide three letters of reference and be interviewed by a team of teachers, administrators, and union representatives. The candidates must be multi talented and able to problem solve from a team approach. Moir and Bloom (2003) state, "Effective mentors must be able to observe and communicate; track a new teacher's immediate needs and broader concerns; and know when to elicit a new teacher's thoughts and when to provide concrete advice" (p. 59). Candidates are trained to accomplish these tasks by undergoing rigorous training activities.

The first training step requires mentor candidates to complete three days learning the following: creating a vision of quality teaching, identifying new teachers' needs, understanding the phases of new teacher development, selecting support strategies, assessing a beginning teacher's practice, and reaching professional standards in mentoring. Afterwards, mentor candidates also undergo an additional two days of training. This training focuses on coaching and observation. This is where mentors learn how to assist new teachers' classroom performance by focusing on collecting data and using data for student improvement. The training that mentors receive aids in developing them as school leaders.

There were benefits for candidates who complete mentor training. To ascertain the benefits, Moir and Bloom (2003) conducted a study. After conducting observations and interviews five themes emerged. The themes were as follows:

1) Former mentors have a deep understanding of teaching and learning

2) They know how to help classroom teachers grow

3) Former mentors are attuned to the needs of beginning teachers

4) They know how to participate in and create learning communities

5) Our new principals have a head start in dealing with such issues as time management and communication. (p. 59-60)

 As a result of this wealth of knowledge and expertise, many mentors moved on to leadership roles. The article states, "of the 35 mentors who have gone back to K-12 positions during the past 14 years, seven are now principals, 14 are teaching, and 14 are serving in professional development leadership roles" (p. 59). The mentorship program has the benefit of professionally developing new teachers to be successful in the classroom. Furthermore, veteran teachers become school leaders who know how to successfully implement a mentoring and induction program for the professional preparation of new teachers.

A study was conducted using two urban school districts in Connecticut to decipher if there was a difference in school system policies relating to mentoring and induction and its effects on first and second year teachers. Youngs (2007) conducted a study to examine the relationship between district induction policies and the quality of support experienced by beginning teachers. The study contained two purposes: 1) to explore whether variations in district policies were associated with differences in the

quality of instructional support experienced by first and second year teachers and 2) to investigate the view of induction held by mentors, principals, and other teachers and their effects of district policies on new teachers' experiences (p. 797).

The study conducted by Youngs (2007) used qualitative case studies, during the 2000-2001 school year, as a research design. Two urban school districts (Copely and Ashton) within the state of Connecticut were used as the sites. These two systems were very comparable as it related to eligible students for free and reduced lunch, as well as policies regarding mentor training and work conditions. Both districts also served high percentages of minority and/or low-income students.

The researcher used a set of criteria to select samples for the study. The study focused on first and second year teachers. All participating teachers had to be currently teaching in a core content area, teaching full-time, have an earned standard teaching license, and have classroom and school demographics that are consistent with their district's. Twenty-two first-year teachers and 18 second year teachers met the set criteria in Copely. However, only 13 of the 22 first-year teachers and 8 of the 18 second year teachers volunteered to be a part of the sample study for the system. In Ashton, 18 first-year teachers and 14 second – year teachers met the set criteria. However, only 10 of the 18 first-year teachers and 7 of the 14 second-year teachers volunteered to be a part of the study. In addition to first and second year teachers, principals and mentors were also used as samples of the study. A total of 5 mentors, 4 principals from Copely, 3 principals from Ashton, and one district facilitator from each district participated in the study.

According to Youngs (2007) data collection involved interviewing beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district administrators, as well as observing mentor-

novice meetings and other induction activities. The researcher interviewed each participant two to three times throughout the 2000-2001 school year. Youngs (2007) states, "in the interviews, I probed to learn whether novice teachers were acquiring curricular knowledge, planning instruction, and/or reflecting on their practice with their mentors or other colleagues" (p. 803). The interviews of second – year teachers focused on their experiences and support on the teacher assessment and portfolio process.

The following research questions were the focus of the study: 1) What is the nature and quality of the induction support experienced by first and second – year teachers in two urban districts in Connecticut and 2) What is the nature of the possible connections between district policy and induction support? (p. 798). As a result of exploring the central research questions through data analysis, the study found that first – year teachers in Copely experienced greater and higher quality of support than the first – year teachers in Ashton relating to curricular knowledge, planning instruction, and reflecting on practice. According to the researcher, "…these variations in the nature and quality of instructional assistance seemed related to district policy involving mentor selection, mentor assignment, and professional development" (p. 798). As a result of this study, first and second-year teachers' experiences of the two Connecticut school districts have a correlation to whether or not the teachers had access to mentors or other colleagues who were strongly familiar with the subject area and grade level they taught.

Mentoring and Induction (Informal)

The informal relationships that new teachers acquire are extremely important in the work place. In formal mentoring programs, new teachers are assigned a veteran teacher to work with. However, informal mentor relationships develop as a result of the

personal bonds that develop between two individuals. To illustrate this, Davis (2001)

states, "…authentic mentorship is characterized by 'a voluntary and ultimately personal

relationship between two individuals" (p.2). The informal mentor relationship is

extremely important. Two professionals naturally gravitate towards one another.

Sullivan (2004) lists some reasons as to why informal relationships develop. They

include:

1) Similar values concerning achievement

2) Complementary (not duplicate) factors in skills and knowledge

3) Experience in day to day requirements on the part of the mentor

4) Openness to experimentation with many options

5) Willingness to listen

6) Ability to ask questions

7) Sense of eagerness for learning new ideas

8) Courage to deal with difficult issues such as culture and ethics

9) Inclination on the part of each individual to rejoice in the success of the other.

   (p. 20-21)

 Mentoring and induction programs are critical to the success of beginning

teachers. The success of beginning teachers is critical for the success of students.

Furthermore, Moir & Bloom (2003) state, " All students deserve competent and caring

teachers, all beginning teachers deserve competent and caring mentors, and all teachers

deserve competent and caring administrators" (p. 60). The entire school community has

to develop an obligation to assist new teaches in learning their craft.

Summary

There is a fervent and dire need to staff America's classrooms with high quality competent teachers. However, research has confirmed that this task is extremely hard to accomplish in urban secondary schools. As a result, alternative teacher certification has been implemented in many states. Alternative teacher certification programs allow second career, older adults, or graduates in the fields of math and science to earn certification while working in classrooms.

There have been some studies conducted to explore the effectiveness of alternative teacher certification programs, as well as the effectiveness of alternative certified teachers as compared to traditional certified teachers. The results have been inconclusive as some research studies find little to no difference and some find significant differences between the two groups. However, there is a plethora of research that states the importance of implementing strong mentoring and induction programs to train, support, and ultimately retain good teachers. Research also indicates that school culture as it relates to professional development and student achievement plays a significant role in growing and developing good teachers. Nevertheless, there still exists a need to explore the preparation process of alternative certified teachers as the research listed significant differences in the way alternative versus traditional certified teachers are prepared to enter the classroom.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Approach

To study the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Guba, 2000). Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional quantitative research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Merriam (1998) stated, "qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products," (p.19). Therefore, conducting a qualitative research study will yield results that are reflective of the descriptive experiences and feelings of the participants. This type of research seeks to answer the questions that stress the *how* social experience is created and given meaning. Qualitative research also seeks to bring to light the inner workings of an organization, which are not directly observable, and to do so, requires that researchers rely on subjective judgments (Hatch, 2002). This study focused on understanding the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama.

Qualitative research, which began as early as 1900, is designed to understand a process, describe poorly understood phenomena, understand differences between stated and implemented policies or theories, and discover unspecified contextual variables (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002). In essence, qualitative research is an inquiry approach that explores a central construct or phenomenon. This research process focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon by studying a small number of people or sites (Creswell, 2005). The process is inductive in nature, occurs in the natural setting, and is considered to be subjective and biased. As a result, qualitative studies take an in-depth look at multiple realities to determine the truth about a central phenomenon. The process involves focusing on participants' experiences by asking broad, general questions and allowing participants to describe their experiences. Participants accomplish this task by using words through interviews, or providing documents such as pictures, videos, and/or any other artifacts.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated that the future is concerned with moral discourse. The critical conversations of social sciences and humanities examine democracy, race, gender, freedom, and community. Researchers are now attempting to connect qualitative research with the "hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). As a qualitative scientist, the researcher studied the various processes of professional preparation implementation for alternative certified teachers in urban high schools. Conducting a qualitative study allowed the researcher to choose the sample that met certain criteria and developed relationships with participants to allow for very in-depth and descriptive data regarding the topic. The purpose was to get a true picture of the professional preparation process of

urban high school alternative certified teachers, including formal and informal mentoring practices, and the professional development strategies used to support these teachers. Conducting a qualitative study allowed the researcher to gather information from principals, third year alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers in order to get the true representation of urban high school alternative certified teachers' professional preparation.

<div align="center">Grounded Theory Design</div>

This qualitative research study employed a grounded theory design. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined grounded theory as deriving 'theory' from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. Creswell (2005) stated that grounded theory enables the researcher to generate a broad theory about the qualitative central phenomenon 'grounded' in the data. A primary goal of a grounded theory study is to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the central phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In grounded theory, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in close relationship to one another. A theory emerges from the data. Grounded theories offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a guide to action. The purpose of conducting a grounded theory study is to discover or develop a theory that relates to a particular situation in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005).

Grounded theory was originally developed in 1967 by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss (Hatch, 2002). This design was developed to provide a systematic and rigorous process of analyzing qualitative data. Since then, three grounded theory designs have been distinguished: 1) The Systematic Design – associated with

Strauss and Corbin (1998), 2) The Emerging Design – associated with Glaser (1992), and

The Contructivist Design – associated with Charmaz (2000). The systematic design

emphasizes the use of open, axial, and selective coding, to generate a theory that is

represented by a visual picture. The emerging design requires letting a theory emerge

from the data by constantly comparing categories to build a theory by providing an

explanation of the relationships that exist among categories. The constructivist design

focuses on the views, values, beliefs, and feelings of individuals in order to develop a

narrative that explains the emotions of the participants as they experience the

phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The researcher of this study implemented the systematic

research design of grounded theory that uses the strategic steps of open, axial and

selective coding in order to build and present a visual diagram of the theory grounded in

the data.

The role of the researcher, in grounded theory, is to build a substantive theory,

which is localized and deals with a real-world situation (Merriam, 2002). The researcher

is one of observer and interviewer in this tradition of qualitative inquiry. Therefore, it is

important for the researcher to exhibit objectivity and sensitivity. According to Strauss

and Corbin (1998), "Objectivity is necessary to arrive at an impartial and accurate

interpretation of events. Sensitivity is required to perceive the subtle nuances and

meanings in data to recognize the connections between concepts" (p. 42-43). The

researcher does not begin with a preconceived theory in mind. Instead, the researcher

begins the study and allows the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Theory that is actually derived from the data is more apt to represent the "realities" of the

participants. Strauss & Corbin (1998) stated, "a theory usually is more than a set of findings; it offers an explanation about the phenomena" (p. 22).

The development of the grounded theory involves a set of procedures: identifying categories, connecting the categories, and forming a theory that explains the process. This is accomplished in the process of data collection and analysis. Data are analyzed through the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2002). Constant comparison, as defined by Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987), is the process of comparing concept against concept. This process allows the researcher to identify patterns and similar experiences and label them as specific categories. In grounded theory, research questions reflect an interest in process and change over time, and the methods of analyzing data reflect a commitment to understanding the ways in which reality is socially constructed (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers was a process rather than an outcome. Therefore, it was best studied with a grounded theory approach that was aimed at answering the question, "How does the process work?" In this study, the researcher wanted to develop a theory, which was grounded in the data, of the actual processes that took place in the growth and development of alternative certified teachers during a three-year time span.

<div align="center">Philosophical Assumptions</div>

Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain 'world view' or a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide their inquiries (Creswell, 2007). The researcher of this grounded theory study demonstrated a viewpoint of constructivist philosophy. Constructivism is a philosophical foundation for qualitative research in

which all others are derived (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the researcher believed in absolute realities that were experientially-based and knowable to all (Hatch, 2002). The specific constructivist assumptions are related to ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (relationship of researcher to topic), axiology (role of values), and methodology (process of research) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The qualitative researcher believed that there were multiple constructed realities. This is known as ontology. Urban high school principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers' views of supporting and training alternative certified teachers may vary distinctly. Schools are different and have different profiles. What is reality for principals, alternative certified teachers, or mentor teachers may not be reality for others in the same positions. People have varying perceptions and perceptions are usually viewed as reality.

The qualitative researcher believed that knowledge is created through experiences. This is known as epistemology. Epistemology relates to how knowledge is created. In order to know something, you have to truly experience it. The principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers of this study all have experiences in working in urban high schools. Their experiences related to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers allowed them to have the knowledge to be active participants in this study. The researcher learned through her experiences as an urban middle school principal. This allowed the researcher to show empathy towards the participants. As a result, the researcher was able to develop close relationships that were expected to exist between researchers and participants in qualitative studies.

The researcher believed that inquiry is value bound for the most part (axiology). Inquiry has a little value based on presumptions. As scientists, researchers study aspects of lives in which we hold value. The premise is to study a topic and conduct research regarding a phenomenon in order to learn more and possibly improve upon it. There was a great possibility for many outcomes as it related to the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers. In order to learn more about the phenomenon, the researcher bracketed (set aside) all positive and negative experiences related to alternative certified teachers. As an urban middle school principal, the researcher was very passionate about this topic. The researcher believed that teacher preparatory programs were extremely important.

The researcher believed that there are inductive approaches to the natural research methods of data collection (methodology). The researcher began by developing interview protocols for each group of participants that incorporated general, broad, and open-ended questions. The researcher continued to follow the inductive approach by implementing open, axial, and selective coding to build a theory of the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. The theory that emerged was generated from data and was grounded in the views of the study participants.

<div align="center">Role of the Researcher</div>

"Any study (qualitative or quantitative) is only as good as the researcher" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 168). The quality of the study is depended upon the researcher's skills and effectiveness. This includes the ability to learn new methods, develop strategies, improve techniques, and develop skills as an observer and interviewer as stated

by Morse and Richards (2002). In qualitative research, the researcher has to be willing to be a continuous learner. The researcher employed all of these skills and characteristics in this study with the premise of learning more about the central phenomenon.

The process of bracketing during data analysis was conducted by the researcher. Bracketing, or removing ones biases, is also referred to as, *epoche*. *Epoche,* is defined by Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), as the process of setting aside all prejudgments and ideas. The researcher analyzed all data through bracketing, intuiting, and describing (Moustakas, 1984). In doing so, the researcher relied on the descriptive details given from the participants to describe what was real. Morse & Richards (2002) described bracketing as setting aside ones personal theories, prior knowledge, and experiences with the phenomenon in order to accurately report and describe it precisely as it is perceived from the participants' points of view.

The researcher of this study was an urban secondary school principal with a total of nine years of administrative experience, two as assistant principal and seven as principal. The researcher had many experiences with alternative teacher certification, both positive and negative, and was very passionate about this topic. As a result, the researcher had to bracket, those experiences and not include them as a part of the study. During this process, the researcher set aside all belief systems and biases related to this topic as much as possible. The researcher was open and receptive regarding the descriptions of all participants.

The researcher believed that teacher candidates who traveled the route of alternative certification into the field of education were expected to have a thorough knowledge of their subject areas. However, teaching students took more than an

adequate knowledge of subject matter. Teachers must be counselors, reporting agents for

the state in cases of abuse, disciplinarians, individuals skilled in making accommodations

for students with learning disabilities, curriculum writers, club advisors, athletic coaches,

and record keepers (Heller, 2004). Child psychology and the various stages of learning

are important factors that affect the overall educational growth of a child. Teachers

should be well aware of and equipped with the needed skills to implement a variety of

teaching strategies to reach kinesthetic, auditory, as well as visual learners.

Differentiated instruction and assessments are imperative to individualize instruction to

allow for students to learn and succeed at their own pace. The number of well-qualified,

certified teachers within the state is a consistent and significant predictor of student

achievement in math and reading on standardized tests. Furthermore, one of the best

predictors of low student performance in individual schools is the number of uncertified

teachers in the building (Stronge, 2002). Candidates from non-traditional programs do

not readily come equipped with the skills to handle the diversity of learning levels in

addition to teaching strategies and assessment methods. Alternative certified teachers are

essentially training on the job. In order to ensure that students receive the best quality

education, strong instructional leadership is needed to train, develop and grow non-

traditional teachers to become quality teachers. Therefore, the principal plays a major

role in leading, training and supporting members who are new to the field, in an academic

organization, especially when the members have no prior knowledge or background

experiences. The principal stands at the nexus of change, and many of the

responsibilities involved in solving the problems presented by teacher shortages will fall

to the principal. The principal must become the lead or principal teacher, not the manager, of a building (Heller, 2004).

The researcher has had to employ at least 17 alternative certified teachers during a five year time period. Some of the teachers have been effective. They learned quickly, and had a desire to be successful. Only three of the fifteen alternative certified teachers received tenure. One resigned. Six were non-renewed, and seven still remained in the current teaching assignment during the time of this study. The researcher believed in alternative teacher certification as a way to lure candidates into the field of education; however, a large number of these teachers are being placed in urban high school settings as a result of teacher shortages. Therefore, due to the large numbers, it is extremely difficult for principals to supply appropriate instructional leadership for their success.

The researcher had personal experiences related to supervising alternative certified teachers. This allowed the principal participants of this study to be more candid and open with her during interviews. The researcher concluded, based on their hesitation to respond to some questions, that it was difficult for alternative certified teachers and mentor teachers to disclose information to a principal. Therefore, the researcher had to build a rapport by focusing on her experiences as a teacher and former mentor teacher. This assisted the researcher in building trust. The researcher did not volunteer or disclose her experiences related to supervising alternative certified teachers to any of the other participants.

Theoretical Framework

Theories provide an explanation, a predication, and a generalization about how the world operates (Creswell, 2005). Strauss and Corbin (1998) described "theorizing" as

work that entails conceiving or intuiting ideas (concepts) as well as formulating them into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also provided a more precise definition as follows:

…theory denotes a set of well developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon. The statements of relationship explain who, what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences an event occurs. (p. 22)

However, in grounded theory, the researcher does not operate from a theoretical framework. Instead, a theory is generated from the data. In order to devise a theory associated with the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers in urban high schools, the researcher followed the steps of open, axial, and selected coding as presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The researcher explored the experiences of participants from five urban high schools as it related to the phenomenon. After all data was collected and analyzed from all participants, a substantive theory grounded in the views of participants was developed.

Sites and Participants

Site Descriptions

The sites for this study included five urban high schools in Central Alabama. For the purposes of this study, one county was selected. This county was comprised of both county and city school systems. The county school system had 11 high schools of which two schools were classified as urban, five schools were classified as rural, and four

schools were classified as suburban (ALSDE, 2007). The city school system consisted of 12 city school systems. Eleven of the 12 city systems had one high school. The other city system had eight high schools. Of the city school systems, fifteen high schools were classified as urban, and four high schools were classified as suburban (ALSDE, 2007).

The school sites were identified based on the following set of criteria: 1) Achievement of 100% Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the areas of Reading, Math, Test Participation, and Student Drop Out Rate on the Alabama High School Graduation Exam and 2) Employment of five or more third year alternative certified teachers as identified by each school principal. The school principal verified the academic status of each school. The researcher further verified the academic status of each participating school from the academic state report cards located on the Alabama State Department of Education's website (ALSDE, 2007).

The following section provides a detailed description of the urban high schools selected to be the focus of this study.

Site I. This school was located in a Southwest community of a large urban city in Central Alabama. The school had achieved 100% AYP for three consecutive years. Low income houses and apartments encompassed the school's campus. In addition, the community was also surrounded by railroad tracks. The school had a student population of 667. Students who walked to school crossed the tracks on a daily basis. The school employed 53 teachers. Approximately 86% of these teachers were African American, 10% Caucasian, and 4% other ethnic groups. Twelve teachers (22.64%) entered the profession as an alternative certified teacher. Ten of the 12 teachers were currently

working on alternative certification, and five of the 12 teachers were third year alternative certified teachers.

Site II. This School was located in an Eastern community of a small urban city in Central Alabama. It had improved from being in School Improvement Year 3 to achieving 100% AYP for two consecutive years. The school was surrounded by middle class housing and local businesses. The school had a student population of 1064. Most students who attended this school were bus riders. The school employed 72 teachers. Approximately 89% of these teachers were African American, 8% Caucasian, and 3% other ethnic groups. Twenty-two (30.5%) entered the profession as an alternative certified teacher. Seventeen of the 22 teachers were currently working on certification, and seven of the 22 teachers were third year alternative certified teachers.

Site III. This school was located in a Northern community of a large urban city in Central Alabama. It also improved from being in School Improvement Year 2 to achieving 100% AYP for three consecutive years. The school, which had been newly redesigned, sat majestically high on a hill. The school had a student population of 1257 students. Students who walked to school also had to cross railroad tracks. The school employed 79 teachers. Approximately 96% of these teachers were African American and 4% other ethnic groups. Twelve (15.18%) entered the profession as an alternative certified teacher. Nine were currently working on certification, and five were third year alternative certified teachers.

Site IV. This school was located in a Northeastern community of a large urban city in Central Alabama. It had achieved 100% AYP for three consecutive years. The school had a student population of 1407. It also employed 98 teachers. Approximately

83% of these teachers were African American, and 10% Caucasian. Fifteen (15.30%) entered the profession through alternative teacher certification. Twelve were currently working on certification, and seven were third year alternative certified teachers.

Site V. This school was located in a Southern central community of a large urban city in Central Alabama. It had achieved 100% AYP for two consecutive years. The school sat directly across from a low income housing project. The school had a student population of 986. It employed 73 teachers. Approximately 89% of the teachers were African American, 4% Caucasian, and 7% other ethnic groups. Eighteen (24.65%) entered the profession as an alternative certified teacher. Fourteen were currently working on certification, and five were third year alternative certified teachers.

Participants

The participants were identified through the use of 'theoretical sampling' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sampling is a type of purposeful sampling. Spradely (1979) defined purposeful sampling as selecting participants because of their characteristics and experience with the phenomenon of interest. Good informants (participants) are those who know the information required, are willing to reflect on the phenomena of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate in the research (Morse & Richards, 2002). Theoretical sampling implies gathering data based on the concepts of making comparisons. The purpose is to refer to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All participants in this study were selected for the contributions of their experiences related to the preparation process of alternative certified teachers. Theoretical sampling involved relying heavily on the interviews of

participants as a way to best capture the participants' own words. In theoretical

sampling, the researcher also chooses forms of data collection that will yield text and

images useful in generating a theory (Creswell, 2005).

Twenty-three individuals participated in this study. There were five principals, 13

third-year alternative certified teachers, and five mentor teachers. More specifically, the

participants included the following: one principal from each school site, three third year

alternative certified teachers from three school sites, two third year alternative certified

teachers from two school sites, and one mentor teacher from each school site. As a result

of the researcher's request, the principals of each school site selected successful third

year alternative certified teachers to participate in this study. The alternative certified

teachers helped to identify the mentor teachers. All principals, third year alternative

certified teachers, and mentor teachers at each school site were African American, as

reflected in the demographic composition of the urban high schools that participated in

this study.

Participants were selected based on a set of criteria: 1) for principals- having at

least three years experience at the same school, 2) for alternative Certified Teachers –

being in the third year at the same school, and 3) for mentor teachers – being tenured and

having worked with alternative certified teachers for three consecutive years by the time

of the research. The researcher had easy access to the sites as a result of gaining

permission from the gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are defined as individuals who can

provide entrance to a research site (Creswell, 2005). The gatekeepers in this study were

the principals of all school sites and the assistant superintendent of curriculum and

instruction for one school district.

The participants were recruited via a recruitment letter (See Appendix A). All individuals who were contacted agreed to participate in this study. Each participant was contacted by phone and/or e-mail. They received an overview of the study and a copy of the recruitment letter. Additionally, all participants signed consent forms prior to conducting the research (See Appendix B). Participants were e-mailed the interview protocol at least one week before interviews took place (See Appendix C).

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Procedures

Extensive data collection and analysis lasted for approximately seven months, and occurred during the months of June 2007 through December 2007. Interviews were used as the primary data source in this research study. In grounded theory, researchers rely heavily on interviews, because they allow the researcher to capture the descriptions of experiences in participants' own words (Creswell, 2005). The researcher conducts multiple interviews with the participants and returns to the informants as often as needed until all categories are saturated and a theory is developed (Hatch, 2002). In-depth face to face interviews were used to gather rich descriptions of the growth and development processes of first year alternative certified teachers. In grounded theory, the researcher is expected to conduct interviews with 20-30 participants to reach theoretical saturation. Saturation is defined as a point in which the researcher makes a subjective decision that more collection of data will not provide new information about the phenomenon under exploration (Creswell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The researcher interviewed principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers as a part of this study. Each of these groups were directly involved in the

process of preparing alternative certified teachers. Therefore, they provided valuable information from first hand experiences.

All interviews were conducted face to face in locations convenient for the participants. All principal interviews were conducted in the principal's office. Third year alternative certified teacher interviews were conducted in classrooms, libraries, and/or conference rooms at the school sites. Each interview lasted for 40 minutes to an hour. Follow up interviews were conducted with most of the participants to clarify the emergent categories and themes. Follow up interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview protocols consisted of 11–14 broad, open-ended questions. There were a total of three interview protocols, one for each group of participants (principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers). The interview protocols were used to capture the essence of the verbal descriptions of the participants (See Appendix C). The questions were developed as a result of information gathered from a prior research study of principals' perceptions of alternative certified teachers (Carpenter, 2006), personal experiences as an urban middle school principal, and conferences with alternative certified teachers. Probing questions were included to clarify and broaden the scope of the interview questions. Questions evolved as probing questions were asked and participants' perspectives emerged. Each interview was transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis. The interviews were also checked for accuracy by providing transcripts for the participants to review.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis began by the researcher recognizing and analyzing experiences with the phenomenon as an urban middle school principal who had many experiences with

alternative certified teachers. This process is explained in more detail in the Role of the Researcher section.

Data analysis in grounded theory uses the specific procedures of open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These coding procedures involve breaking down the data and putting it back together again in new ways. The first stage of open coding is the procedure of developing categories, or distinct segments of information regarding the specific phenomenon being studied. It involves identifying similarities and patterns and assigning words or phrases to represent them. In open coding, the categories or ideas about the phenomenon are assigned properties (characteristics) and dimensions (ranges) to capture the details about each category.

The second stage of axial coding is the process of interconnecting the categories that emerged at the open coding stage. Data is re-connected in new ways by relating a category and its subcategories, and drawing meanings from the connections. Typically, one open coding category is selected as the core phenomenon. The other categories are related to the core phenomenon category. These other categories include: 1) Causal Conditions: categories of conditions that influence the core category, 2) Context: the particular conditions that influence the strategies, 3) Intervening Conditions: the general contextual conditions that influence strategies, 4) Strategies: the particular actions or interactions that result from the core phenomenon, and 5) Consequences: the outcomes of using the strategies (Strauss & Corbin 1998). This axial coding model reflects the interrelationship among the categories and serves as a foundation for the grounded theory development.

The third stage of selective coding is the process of building a 'story' that connects the categories. In selective coding, the researcher writes a theory from the interrelationship of the categories developed at the axial coding stage (Creswell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The overall analytical process in this study involved the following steps: 1) Examining the text from interviews, 2) Developing categories and saturated each category with data, 3) Presenting sub categories (properties) on a continuum, 4) Developing a theoretical model and narrative to represent the theory, and 5) Writing propositions (hypotheses) that explicitly explained the relationships among categories in the axial coding model (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Throughout the research process, the researcher incorporated the zigzag process of data collection and analysis. In this process, the researcher collected initial data from each group of participants, analyzed it immediately, and then made decisions about what type of data to collect next (Creswell, 2005). The researcher went from text to analysis in a continuous reciprocating manner. This process helped the researcher to determine when saturation was reached.

The constant comparative method was used to allow the researcher to analyze data as it was collected. Creswell (2005) stated, "constant comparison is an inductive (from specific to broad) data analysis procedure in grounded theory research of generating and connecting categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories" (p. 406). The purpose of this process was to ground the categories in the data. All data was collected, and then immediately analyzed to develop categories. The purpose of this data collection

and analysis method was to collect data until no new themes or categories emerged. The researcher continued until no new information was found, which meant that saturation had been reached. The researcher used the QSR N6 software to organize, manage, and analyze the data.

<div align="center">Establishing Credibility</div>

Establishing credibility is important in order to control for biases and produce a well-grounded and supported study. Verification procedures were employed in this study to ensure that the study was accurate. The researcher used four separate verification procedures to make sure that the study was credible, trustworthy, and transferable of the qualitative findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Verification procedures employed were triangulation, member checks, peer review debriefing, and dissertation committee auditing.

The first procedure was triangulation, the process of obtaining corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Hatch, 2002). This was demonstrated in this study by conducting interviews with principals, third year alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers. Each group of participants gave descriptive interviews relating to their support systems, professional development, and teaching experiences. Analyzing the evidence from each group of participants allowed the researcher to more accurately develop a theory.

Secondly, member checking was conducted. Member checking is the process of taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. Member checking is considered to be the most critical technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All

participants received a copy of their transcripts to review for accuracy. This enabled the researcher to check to see if the participants conveyed their intended thoughts and feelings as it related to their experiences. By conducting member checks, the researcher was able to obtain feedback from each participant in order to gain a more accurate understanding of their thoughts and perceptions. Member checking also made it possible for the researcher to get more clarifications and explanations of meanings that derived from the data.

The third was peer review debriefing, the process of having an external check of the research process. The peer debriefer served as a "devils advocate" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202) by asking hard questions about the methodology, as well as interpretations, codes and themes. This was done by collaborating with another doctoral candidate who was completing a dissertation on a similar topic. Peer debriefing sessions were held by phone and e-mail in which discussions relating to the data were held.

The fourth was an external audit conducted by dissertation committee members. An external audit is the process of examining the processes and information found in the study for accuracy. This process was conducted primarily by the chairperson and the methodologist of the dissertation committee. The committee members examined the processes used in the study, as well as the results of the study, provided feedback, as well as closely monitored the process of the research (Creswell, 2005)

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the study, the researcher gained approval to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix D). Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study through the use of pseudonyms. The researcher provided a choice

to the participants of choosing their own pseudonym or having one given to them by the researcher. In addition, all data and materials related to the research were kept by the researcher in a locked safe. The information obtained in this study may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings. The audiotapes and transcriptions will be kept by the researcher and destroyed after three years. Race, gender, nor age, played a role in the selection of participants. Participation in this study was done purely on a voluntary basis. Participants were made aware of the details of the study, time involved, risks and discomforts, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, and rewards associated with this study through the use of an Informed Consent Letter (See Appendix B).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

A qualitative research design was chosen in order to obtain precise information through the development of close relationships between the researcher, participants, and the central phenomenon. The grounded theory systematic design was employed in order to explain the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers.

A total of five principals, 13 alternative certified teachers, and five mentor teachers were selected as participants. As a result of interviews being the primary data source of grounded theory research studies, all participants were interviewed in person, as well as participated in follow-up interviews for clarification of meanings. Afterwards, categories were developed through the use of open, axial, and selective coding. Four separate verification procedures were used to establish credibility. The researcher used triangulation, member checks, peer review debriefing, and external auditing. Dissertation

committee members conducted the external audits. Implementing these procedures

allowed for the researcher to control for biases and produced a well-grounded and study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings of this study represent the views and perspectives of all participants as it relates to the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. Combined, both counties in Central Alabama share a total of 12 urban high schools. This chapter will describe each group of participants from five selected high schools, the results from open, axial, and selective coding, the theory about the process of professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama that emerged from the data, and the theoretical propositions that developed as a result of the findings.

Context

The study took place in five urban high schools in Central Alabama. Each high school selected in this study had a total of five to seven third year alternative certified teachers employed in the areas of math, science, foreign language, and/or English. The high schools varied by population. The smallest housed 667 students, and largest housed 1407 students. The student population of each school was 100% minority. More specifically, approximately 96% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 1% other ethnic group represented the student body at each school site. In addition, approximately 87% of the students were eligible to receive free and reduced lunch at each school site. Each high school met all state standards and achieved 100% AYP on Alabama state

assessments. Each school accomplished this goal with a high number of alternative certified teachers.

<p style="text-align:center">Participants</p>

Principals

All five principals who participated in this study were male. Their ages ranged from 38 to 65 years of age. All had an earned Education Specialist (Ed. S.) degree in Educational Leadership. Two were currently working on a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) degree in Educational Leadership. The educational years of experience of the principals ranged from 13 years in education - with six years as a principal, to 45 years in education – with 30 years as a principal.

Chandler was a 39 year old African American male. He was presently working on a Ph. D. in Educational Leadership. Chandler had been in education for 17 years and had been a principal for 11 years. Chandler had also served as a high school teacher, an assistant principal, middle school principal, high school principal, and a Secondary Human Resource Coordinator. He had been the principal of his current school a total of six years. Chandler grew up in the inner - city and enjoyed various sporting activities. He was married with two children.

Mark was a 55 year old African American male. He had obtained an Ed. S. degree in Educational Leadership. Mark had been in education for 33 years and had been a principal for eight years. He had served as a high school teacher, high school coach, assistant principal for nine years, a middle school principal, and a high school principal. He had been the principal of his current school a total of six years. Mark grew up in the

same neighborhood in which he lived and worked. He was divorced and had one son who played professional basketball.

Sean was a 38 year old African American male. He had obtained an Ed. S. degree in Educational Leadership. Sean had been in education for 13 years and had been a principal for seven years. Sean had served as a middle school teacher, middle school assistant principal, middle school principal, and high school principal. He had been the principal of his current school a total of six years. Sean grew up in a rural setting. He was married with no children.

Smitty was a 39 year old African American male. He was presently working on a Ph. D. in Educational Leadership. Smitty had been in education for 15 years and had been a principal for six years. Smitty had served as a high school teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He had served at his current high school for eight years, with six of them as principal. Smitty grew up in a rural setting. He was married with two children.

Bo was a 65 year old African American male. He had an Ed. S. degree in Educational Leadership as well. Bo had been in education for 45 years and had been a principal for 30 years. He had served as a high school teacher, elementary principal, middle school principal, and high school principal. He had served as principal of his current high school for a total of six years. Bo also grew up in a rural setting. He was divorced with two children.

Third-Year Alternative Certified Teachers

Two male and eleven female alternative certified teachers participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 27 to 43 years of age. The alternative certified teachers

completed either one of two alternative teacher certification programs. The Alternative Baccalaureate Certification (ABC) allows a local board of education to employ teachers who have earned at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university in any field. The Special Alternative Certificate allows a local board of education to employ an individual who is in the process of completing requirements for a master's degree level professional educator certificate. This route is commonly referred to as the Alabama Fifth-Year Program. The alternative certified teacher participants entered the field of education through a variety of avenues. Some entered directly from college as former students with a change in college majors. Others entered as a career change opportunity. All third year alternative certified teacher participants indicated that teaching was a profession that they seriously contemplated while in school or working in their previous careers. Therefore, it was not surprising when they became teachers because it was a passion they all held.

Sonya was a 32 year old African American female. She was the single mother of a 7 year old son. Sonya had been a data entry clerk before coming into the field of education by way of substitute teaching. In addition, she held down a part-time job at Burlington Coat Factory. Sonya majored in nursing while in college. However, she found that she was not comfortable with certain aspects of that field. Nevertheless, she continued to major in biology, but her desire to be a nurse had faded. Sonya needed to add another class to her schedule in order to keep her financial aid. She chose Reading In the Content Area as the extra class. That sparked her interest in teaching. After receiving a B.S. in Biology, she began substitute teaching. Shortly after, she enrolled in

an alternative teacher certification program. Sonya was currently working on a Master's in Biology Education through the Alabama Fifth Year Program. She taught Science.

Rod was a 32 year old African American male. He was single with no children. Rod was a graduate student who had just quit a job as a bank teller. He was working on a Master's in Biology. He had ambitions of going to medical school. While waiting on an acceptance to medical school, a friend recruited him into the field of teaching. His friend often bragged about the great experiences she had as a classroom teacher. She was also alternatively certified. She convinced him to try teaching as a career. Teaching was something that he always thought about as a result of his grandmother, mother, and aunt being educators. He applied for a job and enrolled in an alternative certification program. Rod's situation was unique. He completed the ABC in Math in order to get teaching credentials and was currently working on completing the Fifth Year alternative certification program in Biology in order to get his Master's degree. He experienced problems receiving his certification from the Alabama State Department of Education because his principal moved him from teaching science to teaching math. One of the requirements for certification was that he had to complete three years teaching the same subject. That was why he had to complete two different programs in two different subjects. He taught Math and Science.

Katy was a 38 year old African American female. She was married with two sons, ages five and 20. She had been an executive assistant to the executive director of a small business firm. During that time she volunteered her time with youth groups at her church and athletic programs at her son's school. Katy was also a volleyball coach for the school system before she became fully certified to teach. She wanted to become a

teacher in order to allow her to spend more time with her youngest child and family. Also, as a result of volunteering with youth programs, she realized she loved working with young adults. Therefore, she began her path to the career of teaching. Katy graduated from college with a B.S. in Accounting. However, she did not have enough math classes to qualify for her certification. As a result, she had to enroll in more undergraduate mathematics courses. Afterwards, she began her work in completing the Alabama Fifth Year alternative certification program in Math Education. She taught Math.

Betty was a 27 year old African American female. She was a single mother of two boys. Betty had been a student prior to entering the field of education. Betty graduated from college with a B.S in Math. She had intentions on attending graduate school. Her plans were postponed when she had a baby. Teaching was her next option. Betty had a sister-in-law who was a high school teacher. She encouraged her to become a teacher. Betty applied for a job and enrolled in the ABC program to become certified in Math. Afterwards, she enrolled in the Alabama Fifth Year alternative certification program. Betty was currently completing her Master's degree in Math while teaching Geometry and Calculus.

Alyah was a 38 year old African American female. She was a divorced mother of two. Alyah had worked several years as a para - educator in the private school sector. It was during that time that she developed a love of teaching. She decided to become a teacher because of her love of working with young adults, as well as wanting to give back to the community. Alyah graduated college with a degree in Spanish. She spoke fluent Spanish. She applied for a job teaching foreign language and entered the Alabama Fifth

Year alternative certification program to become certified to teach Spanish. Her goal was to join her two passions – speaking Spanish and working with young adults. Alyah teaches Spanish to high school students.

Michelle was a 30 year old African American female who liked to write, sing, and dance. She was single with no children. However, she had custody of her teenage brother. Michelle worked as the manager of a Wal-Mart before entering the field of education. While working at Wal-Mart, she worked with youth groups by volunteering her time to sponsor church and recreation center Step Teams in the inner-city. During that time she found that a lot of the teenagers were experiencing problems in school. In addition, her brother was also experiencing problems in school. As a result, she became interested in becoming a teacher. Michelle graduated college with a B.S. in English. Because of her desire to become a teacher, she entered the Alabama Fifth Year alternative certification program before actually being officially hired. During the process of obtaining teacher certification, she obtained a job as a high school English teacher.

Latisha was a 43 year old African American female who liked to read, swim, and skate. She was married with three children. Latisha worked as a medical technologist in a medical laboratory before entering the field of education. That job required her to move from conducting lab work to teaching adults who were on the tract of becoming medical technologists as well. Latisha's thoughts were that since she was teaching adults, she might as well teach young adults in a high school setting. She felt that way because she had a long term goal of one day becoming a teacher. Latisha graduated with a B.S. in Biology. She received a job teaching high school Biology and Environmental

Science. While working, Latisha entered the ABC alternative certification program. She uses her real life experiences of work in the medical field to teach high school students.

Charles was a 40 year old African American male who liked to be involved in sports. He was married with one daughter. Charles worked as a chemical engineer in California for eight years before entering the field of education. As a result of moving to Alabama, which had a significantly lower cost of living, he decided to fulfill his long - term goal of becoming a teacher. Charles graduated from college with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering. He received a job teaching ninth grade math. While working, Charles entered the ABC alternative certification program. He was ecstatic to be able to use his personal work experiences to prepare high school students for the real world of work.

Allison was a 33 year old African American female who liked to read and write children's stories. She was married with two little girls. Allison worked as a journalist for a newspaper before entering the field of education. She grew tired of that career and applied for a teaching job as she felt that teaching was her first passion. Allison graduated from college with a B.S. in English. She received a job teaching high school English. While working, Allison entered an ABC alternative certification program. She was overjoyed to be able to share her experiences as a journalist in her high school speech and creative writing classes.

Connie was a 41 year old African American female who enjoyed traveling to different countries. She was a divorced mother of two sons. Connie worked in an accounting firm before entering the field of education. She was not happy in that career and decided to become a teacher. Connie graduated from college with a degree in

mathematics. She applied for a teaching job. While teaching high school calculus, she entered an Alabama Fifth Year alternative teacher certification program. She was extremely happy and motivated by her career change.

Mattie was a 43 year old African American female who enjoyed running and working out in the gym. She was a divorced mother of one teenage son. Mattie worked as a loan officer in a bank before entering the field of education. She decided to make a career change after enduring a difficult divorce. As a result, she decided to become a teacher.   Mattie's mother was a retired teacher as well. Mattie graduated from college with a degree in Business and Accounting. She applied for a teaching job. While teaching high school math, she entered the Alabama Fifth Year alternative teacher certification program. She was delighted about her career change.

Melissa was a 29 year old African American female who enjoyed singing. She often sang in jazz clubs and at weddings on weekends. She was a single mother of a three year old daughter. Melissa was a former student who tried to break in the entertainment business with her talents of singing and acting before entering the field of education. She graduated from college with a degree in Theatre Arts. Melissa became frustrated with the unstable job market in the entertainment field and decided to become a teacher. She always enjoyed volunteering at the local recreation center introducing children to theatre and the arts. She applied for a job in the drama department at high school. While teaching drama, she entered the Alabama Fifth Year alternative teacher certification program. She enjoyed putting on productions with high school students.

Cheree was a 33 year old African American female who enjoyed baking cakes. She wanted to start her own bakery business one day after she retired from teaching. She

was married with one son. Cheree was in the military before she decided to enter the field of teaching through the Troops to Teachers alternative certification program. Her specialty was environmental science. While in the Army, she earned a degree in Science. After serving 10 years of full duty in the Army, she decided to become a teacher. Cheree entered the Alabama Fifth Year alternative teacher certification program while teaching environmental science to high school students.

Mentor Teachers

One male and four female mentor teachers participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 33 to 41 years of age. Their years of teaching experiences ranged from seven to 13 years of experience. All mentors had at least a minimum of three years of mentor experience. Two of the mentor teachers entered the field of education as alternative certified teachers. All of the mentor teachers mentored a minimum of three new teachers per year.

Carter was a 33 year old African American male. He considered himself to be outgoing and fun loving. Carter was single with no children. He had a total of 10 years of teaching experience. Five of those years were spent teaching Biology and five were spent teaching Chemistry. He was currently a high school Biology teacher, as well as the Department Chair of the Science Department. Carter's highest degree was an Ed. S. in Educational Leadership. He had an interest in becoming a high school administrator. He entered the teaching profession as an alternative certified teacher as well. He mentored a total of two teachers.

Paula was a 33 year old African American female. She enjoyed spending quiet days in the park with her son. Paula was a single mother of a little boy. She had a total

of seven years of teaching experience as a high school science teacher. Paula was the Team Leader of the Ninth Grade Academy. Her highest degree was a Master's degree in School and Agency Counseling. She was currently working on an Ed. S. in Counseling. Paula had a strong desire to be a middle school counselor. Paula also entered the teaching profession as an alternative certified teacher. She mentored a total of three teachers.

Monica was a 41 year old African American female. She considered herself to be very well grounded. Monica was married with three children. She had 12 years of teaching experience. She was the Department Chair of the Math Department. Monica's highest degree was a Master's in Math. She mentored a total of three teachers.

Cheryl was a 35 year old African American female. She was single with no children. Cheryl really liked her job and loved providing professional development for teachers. Cheryl was the Department Chair of the English Department. She had a strong interest in becoming a Professional Development Coordinator. Paula's highest degree was a Master's in Secondary Language Arts. She was currently working on an Ed. S. in Educational Leadership. She mentored three teachers.

Alice was a 34 year old African American female. She was married with two small girls. Alice was the Department Chair of the English Department. She volunteered as a drama coach in her school. Alice's highest degree was a Master's in Secondary Language Arts. She also mentored a total of three teachers.

Coding Results

Open Coding

After transcribing interviews verbatim, the researcher conducted the data analysis using the specific procedures of open coding. The following 11 categories were identified through the open coding process: 1) Need for Preparation, 2) Teaching as a Career, 3) Principal Expectations, 4) Support Roles, 5) Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 6) Enabling Qualities of Participants, 7) Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 8) Duties and Responsibilities, 9) Interpersonal Interactions, 10) Developmental Strategies, and 11) Alternative Certified Teacher Professional Growth. These categories represent different aspects of the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. Each category is described as having properties and dimensions. Properties are defined as the specific characteristics of each category that gives its meaning. Dimensions provides the description if the value range of properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Figure 1 shows the identified categories, dimensions and properties as they related to the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama.

Figure 1: Open coding categories

Categories	Properties	Dimensions
Need for Preparation	Views and perceptions of principals and mentors relating to number of ACT's/training/ disadvantages of ACT Programs	High
Teaching as a Career	Concepts of principals, ACT's, and mentors relating to teaching as a career	Strong to moderate
Principal Expectations	Principal expectations of teachers and mentors	High
Support Roles	Roles in providing mentoring, training, and professional development development	High to moderate
Barriers to ACT Development	Principals, ACT's, and mentors views related to deficits of first year teachers and time management struggles	High
Enabling Qualities of Participants	Positive qualities of principals, ACT's, and mentors	Positive
Causes and Phases of ACT Development	Reasons and time frames of ACT Growth	High to low
Duties and Responsibilities	Specific duties of principals, mentors, other faculty members, and central office personnel related to ACT preparation	Positive
Interpersonal Interactions	Interactions related to ACT development: ACT's-students/ principals- ACT's/and Mentor-ACT's	Positive
Development Strategies	Programs and activities that relate to ACT development: Mentoring, professional development, and school climate	Positive
ACT Growth	Effects of mentoring, school culture and professional development	Positive

The following section provides a detailed description of each category listed in the open coding paradigm model. Each group of participants' thoughts and ideas as it relates to the preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers of Central Alabama will be presented.

Need for Preparation. This category included the attitudes and opinions of all participants regarding the phenomenon of the professional process of alternative teacher certification. Their thoughts referenced the high number of alternative certified teachers in schools, their training, as well as the disadvantages of alternative teacher certification programs.

The principals and mentor teachers expressed their thoughts as it related to the high number of alternative certified teachers in their schools. At the time of the study, the total number of alternative certified teachers working on certification in each high school ranged from five to 17. The number of third year alternative certified teachers on each campus ranged from five to seven. When totaling the entire number of teachers who entered the profession through alternative certification on each high school campus, the numbers ranged from 12 to 22. Chandler, a high school principal, indicated that the number of alternative certified teachers on his campus was very high. He stated, "At one point I calculated approximately 70% of the teachers in that particular school were alternatively certified." He believed the high percentage of teachers with limited to no training before entering the classroom was a direct indicator of the school's past academic failures. Monica, a mentor teacher, supported Chandler's point, "It is very difficult to provide mentoring experiences to all of the new teachers. Each year, I have to mentor at least three new teachers." The mentor teachers believed that all new teachers

would receive better training if the mentor teachers could provide mentor services to only one new teacher at a time. The general consensus of the principals and mentor teachers was that they would rather have experienced persons who had completed a traditional education program than alternative certified teachers. Both groups indicated that it was not good to have so many inexperienced teachers, especially in the era of high stakes testing.

The principals and mentor teachers viewed "on the job training" as having negative affects on teaching and learning for first year alternative certified teachers. They believed that on the job training allowed for too many crucial mistakes that affect learning. Paula, a mentor teacher indicated, "It is extremely difficult for new teachers when they are learning on the job. They can not focus on student achievement when they are learning themselves." There was a general consensus among principals and mentor teachers that student achievement declined among students who were taught by first year alternative certified teachers. Bo, a high school principal, stated, "…it is like asking a surgeon to do surgery and he has never done surgery without going through the full course and knowing what tools to use. I just can't afford to take a chance with that teacher being ineffective." Principals and mentor teachers felt that there was a need to ease alternative certified teachers' transition into the classroom and not allow their inexperience to adversely affect teaching and learning.

Both principal and alternative certified teacher participants believed that there were some disadvantages of entering the teaching field through alternative teacher certification programs. Both groups of participants expressed distinct perspectives regarding the timeline for completing course work, and lack of alternative certified

teacher preparedness, which were viewed as disadvantages of alternative teacher certification programs.

The timeline for completing course work was viewed as a disadvantage of alternative teacher certification by principals. This is a direct opposite viewpoint of the alternative certified teachers who listed this as an advantage to the programs. The principals felt that alternative certified teachers did not understand the timeline or the importance of completing required course work for certification. Bo stated, "You can tell the ones who haven't had classes. You can tell the ones who just started, that just signed up for the program." The principals indicated that the alternative certified teachers did not make good use of their time. They felt that the alternative certified teachers disregarded the three year time span allotted to complete certification.

The alternative certified teachers also believed there to be some disadvantages of alternative teacher certification programs as a result of entering classrooms without obtaining certain knowledge or concepts. The alternative certified teachers admitted to having trouble with lesson planning, classroom management, and various other instructional tasks associated with teaching. Betty, an alternative certified teacher, stated, "I'm sure they take classroom management classes, classes like lesson planning, which I had never written or seen. Bulletin boards … is an issue…making them look good." The teachers felt that not knowing some things and not having the educational background was a disadvantage.

Teaching as a Career. This category included the general concepts of all participants as it related to teaching. It was interesting to find that all principals believed

teaching to be more of an art than science. For example, Mark, a high school principal insisted,

> Teachers are born…I do feel that teachers can be trained and a lot of them can do very outstanding jobs…I would say it has to be an in born type of thing, and then a certain part of training would have to come with it to make certain type teachers be great."

Three of the five mentor teachers also believed that the profession of teaching required a type of spiritual calling. Carter, a mentor teacher, expressed, "Teachers have to be innately nurturing, dedicated, determined, and compassionate." The mentor teachers indicated that the best teachers were those who truly believed that they were born to be teachers. They wanted teachers to be loyal to the profession. Alice, a mentor teacher, stated, "The most successful new teachers are the ones who are determined and self-motivated. They are extremely dedicated and have a sincere passion for the job." The mentor teachers believed that the thought of teaching as an easy career was too common among many people who wanted to enter the teaching field. Therefore, they believed that the new teachers who endured and became successful had a special gift of teaching and nurturing children.

The third year alternative certified teachers also displayed strong opinions relating to their concept of teaching as a career. Teaching was always the ultimate goal of the alternative certified teachers in this study. This supported the principals' viewpoint that teaching was more of an art than science. The entire group of alternative certified teachers originally wanted to become teachers. The interviews revealed that initially they had to choose other careers based on life circumstances. They originally chose those careers to

make more money, to please family members, or because they felt it to be the right thing to do. Nevertheless, they were not fully happy or satisfied with their first career choice and eventually decided to become teachers. They also admitted to having a rewarding experience as teachers.

Principal Expectations. This category included the principal expectations that were considered to be determinant factors closely related to the preparation and training of alternative certified teachers. Third year alternative certified teachers and mentor teachers indicated that their principals had extremely high expectations for all of the teachers in their buildings. Melissa, an alternative certified teacher explained, "My principal does not make distinctions between alternative and traditional certified teachers. He expects the very best from all of us. No excuses-new or not." Excellence was expected of all teachers by the principals in this study. The principals stated that they could not afford to hold alternative certified teachers to lower standards simply because they were new to the profession. This expectation was consistently communicated to all alternative certified teachers during the year.

Alternative certified teachers and mentor teachers also explained that principals held high expectations of teachers as it related to participating in job embedded professional development. Alice, a mentor teacher, said, "In our school, professional development is a high priority. My principal develops professional development plans for every department in the building. We are striving to become a professional learning community." Both groups of participants also expressed that principals believed in providing quality professional development sessions that addressed the needs of the school. Principals used their School Improvement Plans and the overall weaknesses of

the Professional Employee Personnel Evaluation (PEPE) to determine the school needs.

Some of the weaknesses the principals admitted to addressing in their schools were

differential learning as well as formal and informal assessments. Their professional

development plans were based on these factors. The principals believed that only quality

professional development programs would address their needs. They also realized that it

was their responsibilities to inform teachers of professional development opportunities.

Support Roles. This category included the ideas of what all participants believed

to be the overall support roles in preparing and training alternative certified teachers.

They all agreed that proper support and training were vital to the success of alternative

certified teachers. Each principal in this study insisted that having a mentor was a great

source of support for alternative certified teachers. However, four out of five principals

admitted to not having formal mentoring and induction programs in their schools.

Instead, the principals of these schools paired new teachers with one or more veteran

teachers and that was the only mentoring activity. Smitty, a high school principal,

explained,

> I know I should invest more time in implementing a full mentoring and induction
>
> program. Veteran teachers need extensive training on how to be mentors. I just
>
> don't have the time or adequate resources to implement a full mentoring and
>
> induction program. I have been soliciting help from the Board.

The principals of this study indicated that alternative certified teachers could succeed,

despite their inexperience and lack of training. The principals believed that it required a

team effort, which included principals, mentor teachers, as well as central office

personnel to ensure the success of alternative certified teachers.

The alternative certified teachers also viewed themselves as needing additional support when reflecting back to their first years of teaching. They all admitted that the first year of teaching was extremely hard. Seven of them made references to thinking of quitting during the first year of teaching. Michelle said, "I almost quit after the first month of teaching. I just felt so lost and out of place. Luckily, an older teacher came to my rescue. She talked and worked with me through my fears." The alternative certified teachers wanted effective teachers to mentor them. They wanted teachers who were friendly and easy to work with. The alternative certified teachers wanted a mentor who would give them good advice in every situation. It emerged that alternative certified teachers believed that having a secure support system was vital to their success and longevity in the teaching field.

The mentor teacher participants also believed that alternative certified teachers could be extremely successful with the right support systems in place. The mentors emphasized the idea of effectively using their principals and central office personnel to provide additional support for new teachers. They, themselves, wanted to be considered as a liaison between the principals and the alternative certified teachers. It emerged that mentor teachers did not distinguish between alternative and traditional certified teachers. They viewed all new teachers the same, with the exception of one difference. The difference related to the extra time needed to foster growth with the alternative certified teachers. For instance, Monica, a mentor teacher, admitted, "I do know we have a numerous amount of alternative certified teachers. But, I don't make a difference in them. All new teachers need work. They essentially all need the same things. The ACT's just need more of it." All mentor teachers expressed the need to spend additional

time with alternative certified teachers, even though they shared the same needs as all new teachers.

Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development. This category included what all participants indicated as negative factors and/or frustrations related to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. The negative factors related to skill deficits of first year alternative certified teachers and time management struggles.

The principals indicated that first year alternative certified teachers needed a lot of skills to be proficient in the classrooms. They believed that alternative certified teachers needed a basic understanding of child development, teaching strategies, classroom management, and effective instruction methodology before entering the classroom. Smitty observed,

> They are truly 'green'. They don't know how to set up the labs, the stations for
> the kids to go from station to station to work. They don't know about
> individualized instruction. They don't know about special education students and
> IEP's. So, you know those are things that they have to learn on the job.

In addition, mentor teachers believed that first year alternative certified teachers needed interpersonal skills, and curriculum assistance. The mentor teachers believed that first year alternative certified teachers needed to know how to tactfully deal with parents, students, and other teachers. Alice, a mentor teacher explained, "I remember sitting in the first parent conference of an ACT. They were so negative throughout the conference. The parent was becoming defensive. I had to take over." Many of the mentor teachers stated that they had to train alternative certified teachers how to begin and end conferences by saying positive things about students. Curriculum assistance was another

area in which mentor teachers felt alternative certified teachers needed training. Although they knew their subject matter, mentors stated that they needed training on how to sequence goals and objectives. The mentors stated that the alternative certified teachers wanted to start from page one in the textbook and proceed sequentially. Sonya recalled,

> I had to really work with the alternative certified teachers to teach them how to use the pacing guides, and Alabama Course of Study to decide what they needed to teach. They seemed to be blown away that we did not rely solely on the textbook for teaching.

Both principal and mentor teacher participants believed that of alternative certified teachers needed assistance with transitioning into education.

Alternative certified teachers recognized their own weaknesses as first year teachers. The teachers admitted that the obstacles they experienced resulted from not being prepared for students and not having the proper backgrounds to implement teaching strategies that were expected of effective teachers. Rod, admitted to having a difficult time with classroom management. He stated, "I had a hard time controlling the students. I guess they could sense the newness in me. That was extremely frustrating to me." Other alternative certified teachers revealed that delivering lessons was a barrier for them as well during the first year. Planning for 90 minutes was very hard for them. It was hard to keep students engaged for the entire class period, especially without any prior practice or experience. The alternative certified teachers revealed that they lacked knowledge in delivery of instruction. They did not think they were well prepared to enter the classroom during their first year of teaching.

Time management issues were also listed as a barrier to alternative certified teacher preparation. The principals shared that good instructional leaders take time out to work with teachers, especially struggling teachers. Alternative certified teachers were viewed as struggling teachers, especially during their first year of teaching. The principal participants expressed the difficulty finding adequate time to nurture these teachers amidst the various other duties they were expected to perform, which were equally as important. Chandler stated,

> It is very, very time consuming working with these individuals. It becomes really frustrating when you have to develop and nurture more than three at a time. I have nine alternative certified teachers on my staff with four of them being first year. It is very taxing making sure they receive the proper guidance and leadership to develop as great teachers.

The principals stated that conducting walk-throughs, meeting individually with teachers, conducting PEPE's, meeting with mentors, providing feedback, researching best practices, and finding appropriate workshops for alternative certified teachers to attend took a lot of preparation and time.

The mentors, as well as alternative certified teachers expressed their concern with time management. Mentor teachers found it to be very difficult to manage their time and responsibilities while mentoring alternative certified teachers. Cheryl stated, "It is extremely difficult. You have to really manage time. Time management is a huge issue with juggling your regular teaching duties, extracurricular duties, and mentor duties." Alternative certified teachers' issues dealt with working while attending school. The alternative certified teachers stated that having to perform the rigorous responsibilities of

being a teacher during the day and attending classes during the evening didn't allow many opportunities to attend professional development sessions that were needed in order to become qualified instructors. The alternative certified teachers stated that one of the main frustrations was trying to balance school, teaching, and family life. Balancing those things during the first year of teaching was very frustrating for alternative certified teachers. Eight of the alternative certified teachers indicated having to study for tests while working as one of their most frustrating experiences. They admitted to taking off work in order to prepare for tests. The alternative certified teachers shared that working towards certification took a lot of hard work and sacrifice.

Enabling Qualities of Participants. This category included the qualities of principals, mentor teachers, and alternative certified teachers that were viewed as important to the preparation process of these teachers. The principals' most prominent qualities included being innovative, patient, and personable. According to all participants, principals who supervised alternative certified teachers had to be innovative in supervisory practices and finding resources to assist teachers. All principals believed that alternative certified teachers needed more time, assistance, feedback, and resources. The data revealed that principals often conducted classroom walkthroughs, as well as provided immediate feedback, extensive training in curriculum, and ways to identify student weaknesses. The principals also indicated that they had to be very creative with scheduling. Principals searched for as many resources as possible to assist alternative certified teachers in every aspect of the job. Both alternative certified teachers and mentors expressed that principals had to be extremely patient when supervising alternative certified teachers. As an alternative certified teacher, Allison expressed her

appreciation for her principal's patience. She declared, "I just love my principal. He does not get angry when you make mistakes. He calls you into his office, lets you know what you did wrong, and he sits to problem solve with you. We work it out together." All participants recognized that it took strong efforts to be patient during the growing process of alternative certified teachers.

All participants believed that alternative certified teachers needed their principals to be personable with them. Participants expressed that these teachers seemed to do better when they believed in their supervisors' trustworthiness, abilities, and skills. Principals, mentor teachers, and alternative certified teachers believed that trust was garnered mostly as a result of being personable. The mentor teachers believed that simply trying to build relationships with alternative certified teachers lead to trust. Paula commented, "I love it when the principal takes a personal interest in new teachers. At first the new teachers are so afraid of them. When relationships are built, it makes it easier for everyone involved." The participants viewed building trust as important for whatever corrective actions or suggestions that had to be made along the way.

Principals and alternative certified teachers wanted their mentor teachers to possess certain professional qualities. They believed that mentor teachers should be flexible, knowledgeable, as well as patient and kind. The principals revealed that when pairing new teachers with mentor teachers first and foremost they looked for people who were willing to give of their time. It was extremely important to have mentor teachers who were genuinely interested in the success of all new teachers. Principals and alternative certified teachers also wanted mentor teachers to be knowledgeable not only in content areas, but in every aspect of school operations. As an alternative certified

teacher, Sonya indicated, "I needed someone who could assist me in things that I needed to do outside of the classroom. I knew my subject matter, but I needed help with the paper work and other things my principal asked of me." The principals and alternative certified teachers also wanted to work with mentor teachers who were patient and kind.

Even though alternative certified teachers lacked classroom experience, all participants believed they had other qualities that were needed to develop successful teachers. It was believed that what successful alternative certified teachers lacked in experience, they made up for in passion and conviction. For example, alternative certified teachers really wanted the students to learn. Katy said, "I feel even the worse student can learn. It is a matter of finding the way that they learn and helping them in that way." Katy and the other teachers believed that there was a way for all students to master skills and concepts. They viewed their job as finding ways to get the students to learn. In order to do that, the alternative certified teachers believed that they first had to know the students. They felt this to be especially true of urban students as a result of their extenuating circumstances. Connie stated,

> You have to really get to know the children. Once you get past the story, then you can get to the child. You know…of course we are here to teach, but teaching and caring go hand in hand. So, you can't deal with the academics if you can't handle the person.

The principals viewed it as their jobs to screen and filter through the undesirable candidates in order to choose the best people. They looked for character traits in teaching candidates that they deemed as requirements for successful teachers. The principals used the professional qualities of the successful alternative certified teachers in their schools as

a guide. They believed that with the desired amount of positive character traits, the alternative certified teachers would become the best teachers with proper support and training.

Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development. This category included what all participants determined as reasons and levels of alternative certified teacher development. Professional development was rated the highest reason for alternative certified teacher growth. This was the common activity that contributed most to the components of alternative certified teacher development.

The participants believed that professional development was an absolute necessity that produced quality alternative certified teachers. As a principal, Smitty stated, "They generally grow by going to workshops that we send them to and talking to other teachers." Professional development gave alternative certified teachers insights and understandings about tangible things that could actually be implemented in classrooms. It allowed alternative certified teachers opportunities to receive hands-on instruction on how to implement various teaching techniques. The principals were very resourceful in providing professional development for alternative certified teachers. They used innovative ways for teachers to see quality teaching inside and outside of their schools. Sean stated, "One thing that I've done, is that I've used some of my colleagues. I have asked other principals if my teachers could observe teachers in their buildings who do an outstanding job." The principals oftentimes allowed alternative certified teachers to visit other schools to see different strategies related to increasing student achievement, using student data, and infusing technology into the curriculum. The mentor teachers gave insight to their role in providing professional development. Cheryl, a mentor teacher

stated, "As a mentor teacher, I consider myself as a coach. I model lessons, provide training sessions of different strategies, and hold monthly professional development on different topics for new teachers." The alternative certified teachers were very enthusiastic about their professional development sessions. As an example, Latisha stated,

> We had opportunities to go to workshops dealing with stress, classroom management…of course data driven instruction, best practices and teaching, and cross curriculum planning. I loved to go to these workshops. I used whatever they were doing in my classroom. That is where I truly began to learn how to teach.

Principals also encouraged alternative certified teachers to join the professional organizations of their specific subject areas. Principals, mentors, and alternative certified teachers found professional organizations to be excellent avenues for resources and professional development opportunities. They believed that if alternative certified teachers did not receive professional development to address their weaknesses, they were going to experience problems during the most crucial time of their teaching careers.

Duties and Responsibilities. This category included what principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers considered as their duties and responsibilities needed for the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. The data revealed that there were specific duties and responsibilities of school principals, mentor teachers, other faculty members, as well as their school districts related to addressing the needs of alternative certified teachers.

Principal participants considered providing professional development as their most important duty and responsibility in addressing the specific needs of alternative

certified teachers. The principals stated that their roles were to implement strategic planning processes of professional development. This included setting up the committees and establishing the organizational routines of the professional development processes.

The principals also believed in providing in-house, job embedded professional development. In order to accomplish this, the principals used Title I or Professional Development funds to bring in substitute teachers, order books, or pay for consultants to come in and work with teachers. In one school 20% of its Title I funds was specifically devoted to professional development. The principals of non-Title I schools stated that they voted to keep Professional Development funds at the school site instead of sending it back to the system for district –wide use.

In addition, the principals developed detailed professional development plans in order to meet the needs of teachers. They realized that alternative certified teachers each had their specific strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the teachers had to have their individual needs met in order to quickly grow into strong teachers. Chandler stated, "Just like we provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students, I had to provide differentiated professional development to meet the needs of ACT's. We have to take them from where they are to where they need to be." The principals provided recommendations to alternative certified teachers about their professional development. They constructed individual professional development plans for each alternative certified teacher based on their weaknesses and strongly encouraged them to attend.

The mentor teachers shared their views of performing important duties and responsibilities related to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. They believed that their duties and responsibilities included sharing experiences as

professional educators as well as sharing the various things they learned through experience. In addition, mentor teachers also indicated that they encouraged and motivated the alternative certified teachers. Alice stated, "I think providing them with opportunities to have a confidant to talk with about things they are go through without actually having to talk to the administrator was extremely necessary." The mentor teachers felt it important to let alternative certified teachers know that it was actually possible to be successful urban high school teachers. They considered themselves to be valuable in assisting new teachers with accessing resources and other important information within the school. Some of their formal duties included assisting alternative certified teachers with lesson planning, observing classes, and modeling lessons for alternative certified teachers. The mentors believed those duties were important.

Interpersonal Interactions.   This category included the most prevalent relationships that emerged from the data. Those relationships included the interactions between alternative certified teachers and students, principals and alternative certified teachers, as well as mentors and alternative certified teachers.

The most important relationship, as gathered from the interviews, involved alternative certified teacher and students. Those were considered the most important relationships because they had a direct impact on student achievement. Student achievement often remained at a standstill or digressed as a result of first year alternative certified teachers' lack of experience with delivery of content knowledge. However, all principals indicated that student academic scores improved significantly during the alternative certified teachers' second and third years of teaching. The alternative certified teachers credited the growth to better preparation and knowing all teaching expectations.

As a principal, Mark shared, "We had about four students who took AP science from a third year alternative certified teacher. Those kids actually scored III's and IV's during her 2nd year. No one scored a level III or above during her first year." The principals deemed it important for teachers to try to recognize the unique characteristics of their students. This necessity was needed in order to develop proper relationships to teach the students at their individual academic levels. The principals thought it to be extremely important for alternative certified teachers to develop positive relationships with students in order to increase student achievement.

The alternative certified teachers viewed developing their relationships with students as important aspects of their teaching jobs. The teachers believed that in order to be able to reach the students, they had to really get to know the students. Monica stated, "Children don't care about how much you know until they find out how much you care." Monica believed the students became more receptive towards her as a teacher once she made an effort to learn more about them, find out about their backgrounds, and decipher how they felt about certain things. Other alternative certified teachers stated how important it was for teachers to attend extra-curricular activities, such as athletic competitions and performances. Attending those functions made it possible for the teachers to observe students in different areas of their lives. This allowed alternative certified teachers to make class more personable by making references to those events in classes. This type of teacher input boosted students' confidence and involvement in class.

The relationships between principals and alternative certified teachers were also deemed important for the growth and development of alternative certified teachers. The

principals wanted to develop personable working relationships with their alternative certified teachers. They wanted to consistently meet with those teachers in order to foster meaningful professional relationships. Sean stated, "I try to make them feel comfortable so if there are any questions or issues, they don't hesitate to come to me." Principals wanted to develop positive relationships because they knew there would be times in which they would have to be very harsh with the teachers. They did not want the alternative certified teachers to consider their harshness as personal attacks. The principals wanted the teachers to realize the urgency of properly educating urban students. Therefore, they put forth remarkable efforts to develop proper relationships with alternative certified teachers in order to further enhance their development.

The data revealed the importance of relationships between mentor and alternative certified teachers as well. The mentor teachers wanted to have positive relationships with alternative certified teachers in order to build levels of trust to be able to provide constructive criticism. They wanted alternative certified teachers to be able to believe in them and trust in their teaching and discipline methods. Building trust was the only way to accomplish that task. It was important to build positive relationships in which information and ideas could be freely shared between the two groups. Carter stated,

It is truly a two-fold relationship. I don't have the monopoly of great ideas. When they get an idea that is great, I tell them so, and we work together to see how we can implement it in the whole department. Those are my most enjoyable times when we can actually implement a new idea as a result of the new teacher coming up with innovative ways to do things.

All mentor teachers indicated that they learned from the teachers they mentored. They stated that one of the most rewarding aspects of being a mentor teacher was the fact that it was a learning experience for both the mentor and new teacher.

The alternative certified teachers wanted to develop positive relationships with their mentors in order to get honest feedback about their progress. They relied on their mentors to guide them along their journey of becoming effective teachers. The alternative certified teachers believed that the relationships with their mentors should reflect honesty and trustworthiness. The teachers realized that their mentors could have a negative effect on their teaching career if they were unsupportive or non - responsive. Therefore, the alternative certified teachers wanted to develop meaningful relationships in order to grow in their new careers. They stated that this oftentimes caused for their mentor teachers to hold high expectations of them. The alternative certified teachers frequently described their mentors as having extremely high expectations. However, they stated that they appreciated the tough love. The alternative certified teachers stated that their mentors gave them sincere truths about the negative aspects of their development. Katy admitted, "My mentor teacher was brutally honest with me at times, but, we had a good relationship. I didn't take it personally. She just wanted me to be the best I could be for the students' sake." All participants indicated that the alternative certified teacher/mentor relationship was meaningful to both individuals.

Development Strategies. This category included the programs and/or activities in which the principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers participated as it related to alternative certified teacher professional preparation. The programs and/or activities were directly associated with mentoring, professional development, enhancing

school culture, and setting high expectations. All participants agreed that mentoring, professional development, and school culture were important components in training and supporting alternative certified teachers. However, evidence from the interviews indicated that of the five sites studied, all had informal mentoring programs in their schools. In three schools a formal mentor was named for each alternative certified teacher. However, professional development related to school mentoring and induction programs for both alternative and mentor teachers did not exist at any of the school sites. Sean, a principal who assigned a formal mentor, admitted,

> I know mentoring is key, but our program is less formal and more informal. Each teacher will have a mentor veteran teacher, or a teacher that is highly qualified and is very competent in their areas to work with those teachers individually, but that is about as formal as it gets.

All principals also described how all alternative certified teachers were provided the opportunities to attend extensive professional development events. Each high school implemented professional development committees and professional development plans to address specific needs for school improvement.   Smitty expressed, "Our school developed a professional development committee because professional development is key to teacher development. We use a collaborative approach to address the needs of the school." The principals all agreed that professional development ultimately enhances teaching, which also enhances learning.

Alternative Certified Teacher Growth. This category included what principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers considered to be the contributions of effective mentoring, positive school culture, and professional development with regard to

the preparation process of alternative certified teachers. The data revealed that the participants deemed these areas as having the most potential to produce positive results within school environments. These results included special qualities that were beneficial to the teaching and learning that took place in effective schools. The principals in this study believed that effective mentoring resulted in a more qualified teaching staff. They described how it played a prominent and significant role in retaining alternative certified teachers and giving them an opportunity to be successful. The principals stated that proper mentoring resulted in excellent alternative certified teachers. By the third year of teaching, there were no significant differences between alternative and traditional certified teachers in terms of teaching instruction and effectiveness.

Alternative certified teachers believed that proper mentoring resulted in extensive training that gave them real chances of success. Mentoring helped them to grow and improve in their job performances. They believed that mentoring played a significant role that helped them to gain confidence with their teaching duties. The alternative certified teachers felt more willing to take risks and think 'outside the box' as a result of effective mentoring. Allison commented of her mentor teacher, "She helped me to get my kids into documenting their writings on video. Having students to film was something that had not been done. She let me know that it was ok to do things out of the norm." The alternative certified teachers stated that participating in a mentoring relationship provided the needed structure that allowed them to practice organized ways to perform their duties.

The mentor teachers in this study revealed that proper mentoring resulted in the ability to continue to build connections between teaching and learning. The mentor

teachers realized that being a mentor provided optimum opportunities for continuous learning for all parties. Working with new teachers allowed mentors to stay abreast of current topics and trends. Cheryl stated, "The best way to learn is to teach. In order to give advice on teaching and discipline strategies, I had to have a bag of tricks. I get my bag of tricks from reading journals and going to workshops." The mentor teachers did not want to become stagnant in their teaching or mentoring of new teachers. Therefore, they made sure to stay involved in professional development.

The professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama was described in the open coding process. Thorough descriptions of principals', alternative certified teachers', and mentor teachers' concepts and ideas related to the phenomenon were documented in the open coding process of analysis.

<div align="center">Axial Coding</div>

After all major categories were identified through open coding procedures, axial coding was conducted. Axial coding involves identifying a single category as the central phenomenon and exploring its relationship to other categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding consisted of regrouping the categories and properties of open coding identified at the first stage of analysis. This reorganization involved placing the information found through open coding into a new paradigm model. The axial coding model illustrated the relationships that existed among all categories. The paradigm model included causal conditions, a core phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, as well as strategies and consequences. The interactions between these categories are presented in a coding diagram shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Axial Coding

CONTEXT
Support Roles
- Providing Mentoring
- Providing Training
- Providing Professional Development
Principal Expectations
- Principal Expectations of Teachers
- Principal Expectations of mentors
- Principal Expectations of professional development

CAUSAL CONDITIONS

Need for Preparation

- High number of ACT's
- Inadequate ACT Training
- Disadvantages of ACT Programs

Teaching as a Career
- Views of Principals
- Views of ACT's

CORE PHENOMENON
ACT Development
- Causes
- Phases

STRATEGIES
Development Strategies
- Professional Development Activities
- Mentoring Activities

Duties and Responsibilities
- Professional Development Committees
- Principals
- Mentors
- Other faculty members

CONSEQUENCES
ACT Growth

- Contributions of Mentoring
- Contributions of School Culture
- Contributions of Professional Development

INTERVENING CONDITIONS
Interpersonal Interactions
- ACT'S and students Relationships
- ACT's and principals Relationships
- ACT's and mentors Relationships

Barriers to ACT Development
- Limited number of Mentor teachers
- Urban Student Discipline and Cultural Issues
- Skill Deficits of First Year Teachers
- Time Management Struggles
Enabling Qualities of Participants
- Positive qualities of principals
- Positive qualities of ACT's
- Positive qualities of mentors

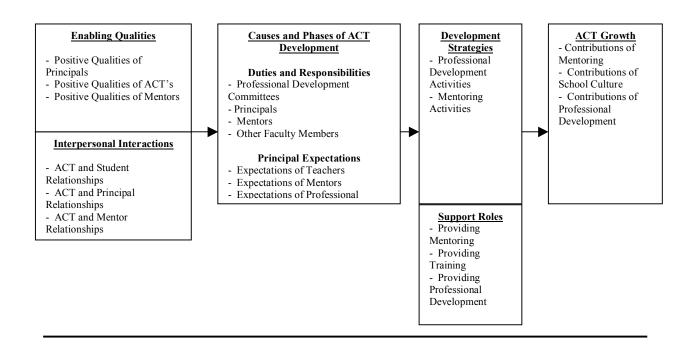The relationship of the Core Phenomenon, *Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development* to other categories was explored. Through this exploration, the Causal Conditions that led to the Core Phenomenon that represents the

causes and phases of alternative certified teacher development was determined to be the

Need for Preparation and Teaching as a Careers. The need for preparation included the

properties of *high number of alternative certified teachers, inadequate training of*

alternative certified teachers, and the disadvantages of alternative certified teacher

certification programs. The properties of *Teaching as a Career* included the *views of*

principals and alternative certified teachers of becoming a teacher. These categories

had a direct impact on the causes and phases of alternative certified teacher development.

Development Strategies, including the properties of *professional development activities*

and *mentoring activities,* were identified to be the Strategies. These strategies were

found to aid the growth and development of Central Alabama urban alternative certified

teachers, which led to positive consequences. *Support Roles,* including the properties of

professional development committees, principals, mentors, and other faculty and staff

members was determined to be the Context, (i.e. conditions pertaining to the Core

Phenomenon) that provided the contextual frameworks for the Strategies to be

implemented. *Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development, Interpersonal*

Interactions, and *Enabling Qualities of Participants* were considered to be the

Intervening Conditions. *Barriers to Alternative Certified teacher development* included

the properties of *limited number of mentor teachers, urban student discipline and cultural*

issues, skill deficits of first year teachers, and time management struggles. Interpersonal

Interactions included the properties of alternative certified teacher and student

relationships, alternative certified teacher and principal relationships, as well as

alternative certified teacher and mentor relationships. *Enabling Qualities of Participants*

included the properties of *positive qualities of principals, positive qualities of alternative*

certified teachers, as well as positive qualities of mentor teachers. These categories were considered to facilitate or intervene with the Strategies, (i.e. *programs and activities*). The Consequences that occurred, as a result of Strategies, were identified to be *Alternative Certified Teacher Growth,* which included the properties of *effects of mentoring, school culture, and professional development.* After the relationships of the open coding were established during the axial coding process, selective coding was conducted.

<div align="center">Selective Coding</div>

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined selective coding as the validating of relationships and the filling in of categories that need further refinement. Selective coding interrelated the categories identified at the axial coding stage in order to develop a grounded theory. The constant comparative method used when new data was added and analyzed was a part of the grounded theory process. As a result of conducting all coding procedures, six themes emerged: 1) Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 2) Enabling Participant Qualities, 3) Development Strategies, 4) Support Roles, 5) Interpersonal Interactions, and 6) Alternative Certified Teacher Growth. Selective coding involved providing narratives that described the interrelationships among the categories in the coding diagram to ensure consistency with the data (Creswell, 2005). The following section describes the professional preparation process that emerged at the selective coding stage related to alternative certified teachers in urban high schools of Central Alabama. A visual model of the theory is shown in figure3.

Figure 3: Visual Model of Theory

| **Enabling Qualities**

- Positive Qualities of Principals
- Positive Qualities of ACT's
- Positive Qualities of Mentors

Interpersonal Interactions

- ACT and Student Relationships
- ACT and Principal Relationships
- ACT and Mentor Relationships | **Causes and Phases of ACT Development**

Duties and Responsibilities
- Professional Development Committees
- Principals
- Mentors
- Other Faculty Members

Principal Expectations
- Expectations of Teachers
- Expectations of Mentors
- Expectations of Professional | **Development Strategies**
- Professional Development Activities
- Mentoring Activities

Support Roles
- Providing Mentoring
- Providing Training
- Providing Professional Development | **ACT Growth**
- Contributions of Mentoring
- Contributions of School Culture
- Contributions of Professional Development |

Core Phenomenon: Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development

The central phenomenon identified was *Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development.* It was central to the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. This theme describes the participants' views of the causes and phases of alternative certified teacher development over a three year time span.

Causes of Alternative Certified Teacher Development. The principals as well as alternative certified teachers believed that professional development and mentoring were absolute necessities that produced quality alternative certified teachers. Each school principal who participated in this study invested a lot of time, effort, and resources to provide quality and ongoing professional development opportunities for the development of alternative certified teachers. New alternative certified teachers were the primary

focus for each school principal. Some of the professional development activities conducted at the local school sites included the following: weekly data meetings, workshops on data driven instruction, effective instruction, book studies, and curriculum meetings. The alternative certified teachers were very enthusiastic about their professional development sessions.

Cheree expressed,

> Because of classes, I oftentimes cannot not make professional developments offered after school or on weekends. I am so fortunate that my principal provides professional developments, coaching, and training during the school day. I get a chance to practice and prepare to implement the things that I learn. Doing it that way makes a lot of sense to me.

Alternative certified teachers fully emphasized that job embedded professional development was a definite cause of their growth as a teacher.

Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development. The principals, along with alternative certified teachers, believed that there were definite phases of alternative certified teacher growth. The principals believed that alternative certified teachers experienced tremendous growth after their first year of teaching. It emerged that alternative certified teachers lacked the necessary pedagogical skills when they first entered the classrooms. This was an area in which principals tried to teach alternative certified teachers immediately. Principals believed that student achievement suffered during the alternative certified teachers' first year of teaching. Significant improvement of student academic progress was not seen until alternative certified teachers mastered the needed pedagogical skills. The principals also believed that alternative certified teachers

were not taught this important concept and invariably struggled in the beginning of their teaching careers. However, after the first year of extensive training and support, principals admitted to seeing changes in overall teacher performance. According to the principals classroom management and organization improved during the second year of teaching. Lesson development and teaching strategies enhanced during the second semester of the second year as well. Student achievement was significantly increased during the third year. The principals believed that successful alternative certified teachers learned from attending professional development sessions and working closely with their mentors. As a result, the teachers made the necessary adjustments in their teaching. Mark observed,

> One alternative certified teacher had over 30 students in each of his math classes. He was a third year teacher. There was only one student who had to attend night school because he failed that class. Usually we have a tone of 9th graders who have to attend summer school or night school to make up their credits. That teacher came a long way in student achievement.

The principals believed that by the third year of teaching, alternative certified teachers had a better grasp of the strategies and techniques needed to increase student achievement and become effective teachers.

Consistent with the principal participants, the alternative certified teachers stated that they needed work with controlling students and developing teaching strategies that enhanced student achievement. They all thought themselves to be ineffective teachers during their first year of teaching. It emerged that alternative certified teachers experienced phases of growth over a three - year period. For example, alternative

certified teachers believed that they gained control over the students during the second year of teaching. They started becoming more consistent in their everyday routines and being more firmly aggressive with the students. The alternative certified teachers stated the most significant things learned during the first year of teaching was the need to get control of the students, get organized, and develop structure and routines for their classes. Betty recalled,

> My first year, it took adjusting because I actually didn't know what to do. I had to stand in the halls. So, the students would go in and start talking. I have changed since then. Last spring, I started implementing geometry workbooks. So, now they have assignments on the board when they walk in. By the time I walk in the class, they know to have it ready to turn in. That is one routine that I have to continue to do.

The alternative certified teachers found that once they developed daily routines consisting of warm-up activities, introductions to lessons, guided practice, student activities, and proper closures, their class periods were much more enjoyable for both teachers and students. They all believed themselves to possess the qualities of effective teachers being in the third year of alternative certification.

It was found that alternative certified teachers develop in phases. Classroom management and organization, lesson planning, and teaching styles improved during the first three years of teaching. The specific causes of alternative certified teacher growth related to professional development and principals' high expectations of their teaching performance.

Causal Conditions: Enabling Participant Qualities

The causal conditions that influenced the core phenomenon of *Alternative Certified Teacher Development* are reflected in the theme of *Enabling Participant Qualities.* This theme describes the participants' thoughts regarding principals' leadership and levels of support, as well as mentors' guidance and levels of support. Alternative certified teachers described the positive leadership qualities of their principals and mentors. The alternative certified teachers also shared ways in which they would have wanted to be supported in order to aid in their professional preparation.

Principals' Leadership and Levels of Support. Principals' leadership and levels of support emerged as a factor that influenced teacher growth and development. The mentors believed that it was extremely important to be supported by their principals. They appreciated the opportunity provided to them by their principals to take on leadership roles within the schools. Both groups of participants viewed their principals as being strong, knowledgeable, and supportive leaders who wanted the best for their schools. The alternative certified teachers and mentor teachers both expressed that their principals showed a genuine interest in them as people, their professional success, as well as their growth as a teacher. Alyah, an alternative certified teacher commented,

> My principal is very approachable and usually answers my questions. He also allows me to go to the Board of Education during planning time to take care of business. My principal is very empathetic towards me as a new teacher and as one who is working on an alternative teaching certificate. He often asks me how things are going and seems genuinely concerned about my well-being. He is supportive in all my endeavors both professionally and personally.

The mentor teachers also indicated that the principals were instrumental in the growth of all teachers. Carter observed, "Sometimes the principal will even take on the responsibilities of the mentor. This helps because he shows an interest in the new teachers. He provides support in any way that he can." The mentors indicated that they just simply followed the lead of the principal. The alternative certified teachers and mentor teachers all believed that they were successful teachers because their principals were very approachable, listened to them, met their individual needs, and provided lots and lots of support.

The alternative certified teachers appreciated the high expectations of the principals and the value they placed on teaching and education. Alternative certified teachers realized that they learned a lot from their principals as instructional leaders. Connie admitted, "…using data to drive instruction, I have to give my principal credit. We are a data driven school, and he makes sure that we understand how to read data and how to apply it to teaching best practices." The third year alternative certified teachers viewed themselves as strong teachers as a result of having strong leaders. They valued principals who could provide their own professional development. As a result of this, the alternative certified teachers viewed their principals as very knowledgeable and supportive. Allison stated,

> My principal, he was very supportive during the first year because he…at the time there were a lot of us…new teachers…So, he set up little inservices for us everyday almost after school. At least for the first couple of weeks we had a meeting everyday. He would give us advice, and discuss what was going on in our classrooms.

The alternative certified teachers all were grateful for the principals who supervised them. Even when the principals were very authoritative and demanding, the alternative certified teachers viewed this as the type of leadership style that was needed to motivate them to improve the quality of their teaching. This especially seemed to help with student discipline. The principals were appreciated for providing support, supplies, and mentor teachers to assist new teachers.

Even though the alternative certified teachers displayed positive perspectives regarding their principals, some also indicated ways in which they would have wanted to be supported by their principals during the first year of teaching. Six of the 13 alternative certified teacher participants stated that they would not change anything about the support they received from their principals. However, four alternative certified teachers from varying school sites wanted more consistency. The things mentioned related to more personal support and more time in the classrooms. The teachers stated their principals spent some time with them and visited their classrooms occasionally, but they wanted more principal involvement. Rod admitted,

I wanted him to physically show me…He would come to my classroom and demonstrate a lesson. He would come into class and secure students' attention. I know he is a principal, but the way he flowed through a lesson, that is what I wanted. I used his model to assist in my own instruction. I wish he would have done that earlier and more often…

In essence these alternative certified teachers would have liked for the principals themselves to spend more time in the classroom to observe and give feedback on their teaching. They wanted this type of support from principals more consistently. They

believed that it would have made them more comfortable in their teaching earlier in the process. The teachers valued the fact that their principals were once teachers. For instance, one math alternative certified teacher knew that her principal was a math teacher before he became an administrator. Therefore, she wanted more of his input as a math teacher. She wanted her principal, who knew the curriculum, to come in and give her feedback on her strengths and weaknesses.

Mentor Teachers' Guidance and Level of Support. Nine of the 13 alternative certified teachers in the study had formal mentors. The other four had several informal mentors who assisted them. Katy stated, "I didn't have a formal mentor in the school system. However, I had a lot of teachers who really went out of their way to help me." All alternative certified teachers had informal mentors, even the ones with formal mentors indicated that they solicited other teachers who taught the same subject and/or grade level to provide guidance and support. They believed that they began to develop as effective teachers as a result of more teachers assisting with meeting their needs. According to the alternative certified teachers, having a mentor in the same subject area proved to be more beneficial and a tremendous help to the teachers. Connie commented,

> Having a mentor teacher in the same subject and grade level as me was the best. I could actually use the things that she did…a direct replica…I visited other teachers' classrooms and they offered assistance, but the teachers who did the exact same thing that I did, those are the ones I learned from.

The alternative certified teachers who had formal mentors admitted that it was a tremendous help to them. However, there was one alternative certified teacher who had negative feelings regarding her mentor teacher. Sonya stated,

I think he just wanted to get paid to be honest with you. So, outside of the little things that he would give me for organizational things, he just pretty much said sign this paper right here so I can get paid.

As a result of her negative experiences regarding her formal mentor teacher, Sonya relied on other teachers for assistance. Receiving assistance and support from other teachers helped the alternative certified teachers to feel valued in their profession. For instance, Rod expressed,

I was a math and science teacher, so everybody was like, yeah, we got a math and science teacher. I guess they saw value in me and wanted to keep me. I think that is where all of the support came from.

Other teachers believed that mentor teachers were very supportive as far as increasing their morale and motivation to remain in the profession. Allison said, "My mentor continued to motivate me, continued to check up on me, and pointed out some good things that I was doing." The alternative certified teachers who had positive attitudes regarding their mentor teachers was the result of the following: consistent meetings with them, frequent visits to their classrooms, and immediate answers to all of their questions. Six of the nine alternative certified teachers who had formal mentors were generally satisfied with their mentors as well as their experiences. However, there were major to slight differences in the way alternative certified teachers would have wanted to be supported by their mentor teachers. For example, Latisha was generally satisfied with her mentor. However, there was only one thing in which she wished she had more assistance. She wanted more direction on how to get more parental involvement. Michelle was also generally satisfied with her mentor experiences, but she

recognized the time constraints and the demands that were placed on her mentor teacher. Michelle explained, "I really think I would have liked, if she could have answered some stuff right then, it would have been better." Although alternative certified teachers felt positive about their mentors, they needed more support in becoming acclimated to the school, its policies, and general routines. The four who did not have formal mentors would have preferred a designated person to meet with and receive guidance on a consistent basis.

In summary, it emerged that there were specific enabling participant qualities that related to the development of alternative certified teachers. Alternative certified teachers and mentors thrived professionally under the leadership of principals who were strong leaders, knowledgeable and supportive of their professional and personal well-being. Principals and alternative certified teachers preferred mentors who were flexible, friendly, and knowledgeable. Informal mentor teachers also played a significant role in the development of alternative certified teachers by providing encouragement and motivation.

Strategies: Development Strategies

The theme, *Development Strategies,* describe what participants believed to be the specific programs and/or activities that foster professional development of alternative certified teachers. The strategies associated with mentoring and professional development was the primary focus.

Mentoring. All participants unanimously agreed that mentoring was an important component in training and supporting alternative certified teachers. Interviews revealed that all of the five sites studied had informal mentoring programs in their schools. In

three schools a formal mentor was named for each alternative certified teacher. However, professional development and school mentoring for both alternative and mentor teachers was did not exist at any of the school sites. Sean admitted,

> I know mentoring is key, but our program is less formal and more informal. Each teacher will have a mentor veteran teacher… or a teacher that is highly qualified and is very competent in their areas to work with those teachers individually… but that is about as formal as it gets.

All principals admitted that they relied on district personnel to set the tone for formal mentoring programs. They felt it more important to find qualified and willing veteran teachers to work with alternative certified teachers than to incorporate formal mentoring programs. The principals who named formal mentors for their teachers assigned all alternative certified teachers to veteran teachers who were knowledgeable and patient. They looked for mentor teachers who were willing to share their time without expecting any compensation. The principals tried to make the relationships more personable and less formal. Mark stated,

> I try to match someone with the alternative certified teacher who I feel can work with them, and that is a competent teacher who won't have a problem with someone always asking them questions about teaching. One who is willing to share his time. I try to, if at all possible, put the teacher as close to them as possible.

The principals tried to assign mentors who taught in the same subject area as much as possible. Their goal was to make sure alternative certified teachers were exposed to resources and materials, the operations of the school, and teaching strategies. The

principals wanted to be sure that new teachers knew where to find any and all of the information they needed to get the job done.

School Culture and Professional Development. The concept of school culture was found embedded in the views of principals and alternative certified teachers. The participants found both positive and negative qualities of their school cultures relating to professional development and welcoming new faculty members. These qualities had significant relevance to both teaching and learning.

The principals considered their school cultures relating to professional development as being extremely high. They believed that their schools were true professional learning communities. The principals stated that adult learning was a primary focus and was deeply embedded in the schools' cultures. Chandler stated. "I think anything you want to learn you can learn here. I think there are more than enough opportunities to provide information and disseminate information to new teachers, and there are just a significant amount of opportunities to learn." The principals scheduled times in the school day for job embedded professional developments and workshops. Teachers often attended national conferences such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Association for Supervision, Curriculum and Development.

In addition, each school had a professional development plan and an active professional development committee. The professional development committees consisted of administrators, department heads, counselors, and other teacher leaders. The committees met in the summer to develop professional development plans for the upcoming year. The principals stated that once a month, departments had to present a

professional development at faculty meetings. Members of the professional development committee or curriculum support personnel from central office facilitated the workshops.

Two of the five principals rated their school culture of welcoming new faculty members as marginal, especially when new teachers entered the profession after the school year had begun. The other three principals gave high ratings of their schools' cultures related to welcoming new faculty members. The principals who rated their cultures as marginal tried to welcome new teachers by introducing them to members of the department and/or implementing school orientation programs. However, they cited lack of time and resources as reasons for failing. Smitty declared, "It was my intention to have a welcoming ceremony and orientation for all new teachers. However, when new teachers come in after the school year has already started, we just have to hit the ground running." On the other hand, the principals who rated their school cultures as high used innovative ways to make new teachers feel welcomed. These principals believed that everyone on the teaching staff should know one another, despite their large numbers. Sean had a large faculty and staff. He wanted to have a family atmosphere at his school. He explained,

> With this being a high school, one thing I really preach, that if someone works at this school, we should know who they are…Even though we have a faculty and staff of about 130, I don't think that that is too many, as much time as we spend together, to get to know the cafeteria staff, the custodial staff, and other teachers in the department.

Bo, a high school principal had a faculty and staff of about 85. He considered it important for all teachers, and especially students to know all new teachers. Bo

implemented a welcoming board in the center of the school. He placed the teachers'

names, pictures, grade levels, and subjects on that board to welcome them to the school.

Bo believed this was especially beneficial for the students. They could match faces with

the names on their schedules. Mark also used creative ways to get new teachers involved

in the everyday operations of the school to make them feel welcomed. He indicated, "We

try to give new teachers duties within the school so they will take ownership. So, they

can become an active part of the team, and not just somebody on the outside looking in."

Furthermore, the views of alternative certified teachers also reflected those of the

principals. Six of the 13 alternative certified teachers, from different school sites, viewed

their schools' cultures as marginal with welcoming new faculty members. The data also

revealed that five of the 13 alternative certified teachers began working after the school

year had begun. They stated that they were introduced to members in their department,

but rarely got a chance to see or speak with them. They also admitted that they rarely

saw or spoke with teachers in different departments. The alternative certified teachers

admitted to seeing people in the halls and not knowing whether or not they were

members of the faculty. Charles explained,

> Sometimes I walk through the hallways and see people I haven't seen before. I
>
> don't know if they work at the school unless they wear their badges. As a part of
>
> the security team, I ask people without badges if I can help them. I am so
>
> embarrassed when they tell me they teach at the school.

The other seven alternative certified teachers, from different schools, viewed their school

cultures as high with welcoming new faculty and staff member. The teachers stated that

other teachers assisted them with getting their rooms together, as well as giving them

materials and supplies. The teachers also shared how other teachers took a personal interest in them. Michelle stated, "I was out sick. They called to check on me and they gave me some of their sick days as a part of the Sick Leave Bank." These alternative certified teachers viewed the members of the faculty as being easy to talk to about various things. They also considered their schools to be warm and inviting places. Charles observed, "The school has a good atmosphere. That is why I chose it. It reminds me a lot of the high school I attended. It just felt like home." The alternative certified teachers recognized the value of having a welcoming and inviting school culture.

In Summary, principals believed in providing extensive professional development to support the needs of teachers. The principals especially wanted to provide quality professional development for all new teachers, especially alternative certified teachers. All principals indicated that the best procedure to use was to implement job embedded professional development. The principals used the assessment results from School Improvement Plans and PEPE in the development of school-wide and individual professional development plans. They believed that their primary and most important duty was to be an instructional leader. All principals realized that it was their responsibilities to inform teachers of professional development opportunities, as well as encourage them to facilitate professional development sessions.

Context: Support Roles

The theme of *Support Roles* describes the specific duties and responsibilities of principals, mentor teachers, other faculty members, and curriculum office personnel in preparing alternative certified teachers. These were deemed the most significant roles in the development of these teachers.

Principals' Roles. The principals took a practical approach with supervising alternative certified teachers. They believed in consistently meeting with alternative certified teachers themselves. Sean admitted, "I always meet with the first year alternative certified teachers at the beginning of the year. I kind of monitor them myself, and I kind of check with the veteran teachers and their mentor teachers to see how they are doing." Two of the five principal participants met with their alternative certified teachers separately twice a week to hold individual conferences. The other three had meetings with their alternative certified teachers separately from other faculty members at least once a month. All principals facilitated curriculum and data meetings as professional development sessions for alternative certified teachers. The principals indicated that these were important areas that the teachers needed to quickly learn in order to do well on state assessments. Mark commented, "I like to call them in and talk with them personally myself. I like to personally go in and observe them myself. I also call these people in privately and we address issues straight forward." The principals believed that alternative certified teachers needed administrators to check with them often to be sure they were effectively teaching students.

Mentors' Roles. The mentors believed their duties to be important for the success of alternative certified teachers. Some specific duties of mentor teachers included working with the teachers' efforts of making sure that they understand their teaching responsibilities, assisting them with curriculum issues in terms of completing their lesson plans, explaining how to use the standards to write the lesson plans, and working with them on testing data and benchmark assessments. Formal as well as informal mentors also assisted alternative certified teachers with classroom management, time

management, and classroom discipline issues. Performing those duties allowed mentors to intelligently discuss the weaknesses of alternative certified teachers in order to foster improvement. The mentor teachers realized that the success of the alternative certified teachers was a direct outcome of effective mentoring.

Roles of Other Faculty Members. The alternative certified teachers viewed other faculty members, who displayed positive professional attributes, as having important roles in their overall growth. The alternative certified teachers indicated that they learned a lot from their peers and co-workers. They stated that they offered alternative ways to enforce discipline and implement motivating teaching strategies that were effective. One of the alternative certified teachers who did not have a formal mentor stated that there were some veteran teachers in the building who were really nice and helped her a lot. Sonya indicated that she solicited three other teachers to be her informal mentors. All of the teachers taught the same subject. She stated that they would let her come in to their classes to observe their teaching styles. They also gave her lesson topics, let her borrow books, and provided teaching resources. Sonya said that the other faculty members assisted her with setting up her room and organizing things as well. The alternative certified teachers with formal mentors indicated that they received additional support from other faculty members. Some of the other faculty members freely offered their time and assistance. The alternative certified teachers stated that they especially appreciated the help in dealing with difficult students. Rod described his experience in dealing with emotionally disturbed students,

> I had several extreme cases of Special Ed students. They were emotionally
>
> disturbed. Two of them, they drove me crazy. They would upset my entire day.

From the time they came into the classroom, the class was totally disruptive.

They wanted all attention on them. I couldn't get anything done. Of course the

teachers gave me different strategies. They actually came in to help me out.

They gave me advice as far as where to sit him, what to give him that he actually

could do, and how to allow him to be a participant in the class. They told me that

he wanted attention, so I should give him ways he could have that attention in a

constructive matter. That was very helpful.

The alternative certified teachers stated that other faculty members could serve as

valuable resources and had access to a wealth of information. They believed that other

faculty members shared in the duties and responsibilities of preparing them to have

successful careers by being supportive, offering advice, and sharing resources.

Roles of Central Office Personnel. Central office curriculum support personnel

also held important roles related to the professional preparation of alternative certified

teachers. The principals revealed that the central office curriculum personnel provided

support for all new teachers. The alternative certified teachers at each school site were

encouraged by the principals to take advantage of the training opportunities. The districts

provided a series of new teacher workshops, which were held throughout the year. The

workshops included new teacher orientations, classroom organization and management

programs, and best teaching strategies. In addition to providing a series of new teacher

workshops, the school systems also used program specialists from the various subject

areas. The program specialists would collaborate with the principals to determine the

needs of the teachers and provide support and assistance. The alternative certified

teachers recognized the importance of the specific roles provided by central office

curriculum personnel. They especially appreciated the support provided by the various curriculum departments. Sonya, who did not have a formal mentor, observed,

> Initially coming in, the science department saved me. I have to give them so much credit because the director of the department was so awesome with coming in and spending time in the classroom and helping me get ready for teaching. Just explaining the pacing guide and how the standards should be taught and the different ways of teaching science was great.

Sonya believed that the director and program specialists of the science curriculum department went above and beyond the call of duty to assist her. She stated that they provided her with everything including pencils, paper, workbooks, and other supplies. Other alternative certified teachers indicated that the school districts assisted them by providing consultants, who were retired teachers, to come to the schools to collaborate with them. They stated that the consultants were able to fill in when the mentors were teaching classes of their own. The consultants assisted with helping the alternative certified teachers learn curriculum, deliver subject area content, and gather teaching resources. The consultants were able to spend entire days team teaching and conducting model lessons. The alternative certified teachers considered the consultants as valuable resources provided by the school system.

To summarize, principals, mentor teachers, other faculty members, and curriculum office personnel were all responsible for specific duties and responsibilities related to the preparation process of alternative certified teachers. The specific roles of principals included frequent monitoring and observations of alternative certified teachers. Mentor duties and responsibilities included developing lesson plans. Other faculty duties

included various sharing discipline techniques and providing teaching resources. Central Office personnel duties included providing training and new teacher orientations. All duties and responsibilities related to professional development sessions on curriculum, teaching strategies, and classroom management and organization.

Intervening Conditions: Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development

This theme describes the barriers that intervene or influence the strategies associated with alternative certified teacher development. The barriers were considered to be the obstacles and/or frustrations that principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers encounter during the preparation process. Their barriers were linked to teacher shortages, and reasons alternative certified teachers leave the classroom. In addition, alternative certified teachers had considerable obstacles related to cultural issues and behaviors of students in urban schools.

Barriers Related to Teacher Shortages. All principal participants experienced frustrations with hiring teachers as a result of teacher shortages. The principals' primary issues involved finding people who were fully credentialed in the subjects they wanted to teach. All principal participants in this study preferred to hire candidates who had traditional teacher certification. However, they realized that there were severe shortages of teachers in math, science, special education, and foreign languages on the secondary level. The principals stated that the people who majored in those areas were not interested in teaching. Smitty encountered this while trying to recruit high school math teachers. He explained, "There are just not any math majors in education. I remember one time we went out on a job search at university. We only found one math person graduating in Math education, and they were going back to Atlanta." Smitty believed

that people who majored in the areas of math and science often had other aspirations to obtain what were considered to be more lucrative jobs. As a result of shortages of education majors, the principals came to accept the concept of hiring alternative certified teachers.

The principals were not able to fill the positions that were becoming wide spread among urban high schools. Bo admitted, "I have to accept what we are able to hire for the various subjects. Therefore, I have to do the best I can." The principals stated that there was a demand for teachers, but the supply for qualified teachers wasn't available. Mark recalled having to fill 10 positions in one year- four in English and six in Math. He pointed out, "Finding teachers to fill positions in high schools is tough. Even when you have people who want to begin teaching, they don't have enough undergraduate classes in a specific major to even receive an ABC." Chandler experienced something similar when he lost his entire math department as a result of a reduction in force. He had to hire nine math teachers in one year. The principals stated that not being able to find qualified people to fill positions made it extremely difficult to operate a school, which constituted their barriers.

Barriers Related to Reasons Teachers Leave the Classroom. Principals and alternative certified teachers revealed obstacles related to reasons alternative certified teachers leave the classroom. Teacher turnover was listed as one such reason. The participants stated that teacher turnover was high in their schools for many reasons. Some of the reasons listed were reductions in force, non-renewals, and failure to receive certification during the specified allotted time.

Both principals and alternative certified teachers indicated reductions in force as a barrier related to teacher turnover. As a principal, Mark stated that he had a staff that consisted of a high number of non – tenured teachers, especially in the critical areas of math and science. As a result, whenever his school system declared a reduction in force, a majority of his teachers were affected. Mark lost all of his science teachers, which consisted of seven at the time, in one year. He indicated that he had to make a lot of adjustments, which was a major frustration. Other principals also experienced high turnover in their schools due to reductions in force. Smitty also referenced having a high number of non-tenured teachers in his school. He directly related having such a large number of non-tenured teachers to his school system's decision to lay off teachers every two to three years. Smitty said, "It is hard to keep good teachers in the subjects of math and science when the systems fire them every year. Once they are let go, they find jobs easily in nearby systems. That leaves us extremely short staffed."

The interviews revealed alternative certified teachers viewed teacher turnover that resulted from reductions in force as a barrier. They believed it to be unfortunate to be laid off every year, especially if they worked in high needs areas such as math or science. The alternative certified teachers felt frustrated because there was no job security. Charles expressed,

I don't think it is right when young teachers who are full of energy, like myself, lose their jobs every year when we are really trying to make a difference. As soon as something happens in the system, we are the first ones to go. It has nothing to do with performance. It is just because we are not tenured. That really sucks.

Other alternative certified teachers were frustrated as well. They believed that it was unfair to be fired just because of being non-tenured. The alternative certified teachers believed that they were performing well according to the data indicated by test scores. They were frustrated because they were not valued or judged based on their performance.

Most principal participants revealed barriers related to resignations and non – renewals of alternative certified teachers as well. They learned from prior experiences that when alternative certified teachers entered the profession and did not receive proper mentoring and support, they became very frustrated and oftentimes left the profession. They believed lack of support put alternative certified teachers in unsuccessful situations. As a result, the principals prided themselves on spending a lot of time and resources to ensure that all new teachers experienced success. Sean stated, "I don't want the reason they leave to be because they didn't get the support they needed." The principals indicated that they provided substitute teachers in order to allow department heads to spend entire days with alternative certified teachers. The department heads modeled lessons for the new teachers, gathered resources, and held conferences with them during this time. It became very frustrating for the principals when the alternative certified teachers remained ineffective in spite of receiving extensive support.

The data revealed that mentor teachers experienced frustration when alternative certified teachers left the classroom. They believed that new teachers got lost without proper guidance and as a result, they became frustrated and left the profession. Paula stated, "These are people with majors in math and engineering. They often ask themselves, 'Why am I here?', especially when they do not feel supported." The mentor teachers believed that alternative certified teachers had to feel supported and respected by

other teachers and the administrators in order to survive in the teaching profession. Not having a guide for classroom management, lesson planning, and other important things really sets them up for failure. Mentor teachers believed that schools should do all they can to retain teachers. They were sure alternative certified teachers needed people and resources to provide them with smooth transitions into the profession.

Non-renewals were also attributed to teachers' failures to receive certification during the required time line. The principals showed significant frustration with losing alternative certified teachers because they failed to receive their teaching certification within the three - year time frame. Sean indicated that he lost three science teachers because they failed to get certification. He commented, "I remember last year, I was so mad. I lost teachers because they failed to go back to school. I was extra mad because I allowed them to miss faculty meetings and things of that nature in order to go to class." Principals were extra frustrated when they extended time and resources to assist alternative certified teachers only to find that they neglected to fulfill mandated requirements.

Barriers Related to Skill Deficits of First Year ACT's. Another area of obstacle for participants was skill deficits or weaknesses of first year alternative certified teachers. The principals realized that alternative certified teachers knew absolutely nothing related to what they would need to be effective teachers when they first entered the classrooms. They stated that first year alternative certified teachers spent most of their time trying to discipline and find out where they were themselves.

In addition, individualized instruction proved to be an area of frustration for alternative certified teachers. Betty indicated, "Using student data, I didn't have any kind

of background in that. I had no idea of what to do." The alternative certified teachers revealed that their frustrations came from a lack of knowledge. They did not think they were well prepared to enter the classroom during their first year of teaching. The alternative certified teachers indicated that their frustrations would have been fewer if they would have known what to expect before entering the classroom.

Principals and alternative certified teachers experienced different degrees of frustration in providing support to alternative certified teachers, especially during the first year of teaching. Finding mentors for all new teachers was the biggest frustration for principals. Mark stated that he had a lot of turnover on his staff. Therefore, it was hard to find qualified and willing veteran teachers to mentor new teachers. He expressed, "You know good veteran teachers are far and few between. I have to be sure I don't wear out my good teachers." Finding mentors who actually had the time and the training to work with alternative certified teachers was a task. As a result the principals began to take on mentoring responsibilities themselves. Bo stated, "If I do not install a lot of mentoring, and work with a lot of the new teachers myself, we are going to lose the teacher and the students are going to suffer." The principals recognized mentoring as an important aspect of teacher support. Therefore, regardless of the frustrations they were dedicated to providing mentors for every teacher.

Barriers Related to Lack of Support. Another source of frustration was the lack of support from other faculty members. The principals, alternative certified teachers, and formal mentor teachers listed other faculty members as having the potential to negatively affect new teachers. The participants felt that the bad habits of tenured teachers had the ability to affect new teachers. Some of the bad habits included degrading students,

submitting lesson plans late, speaking negatively about the administration, failure to

attend professional development opportunities, and not performing extra duties. The

principals admitted to having to diligently work at keeping new teachers surrounded by

people who could influence them positively. Sean stated, "You don't want new teachers

to connect with teachers who don't come to work on time, don't submit lesson plans on

time, or who are always griping and complaining. Those things can easily rub off on new

teachers." The principals did not want alternative certified teachers to adopt the bad

habits of these ineffective teachers. Alternative certified teachers admitted to having to

make concerted efforts to avoid people with negative attitudes at school. They especially

found it frustrating when their co-workers spoke about students in negative terms. Katy,

an alternative certified teacher, said,

> I found out a lot of the teachers, their attitude towards student achievement, they
>
> really didn't see any good, sort to speak, in the students. That to me was
>
> disheartening because instead of breaking them down, I would rather build them
>
> up. In some of their eyes, it didn't matter what the students did. They couldn't do
>
> anything right. They didn't look for the good in the student. They were too busy
>
> focusing on the bad. There is some good in even the worse of us. Instead of
>
> finding that little grain of good, that little hole that you can use to get through to
>
> that child, instead of trying to find that, they were busy saying, 'ok, you are a lost
>
> case' sort to speak. And to me that was disheartening.

The negative behaviors of some faculty members also resulted in alternative

certified teachers having negative feelings towards them. The alternative certified

teachers admitted to being disgusted by the attitudes and behaviors of some faculty

members. They felt as if those teachers did not deserve to call themselves teachers.

Charles expressed,

> Quite honestly you have teachers who don't really need to be here. You have
> some teachers who are just here on tenure. I would say that is one of the biggest
> things I have had to get used to…coming from private industry...Too many people
> are just here collecting checks. You work, produce. If you are not producing,
> you have to go…sorry. I don't owe you anything, if you are not producing…
> tenure is a nice little bag that a lot of people hide behind.

The alternative certified teachers believed that the negative behaviors of some

teachers gave the entire professional community a bad reputation. They did not feel that

those characteristics were representative of the effective jobs done by successful teachers.

That was truly frustrating to them. The mentor teachers also revealed the possible

negative influences of other faculty members. The mentor teachers felt that other faculty

and staff members could be very territorial. They often times thought that new teachers

would take their space. Therefore, other faculty members tried to make it hard for new

teachers to be successful. Monica admitted, "I view myself as a protector of my new

teachers. I keep them away from the 'piranhas'. Those teachers strip their classrooms of

everything." The negative behaviors of some of the other faculty members were very

frustrating to all participants in this study. As, a result, they viewed it as their

responsibilities to provide positive people and experiences for alternative certified

teachers in efforts to retain successful, effective teachers.

Barriers Related to Cultural Issues and Behaviors of Urban Students. Alternative

certified teachers experienced obstacles that were significantly different from other

participants. Their obstacles related to cultural issues and behaviors of urban students, difficult caseloads, and negative reactions of faculty members. Working in urban high schools was very different for many of them. They experienced a culture shock, which caused their frustrations. The alternative certified teachers were deeply affected by the cultural issues and behaviors of urban students. Some of the urban school cultural issues included having difficult home lives, being over aged for their grade levels, as well as being emotionally distressed. Betty stated,

> I do remember one student who did nothing in class. He was 16. It was an Algebra
> I class at that time. I called his parents trying to get them involved. The student
> didn't do class work, homework or anything. They ended up having a conversation
> about dinner...So, that kind of discouraged me. It just let me know be careful on
> whose parents to call and whose not to call.

The alternative certified teachers revealed that dealing with the emotional distress of urban students was a very heavy burden to bear. Michelle spoke of an incident in which one of her students was missing for two weeks. The student was still missing during the time of the interview. Michelle commented,

> Right now I have a student who is missing. She has been reported as a runaway. I
> don't know if she is alive or what. I am literally sick. I stay up at night worrying
> about her. I call her house and her mom doesn't seem to be too concerned. Her
> mom believes that she is with a boy. I will feel better when I find out for sure.'

Some of the behaviors of urban students included classroom disruption, sleeping in class, skipping class, and playing pranks on the teacher. Betty gave an account of how her students would plan schemes on her. She admitted that one day she noticed unexpectedly

that there were only 10 students left in class. They had all tricked her into letting them go

to the restroom. Needless to say, they didn't return to class. The alternative certified

teachers believed that urban students came to school with a lot more problems and they

came needing much more support in varying degrees. Charles expressed, "The kids don't

feel like they can learn. They are not engaged in class. I find myself having to baby sit and

discipline more than I would like to be doing." Teachers are really pouring their hearts and

souls into trying to help the kids. However, they feel that they are dealing with kids who

really don't want to help themselves. That was given as the most frustrating part. The

students are coming to school a lot less prepared than they should be.

In summary, all participants experienced barriers associated with the development

of alternative certified teachers. Principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentors

experienced high levels of frustrations regarding teacher shortages, reasons related to why

teachers leave the classrooms, and cultural issues and discipline of urban students.

Consequences: Alternative Certified Teacher Growth

The theme of *Alternative Certified Teacher Growth* describes the results from the

implementation of strategies related to the professional preparation process. Principals,

alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers described the effects of mentoring,

school culture, and professional development.

Effects of Mentoring. Mentoring provided the needed support systems for

alternative certified teachers and allowed them to grow as people and professionals, who

were able to manage classes, effectively deliver instruction, and become confident in

their content delivery. The principals stated that they had some dynamic young teachers

who were successful in their schools. They attributed that to having the foresight to pair

those teachers with dynamic veteran teachers. Without quality teachers who possessed the desired qualities of effective mentors, both teachers and students would experience extreme amounts of failure. It was found that these positive qualities and behaviors were the direct result of building positive working relationships with their mentor teachers. This allowed alternative certified teachers to have formal and informal conversations regarding things that were important to them. They indicated that while mentoring alternative certified teachers, they had to work harder, and be sure to lead by example. This resulted in better teachers within the school. Everyone became better teachers as a result of mentoring. In addition, the mentor teachers believed that the greatest result of mentoring was when the mentored teachers became mentor teachers themselves.

Effects of Positive School Cultures. The principals, alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers in this study believed that positive school cultures produced specific results. They all believed that positive school cultures had direct effects on the expectations of both teachers and students. The principals revealed their efforts to foster positive school cultures through activities held inside and outside of school. They all wanted their schools to represent positive family atmospheres. For example, the principals provided in-school activities for cross curriculum training. Members from different departments collaborated to find out how they could teach skills and objectives in ways that could overlap in different subjects. These collaboration sessions were excellent ways for teachers to get to know one another. The principals stated that teachers worked better together when they knew and trusted each other. The principals found ways for their teachers to collaborate off campus. Mark stated, "I've seen a closeness develop with the things we do. We do a lot of things outside of this parameter.

We have luncheons or dinners outside of school where we still talk school but it is a different atmosphere." Meeting off campus gave teachers a chance to come together in non-threatening, relaxing environments. Being off campus created a joyful time to dialogue about concerns or issues. Solutions to problems were often identified while meeting over lunch or dinner. The principals thought that allowing teachers opportunities to collaborate inside and outside of school provided them with the flexibility and autonomy to get things done. It was believed that positive school cultures allowed teachers the means to develop the persistence to find the answers they needed to assist with making aspects of the entire school better.

The alternative certified teachers revealed that student achievement thrived more in positive school cultures. They considered a positive school culture to be one in which everyone in the building expected students to achieve. Charles explained, "Our school culture is beginning to turn relating to student achievement. The teachers are beginning to not expect anyone to fail. We are expecting success from our students now that we have been 100% AYP three years in a row." The alternative certified teachers also indicated that students themselves expected more of themselves in positive school cultures. The students were not satisfied with the concept of just getting by with average work. They were described as expecting and demanding more from their teachers. As a result, the teachers were expected to provide a more rigorous curriculum, as well as activities that insisted that students used higher order thinking skills. Student morale remained high, fewer discipline troubles existed, and students were more actively involved in schools as a result of positive school cultures.

The mentor teachers believed that positive school cultures resulted in positive school climates. They believed that positive school climates provided structure and routines within the school. It was found that mentor teachers believed alternative certified teachers grew and developed more in structured environments. Sonya admitted,

I give them a duty list – where you are supposed to be, what time you are supposed to be there, what time your class is supposed to start. I even put in on the list to stand at your door. So everything is written out in steps –1,2,3,4.

The mentors believed that orderly schools made it easier for everyone. They stated that teachers are able to develop structures and routines within their classes. In positive school cultures, students know the expectations, rules, as well as the consequences to inappropriate behavior. School operations were also extremely smooth when proper protocol was communicated and understood by all. Things flowed better when things operated on a specific system. Paula stated,

The principal provides a monthly calendar that has all of the activities, assemblies, pep rallies, performances, testing, and other things that have the potential to interrupt the school day. Things go better when we know what to expect. People don't get upset when they know about things in advance. The entire school day just flows better.

All mentors stated that they appreciated attempts to protect class time within the school day. Providing positive school cultures included fewer disruptions on the intercom and less pulling students out of academic classes for extracurricular activities. The mentor teachers believed that positive school cultures existed only when the entire faculty and staff understood the goals of the schools.

Effects of Professional Development. The data revealed that alternative certified teachers found significant benefits of professional development. The significant benefits of professional development included learning how to implement various informal assessments, various teaching styles, and classroom management techniques. The alternative certified teachers stated that the most beneficial professional development sessions entailed things that they could implement on a daily basis. They enjoyed attending workshops that were activities based and modeled what should be done in the classroom. The teachers learned a lot of new things in these sessions that enhanced their job performance.

One of the most significant benefits of professional development was learning how to implement various forms of assessments. Before attending sessions, the teachers basically gave paper and pencil tests and quizzes from textbooks. After the sessions, the teachers were able to use performance - based assessments. Sonya declared, "I found that performance - based assessments worked really well in science. The students were always eager to show me what they knew." The teachers used performance - based assessments to make learning fun for the students. Student portfolios were also used as a form of assessment, especially in English. The English teachers allowed students to keep records of their writings over periods of time. Both teachers and students were able to reflect on the different stages of writing. The students were stunned when they saw their own individual growth in their writing styles. The teachers stated that the students have a tangible means to see how their writing styles change and improve during the course of the year. As a result of learning how to use various forms of assessments, the teachers

were able to vary their teaching styles and not rely solely on quizzes and test to determine if students mastered the content.

Learning to use various teaching styles in the classroom was also listed as a benefit of professional development by alternative certified teachers. The teachers had difficulty coming up with various ways to deliver instruction before receiving professional development. As a result of attending professional development sessions on effective teaching strategies, teachers received lesson plans that included specific activities to use with students on different learning levels. Katy commented,

> They prepared me for what I needed to know about the different modes of learning. They taught me about how students learn. I learned how to reach those exceptional students, whether it be gifted or learning disabled by using different strategies and techniques. So, attending those workshops helped me a lot.

Teachers began to use learning centers set up as labs, computer stations, or writing centers. They also began to bring in instructional tools such as math manipulatives and number cubes to explain concepts. Peer tutoring and cooperative learning was also implemented as a result of attending professional development sessions. The alternative certified teachers stated that they learned a lot of what they needed to become effective teachers from meaningful professional development.

The alternative certified teachers listed classroom management as the most significant benefit of attending professional development. The teachers all reflected on how classroom discipline was their most pertinent issue when they began teaching. Sonya stated,

When I started, the classes that I had…I just couldn't fathom seeing things like that. I remember when I was in school kids were so respectful, "Yes maam, No Maam". So, for me to encounter talking back, cursing adults, and getting up and walking out of class…I couldn't deal with it…That class was so horrible that I gathered my things and I walked out and I told the assistant principal that I am leaving. He stopped me and sent me to a two-day classroom management workshop. He talked me into trying the techniques that I learned at least for the first semester. Things did get better overtime and with his support.

This was the consensus of all alternative certified teachers in this study. They had hard times dealing with the total disrespect of the students. Attending classroom management professional development taught them skills and techniques on how to control the students and the atmosphere of the classroom. Through professional development, the teachers learned how to develop and enforce classroom rules as well. Latisha admitted, "I learned how to approach discipline from a positive standpoint. I stopped yelling and arguing with the students. Attending those workshops taught me how to take control." Professional development allowed alternative certified teachers to learn new things to keep teachers excited about teaching and students excited about learning.

To summarize, all participants believed that increased alternative certified teacher development was the result of effective mentoring, positive school culture, and professional development. Effective mentoring resulted in higher teaching performance of both veteran and alternative certified teachers. Enhanced school cultures resulted in higher performance expectations of both teachers and students. The benefits of

professional development included implementing a variety of teaching strategies, forms of assessments, and engaging learning activities.

<p style="text-align:center">Propositions</p>

Grounded theory was developed during the selective coding process. The researcher built a story that connected the categories to form a set of propositions related to the professional preparation process of urban high school teachers in Central Alabama. The visual model of the theory generated and grounded in the data is shown in Figure 3.

Theoretical propositions describing the relationship among categories were developed interrelating the set of categories that emerged from the constant comparative coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

1) Providing extensive professional development to alternative certified teachers contributes directly to their professional growth.

2) Providing extensive training in maintaining student discipline and lesson development during the first year of teaching contributes directly to alternative certified teacher development.

3) Assigning effective, patient, and caring mentor teachers to alternative certified teachers contributes directly to their preparation process.

4) Providing support, encouragement, motivation, and training by mentor teachers contributes directly to the success of alternative certified teachers.

5) Allowing alternative certified teachers to experience professional growth in phases with significant changes not achieved until year 2 (year 2- growth in classroom organization and management, lesson development, and teaching

strategies, year 3 – student achievement) contributes to their development process.

6) Assigning alternative certified teachers to schools with knowledgeable, strong, effective, caring, innovative, and supportive principals who are willing to get personally involved in their professional growth by providing formal mentor teachers, conducting frequent observations, providing constant feedback, and consistently meeting with them contributes to their professional development.

7) Cultivating positive school relationships (principals/alternative certified teachers, alternative certified teachers/mentors, alternative certified teachers/ curriculum personnel) contributes directly to the development of alternative certified teachers

8) Establishing a positive school culture contributes directly to alternative certified teacher growth, professional development, and student achievement.

9) Increasing the number of alternative certified teachers on a school site reduces the level of support, guidance, and training they receive from principals and mentor teachers.

10) Increasing the number of alternative certified teachers on a school site has a direct impact on the quality of training and time they receive from mentor teachers.

11) Increasing the number of alternative certified teachers on a school site reduces the number of qualified mentor teachers available to provide one on one mentoring experiences.

12) Increasing the time alternative certified teachers spend with positive veteran teachers (informal mentors) who are willing to offer their time, resources, and assistance also increases their confidence and abilities.

Summary

This qualitative research study took place in five urban high schools located in Central Alabama. Each high school had a minimum of five and a maximum of seven third year alternative certified teachers. Each high school selected was considered as meeting or exceeding state standards by achieving 100%AYP.

The participants of this study consisted of principals, third year alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers. All principals had an earned Ed. S. degree with a minimum of six and a maximum of 30 years of administrative experience. All third year alternative certified teachers either entered the field of education through the ABC or Alabama Fifth Year alternative certification program. All mentor teachers had at least an earned Master's degree with a minimum of seven and a maximum of 13 years of teaching experience.

The researcher used the coding process of open, axial and selective coding to generate a theory about the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. The open coding process lead to the development of 11 categories: 1) Need for Preparation, 2) Teaching as a Career, 3) Principal Expectations, 4) Support Roles, 5) Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 6) Enabling Participant Qualities 7) Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 8) Duties and Responsibilities, 9) Interpersonal Interactions, 10) Development Strategies, and 11) Alternative Certified

Teacher Growth. The axial coding process reorganized the categories that emerged in open coding and identified the central (core) phenomenon of *Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development* that explored its relationship to the other categories. The relationships were illustrated through the following categories: 1) Causal Conditions - *Need for Preparation* and *Teaching as a Career*, 2) Strategies – *Development Strategies* and *Duties and Responsibilities*, 3) Context – *Support Roles* and *Principal Expectations*, 4) Intervening Conditions – *Interpersonal Interactions, Barriers to Alternative Certified Teacher Development,* and *Enabling Qualities of Participants*, and 5) Consequences – *Alternative Certified Teacher Growth*. The selective coding process lead to the validation of the axial categorical relationships and interrelated the categories in order to develop a grounded theory. Six themes emerged that described the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama: 1) Causes and Phases of Alternative Certified Teacher Development, 2) Enabling Participant Qualities, 3) Development Strategies, 4) Support Roles, 5) Interpersonal Interactions, and 6) Alternative Certified Teacher Growth.   Twelve propositions that identified the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama were developed from the theory.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

As the research demonstrated, there is a severe teacher shortage in public schools

across the United States (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). The U.S. Department of

Education estimates that approximately 2.2 million teachers will be needed over the next

decade, an average of more than 200,000 new teachers annually (Howard, 2003). Of the

graduates from traditional teacher preparation programs who are "fully qualified to

teach", 30% to 40% do not go into teaching and approximately one-third leave within the

first five years (Feistritzer, 2004). It is also believed that the teacher shortage is not

evenly distributed nor is it uniform across American schools (DeArmond & Guinn, 2003;

Zhao, 2005). Urban schools have experienced a persistent shortage of professionally

educated teachers, no matter how many teachers were being prepared nationally. Dean,

Gimbert and Wallace (2005) stated, "…high–need secondary schools remain understaffed

in terms of quality and quantity of teachers" (p. 54). As a result, many states have

implemented alternative teacher certification programs in efforts to provide high quality,

certified teachers for every classroom.

Alternative certified teachers are described as second-career professionals with at

least a bachelor's degree in their chosen content areas and may have their degrees in an

unrelated field (Tissington & Grow, 2007). In Alabama, principals, teachers, and

students feel the pressures that result from greater accountability measures related to state

assessments. The NCLB states that all students must be proficient in the areas of

Reading and Math by 2014 ((U.S. Department of Education, 2006). High quality teachers are needed to meet the demands of high accountability. However, urban high schools are staffed with many inexperienced alternative certified teachers. Yet, urban schools are still expected to meet and/or exceed state standards. As a result, this study was undertaken to explore the specific kinds of support and training that alternative certified teachers must posses in order to become effective classroom teachers.

Summary of Major Findings

This study described the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. A thorough description was gathered from interviews relating to how alternative certified teachers are trained and supported during their first three years of teaching. Principals, third-year alternative certified teachers, and mentor teachers expressed their attitudes, opinions, frustrations, and/or beliefs systems related to alternative certified teachers, alternative certified teacher training programs, as well as the type of training and support that was needed develop effective teachers.

The research study used a grounded theory approach that generated data from 23 participants. Five principals, 13 third year alternative certified teachers, and five mentor teachers from five urban high schools located in Central Alabama participated in this study. Each group of participants was chosen based on a set of criteria: 1) Principals – at least three years experience at the same school, 2) Alternative Certified Teachers – in the third year at the same school, and 3) Mentor Teachers – tenured and having worked with alternative certified teachers for three consecutive years by the time of the research. The

researcher used the systematic design of grounded theory that included the use of open, axial, and selective coding during data analysis as a process of building a theory.

The researcher found that principals overwhelmingly stated that by the third year of teaching, there was no observable difference between traditional and alternative certified teachers as it related to teacher effectiveness. In many instances, principals stated that the alternative certified teachers implemented more hands – on and engaging classroom activities than teachers who received traditional certification. The researcher also found that mentor teachers did not differentiate between new traditional and alternative certified teachers when it came to their needs as beginning teachers. They essentially viewed all new teachers the same – needing extra support and guidance. From the analysis of data, it was determined that providing intense professional development was necessary in order for alternative certified teachers to overcome the obstacles they encountered as new teachers. There were three major findings of this study that shed light on the process of effectively developing alternative certified teachers: 1) Contributions of Professional Development, 2) Contributions of Mentoring, and 3) Contributions of School Culture. The researcher found that providing extensive and consistent professional development, in addition to assigning effective mentors to alternative certified teachers during their first three years of teaching was essential to their success. Establishing a positive and nurturing school culture that focuses on both student and teacher learning was also found to be significant for the development of alternative certified teachers.

Answers to Research Questions

A theory grounded in the data of all participants was developed. The conclusions of this study provided answers to the five research questions addressed in the study.

1. How does planned professional preparation of alternative certified teachers occur within the school setting?

The researcher found that planned professional development is a necessity for the success of alternative certified teachers. This finding was confirmed by the results of Wenglinsky (2002) who concluded that the greatest influence on student achievement was classroom practices and professional development.

The researcher of this qualitative study also found that professional development was rated as the highest reason for alternative certified teacher growth by the principals, mentor teachers, as well as third-year alternative certified teachers. The results of the grounded theory research study reported in this dissertation that the most prevalent needs of alternative certified teachers included classroom organization and management skills, teaching strategies, effective instructional methodology, and pedagogical training. This confirmed earlier research conducted by Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) who determined that alternative certified teachers tend to have a limited view of curriculum, lack of understanding of student abilities and motivation, experience difficulty translating content knowledge into meaningful information for students to understand, plan instruction less effectively, and tend not to learn about teaching through their experiences. In addition, Stone (2000) studied alternative certified teachers in California and found that there were specific needs of alternative certified teachers. Listed in order of importance, Stone (2000) reported that their needs were as follows: curriculum

development, classroom resources, teaching strategies, techniques for handling difficult students, and classroom management.

The planned professional development implemented to address the weaknesses of the alternative certified teachers in the researcher's study occurred in a variety of ways. The strategies included: providing mentors for alternative certified teachers, developing professional development committees within the school, providing job-embedded professional development, developing individual and school-wide professional development plans, as well as using school district personnel to provide support and training of alternative certified teachers.

2. What is the role of the principal in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

The researcher found that principals play the most significant role in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. This agreed with an earlier study conducted by Ingersoll (2000) which stated that low support from administrators was listed as the second highest reason alternative certified teachers left the classroom.

In this grounded theory investigation, all participants agreed that the school principal was the primary component of the success of alternative certified teachers. The school principals in this study were credited with providing dynamic leadership in addressing the specific needs of alternative certified teachers by being creative, innovative, and knowledgeable. In order to guide the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers, the principals in this study provided positive school cultures, mentors for new teachers, and professional development. The participants indicated that a good school atmosphere began with its leader. They believed that the

school principal set the expectations of the school and lead by example. This corresponded with earlier research that also supported these findings. Richards (2005) also found that alternative certified teachers believed that principals set the tone of the instructional environment. In addition, Walsh and Sattes (2000) cited that strong learning cultures were nourished and cultivated by visionary leaders.

The principals in this qualitative study implemented the following activities and/or strategies for the support of alternative certified teachers: 1) high teaching expectations, 2) routines and procedures that promote positive school cultures, 3) formal and/or informal mentors, 4) strategic planning processes of professional development, 5) professional development committees, 6) in-house job embedded professional development, 7) meetings with new teachers, 8) in-school activities for cross-curriculum training, 9) weekly data meetings, 10) book studies, 11) curriculum mapping, and 12) collaborations with school district Program Specialists in order to plan and provide professional development for new teachers. In addition, the principals listed providing professional development to alternative certified teachers as their most important duty and responsibility as instructional leaders. They felt that attending workshops in classroom management coupled with classroom observations and visits with on-site mentors were extremely important for the training of alternative certified teachers. Therefore, the principals provided the time and resources for these activities to take place within their schools. The principals in this study were found to communicate high expectations of both teaching and learning that had a direct impact on the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers.

3. What is the role of formal mentor teachers in the professional preparation of

alternative certified teachers?

The researcher found that mentor teachers played a prominent role in the success of alternative certified teachers. Mentoring programs and relationships were key factors in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. Alternative certified teachers attribute their teaching success to the extensive support and training provided by their mentors. They believed that mentoring played a significant role that helped them to gain confidence with their teaching duties. It was found that the alternative certified teachers who developed positive mentoring relationships were more confident in their teaching abilities and were more probable to remain in the classroom. Those findings agreed with a previous study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTF) (2003) which discovered that several school districts in the northern states reduced attrition rates of beginning teachers by more than two-thirds. The results of that study attributed the reduction to providing expert mentors who were allowed the time and given adequate resources to train and coach new teachers during their first year on the job.

As indicated in the literature section of this qualitative research investigation on mentoring and induction, mentoring serves several purposes and goals. Formal mentors of alternative certified teachers were found to be encouragers, supporters, as well as motivators of new teachers. The nine alternative certified teachers in this grounded theory study who had formal mentors stated that they experienced success because their mentors were flexible, friendly, patient, and kind. This correlates to the findings of an earlier study conducted by Topolka (2002) which found that what most participants

remembered about their mentors were that they were approachable, knowledgeable, energetic, innovative, organized, and most importantly caring.

The primary job of mentors as related to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers consisted of supporting these teachers by providing time, resources, and training. The mentors who participated in this inquiry assisted alternative certified teachers with managing students within classes, organization of classes, lesson planning and development, as well as effective delivery of instruction. These activities were implemented by providing extensive training through team teaching, modeling lessons, classroom observations, and professional developments facilitated by mentor teachers. The mentor teachers in this study were team leaders, department chairs, and sponsors of various extracurricular activities that were also found in earlier research conducted by Moir and Bloom (2003). They stated, "of the 35 mentors who have gone back to k-12 positions during the past 14 years, seven are now serving as principals or assistant principals, 14 are teaching, and 14 are serving in professional development and leadership roles" (p. 59). It was also found that informal mentor teachers played a vital role in the success of alternative certified teachers.

4. What is the role of informal mentor teachers in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

The researcher found that informal mentor teachers played a very important role in the success of alternative certified teachers. Four of the 13 alternative certified teachers did not have formal mentors. Therefore, they relied heavily on informal mentors for guidance and support. The nine alternative certified teachers who had formal mentors also referenced the value of informal mentors in providing additional support and

assistance, especially when their formal mentors were not available for immediate feedback. In this study it was discovered that the specific duties of informal mentors included providing alternative ways to discipline students, as well as modeling motivating teaching strategies to engage students in the learning process. Having an informal mentor was especially beneficial to alternative certified teachers when their formal mentor did not teach the same subject and/or grade. Those findings were confirmed by a previous study conducted by Youngs (2007) that used interviews to determine if new teachers were acquiring curricular knowledge, planning instruction, and/or reflecting on their practice with their mentors or other colleagues (informal mentors). That study found that first and second – year teachers' experiences of the two Connecticut school districts had a direct correlation to whether or not the teachers had access to mentors or other colleagues (informal mentors) who were strongly familiar with the subject area and grade level they taught.

This study also found that informal mentors who taught the same grade and subject as alternative certified teachers encouraged them to observe their classrooms, gave lesson topics that fit specific skills and objectives, as well as let them borrow books and other teaching resources. In addition, an earlier study conducted by Carpenter (2006) discovered that demonstration lessons, performed by principals, curriculum coaches, or department chairs were extremely important to the success of alternative certified teachers. In that study the researcher revealed that alternative certified teachers wanted a secure support system that included principals, as well as formal and informal mentors. This type of support system was needed in order to help professionally develop alternative certified teachers. The alternative certified teachers indicated that informal

mentors were very supportive, offered advice, and were genuinely concerned about their success as new teachers.

5. How does the school's organizational culture contribute to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers?

The researcher found that positive school cultures played an important role in the success of alternative certified teachers. All participants believed that school cultures had a great impact on teaching and learning. The participants proclaimed that their schools had a primary focus on professional development. All schools had goals of becoming true professional learning communities. The continuous learning of teachers was deeply embedded in each school's culture. All participants in this study made many references to the job embedded professional development that took place within the schools at least once a month. Faculty members were also strongly encouraged to attend national conferences and join national professional organizations. In addition, faculty meetings were solely designated for teacher presentations, trainings, and/or workshops. Every school developed professional development plans and had active professional development committees.

This qualitative research study also found that the principals who participated in this investigation wanted their schools to reflect a "loving" family atmosphere. Principals, as well as alternative certified teachers, viewed school culture as it related to welcoming new faculty and staff members as very important. However, only three of the five principals and seven of the 13 alternative certified teachers rated their school cultures as high in this regard. It was determined from the data gathered from all participants in this study that providing a welcoming atmosphere had a direct impact on the success of

alternative certified teachers. Even the participants who admitted that their schools could do a better job in this regard considered the welcoming of new teachers as important. Some of the ways schools welcomed new teachers included introductions to department chairs and other members of the department, welcoming boards, and school orientations.

This study found that school culture contributed to the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers by providing the following: guidance and support from formal and informal mentors, support of both personal and professional needs, job embedded professional development, as well as school structure and routines. A study conducted by Richards (2005) found that both principals and teachers were a partnership that created the school's culture. Everyone thrives in a positive school culture. Student achievement is enhanced and learning is the primary goal when everyone works towards a common goal.

Implications of Study

The findings for each research study question lead the researcher to develop implications related to the professional preparation process of urban alternative certified teachers. The major findings of this grounded theory study are related to major components that were deemed significant for the professional preparation of urban alternative certified teachers: 1) Contributions of Professional Development, 2) Contributions of Mentoring, and 3) Contributions of School Culture.

Professional Development

Planned professional development is a necessity for the development of alternative certified teachers. Therefore, principals and mentor teachers should immediately identify the weaknesses of first year alternative certified teachers and

develop specific plans of action. Developing individualized professional development plans would allow for targeted improvements to facilitate alternative certified teacher growth.

Principals play the most significant role in the professional preparation of alternative certified teachers. The mentors and alternative certified teachers of this study listed the importance of principals being knowledgeable, innovative, and patient. The same groups of participants also stated that principals should be the leaders in providing professional development and creating positive school cultures. As a result, it is pertinent for school principals to be instructional leaders. As instructional leaders, the principal sets the tone of the academic expectations of the school by consistently monitoring the curriculum, providing resources, being supportive and creating opportunities for continuous learning. Thus, it is also vital for educational leadership programs to properly train future school leaders in these areas.

Alternative certified teachers experience professional growth in phases. All participants said that alternative certified teachers improved significantly in classroom organization and management, lesson development, and teaching strategies during their second year. Student achievement showed gains during the third year. This means that school leaders should allow alternative certified teachers adequate time to experience professional growth in phases in order to contribute to their success.

Increasing the number of alternative certified teachers on a school site reduces the quality and levels of support provided by principals and mentor teachers. Accordingly, the Alabama State Department of Education should monitor school systems as it relates to hiring first year alternative certified teachers. There should be a low number of first,

second, and third year alternative certified teachers hired in schools as a result of limited time for principal and mentor support.

Creating professional learning communities is essential for the professional growth of alternative certified teachers. This indicates that principals should be trained in facilitating job-embedded professional development to address the individual needs of alternative certified teachers. Alternative certified teachers stated that curriculum meetings, data meetings, as well as training sessions related to teaching strategies, various forms of assessments, and classroom management assisted them in their professional growth. Therefore, the Alabama State Department of Education and local school systems should train school leaders to effectively implement these strategies.

Mentoring

Effective mentor teachers are essential to the success of alternative certified teachers. All principals and most alternative certified teacher participants admitted that they were successful as a result of the amount of time, energy, training, and encouragement they received from their mentor teachers. Consequently, it is beneficial to provide all alternative certified teachers with positive mentoring experiences. These teachers must be paired with willing, qualified, effective mentor teachers in order to grow as teachers and be effective in the classrooms.

Informal mentors play a very important role in the preparation process of alternative certified teachers. Cultivating positive working relationships within the school contributes directly to the success of alternative certified teachers. Because of this, it is important to surround alternative certified teachers with positive teachers who teach the same grade and/or subject. It is also critical for school leaders to develop a

positive working environment in which all workers take a sincere interest in the success of all new teachers.

School Culture

Positive school cultures play an important role in the success of alternative certified teachers. All participants found that creating a positive school culture, especially as it related to professional development and welcoming new faculty and staff members, contributed to the development of alternative certified teachers. This implies that school leaders need to create consistent structures and routines within the school. In addition, school leaders should also develop a shared vision, workable mission, and common goals in order to create positive school cultures.

Summary of Implications

This research study highlighted the need to provide alternative certified teachers with various forms of support in order to develop into effective teachers. The alternative certified teachers in this study were identified, by their principals, as successful teachers. In addition, all schools had achieved and maintained 100% Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least 2 consecutive years. The grounded theory developed in this study showed that there were a variety of strategies involved in the preparation process of alternative certified teachers in urban high schools. Therefore, it would be incumbent for school leaders of urban high schools to replicate the strategies found in this study for the success of alternative certified teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was conducted in an urban high school context. In analyzing the data that emerged from this study, the researcher found that there are strong perceptions

regarding the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama. The high number of alternative certified teachers placed in urban high schools has a great potential to affect student achievement. Alternative teacher certification is a phenomenon that will have an impact on education for years to come. Therefore, several suggestions could be made for future research.

This research study focused on the professional preparation of urban high school teachers. One suggestion would be to study the professional preparation of urban middle school teachers. A study conducted in this context would be beneficial because alternative teacher certification is a phenomenon that is impacting all secondary schools. This qualitative study was conducted from an urban high school context. Therefore, it would also be beneficial to compare the findings from a middle school context.

Another suggestion would be to replicate this research study in a rural high school setting. This study would be beneficial because alternative certified teachers are hired predominately in urban and rural areas. Conducting a study from a rural context would also be beneficial to all educators and stakeholders.

An additional research study would be to determine how principals maintain high academic achievement with a high number of alternative certified teachers in the era of high stakes testing. A study of this type would be beneficial because the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandates that all schools will be proficient in Reading and Math by the year of 2014. Therefore, conducting a study to look at the effect alternative certified teachers have on test scores and student achievement in middle and/or high school would be beneficial.

The researcher also suggests conducting a research study to explore how alternative certified teachers view their careers. This study would be beneficial because all principal participants in this study believed, "Teaching to be more of an art than science." They believed that a person had to be born to teach and without certain inherent characteristics, candidates could not be trained to be successful teachers. In addition, all alternative certified teachers in this study stated that they knew they wanted to eventually become teachers even though they may have majored in a different area or worked in a different career field before entering the teaching profession. Therefore, it would be beneficial to conduct a study of successful alternative certified teachers to determine if teaching is more of a job or a fulfilling of a passion that they feel they were called into.

A final suggestion would be to conduct a research study to determine the phases of alternative certified teacher growth. This study would be beneficial because it was determined that the alternative certified teachers in urban high schools experienced their growth in phases. This study would be beneficial to determine if indeed growth occurs in phases, and if so what growth takes place in each phase.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Research indicates that there is a severe teacher shortage. Alternative teacher certification has been found to be a viable solution to the shortage. However, a high number of alternative certified teachers are being placed in urban schools. Principals of urban schools must provide the adequate support and training of these teachers in order to supply each classroom with a highly qualified, effective teacher. The findings of this grounded theory study indicate that alternative certified teachers need some of the same

things as other first year teachers who enter the profession. They need knowledgeable principals, supportive mentors, positive faculty members, and the support of school system curriculum personnel to be successful. Alternative certified teachers are overwhelmed with information when they first enter the school setting. However, they begin to master certain things within the first year of teaching and continue to improve during the second and third years. Alternative certified teachers have to learn extremely fast in order to make up for the practical experiences they missed by not becoming certified through traditional certification programs. As a result, it is incumbent that principals, mentors, state departments of education, and educational leadership programs replicate the strategies found to be determinants of training and developing successful alternative certified teachers. It has been determined, from conducting this qualitative investigation, that providing extensive professional development and effective mentoring experiences are the most pertinent resources needed for the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers in Central Alabama.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letters

517 Park Village Lane
Alabaster, AL 35007

June 5, 2007

Dear Principal,

You have been selected to be a part of a research project studying the professional preparation process of Alabama urban high school alternative certified teachers. I am conducting this research study as part of the requirements of completing a doctoral degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Your supervisory experiences as a principal and instructional leader are valuable for this project.

The purpose of this study is to develop a theory as to the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers. You are being asked to participate by sharing your experiences related to the support and training of these teachers. Participation in this study will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be asked to participate in an interview to explore your experiences in supervising alternative certified teachers. This interview will be face to face. There may be a need to conduct up to two shorter follow-up interviews. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed to maintain accuracy. All tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed within 3 years of the completion of this study.

Your identity will be protected by assigning you a pseudonym that will be used in my notes and all written communication regarding this study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time.

Your signature indicates that you are willing to participate in this study and that you approve of the interviews being recorded. If you have any questions concerning the research, please contact me any time at 205-910-6562. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore, Director of the UAB office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB). Ms. Moore may be contacted at 205-934-3789. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sherene Carpenter

517 Park Village Lane
Alabaster, AL 35007

September 29, 2007

Dear Alternative Certified Teacher,

You have been selected to be a part of a research project studying the professional preparation process of Alabama urban high school alternative certified teachers. I am conducting this research study as part of the requirements of completing a doctoral degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Your experiences as a third year alternative certified teacher are valuable for this project.

The purpose of this study is to develop a theory as to the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers. You are being asked to participate by sharing your experiences related to the support and training of these teachers. Participation in this study will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be asked to participate in an interview to explore your experiences as a third year alternative certified teacher. This interview will be face to face. There may be a need to conduct up to two shorter follow-up interviews. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed to maintain accuracy. All tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed within 3 years of the completion of this study.

Your identity will be protected by assigning you a pseudonym that will be used in my notes and all written communication regarding this study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time.

Your signature indicates that you are willing to participate in this study and that you approve of the interviews being recorded. If you have any questions concerning the research, please contact me any time at 205-910-6562. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore, Director of the UAB office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB). Ms. Moore may be contacted at 205-934-3789. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sherene Carpenter

517 Park Village Lane
Alabaster, AL 35007

November 21, 2007

Dear Mentor Teacher,

You have been selected to be a part of a research project studying the professional preparation process of Alabama urban high school alternative certified teachers. I am conducting this research study as part of the requirements of completing a doctoral degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Your supervisory experiences as a mentor teacher are valuable for this project.

The purpose of this study is to develop a theory as to the process of the professional preparation of urban high school alternative certified teachers. You are being asked to participate by sharing your experiences related to the support and training of these teachers. Participation in this study will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be asked to participate in an interview to explore your experiences in supervising alternative certified teachers. This interview will be face to face. There may be a need to conduct up to two shorter follow-up interviews. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed to maintain accuracy. All tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed within 3 years of the completion of this study.

Your identity will be protected by assigning you a pseudonym that will be used in my notes and all written communication regarding this study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time.

Your signature indicates that you are willing to participate in this study and that you approve of the interviews being recorded. If you have any questions concerning the research, please contact me any time at 205-910-6562. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore, Director of the UAB office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB). Ms. Moore may be contacted at 205-934-3789. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sherene Carpenter

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

UAB Consent Form **irb**

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Working Title: "The Professional Preparation of Alabama Urban High School Alternative Certified Teachers: A Grounded Theory"

INVESTIGATOR: Sherene Carpenter

SPONSOR: UAB Department of Education

Explanation of Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to explore the professional preparation process of urban high school alternative certified teachers. The results are expected to benefit students, parents, alternative certified teachers, administrators, policy makers, school leadership teams, and alternative certification programs, as these efforts will promote teacher growth, teacher retention, and teacher job satisfaction that will lead to better student achievement and quality education in secondary urban high schools.

Examining the process of teacher preparation in urban high schools will allow alternative certified teachers to gain meaningful insights into the preparation process of becoming a high quality teacher. In addition, administrators and teachers will gain a greater understanding of the various roles of formal and informal leaders as it relates to professional preparation.

This study will operate from a framework of studying the organizations of secondary urban high schools to determine what they truly believe about professional preparation of alternative certified teachers, what they value within the organizations, and what the organizations actually do as it relates to professional preparation.

Extensive data collection and analysis is projected to occur within the time period of June 2007 through November 2007. Audio recorded interviews will take place on the school campuses in the offices of each principal. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Observations will take place during professional development sessions at each school. Alternative certified teachers' lesson plans, student discipline files, and professional development documentations will also be analyzed.

Participation in this study will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be asked to participate in a short interview to explore your experiences with supervising alternative certified teachers. This interview will be face to face and will be audio taped. All tapes will be destroyed within three years after the study is complete.

Participant's Initials _____

UAB – IRB
Consent Form Approval _05/08/07_
Expiration Date _____ _05/08/08_

Page 1 of 3
Revised 5/4/07

Risks and Discomforts

The risks and discomforts from participating in this research are no greater than the risks and discomforts from day to day living.

Benefits

You may not personally benefit from your participation in this research; however, your participation may provide valuable information to the educational field about supervising alternative certified teachers.

Alternatives

The alternative is to choose not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. The UAB Institutional Review Board for Human Use may review the records for auditing purposes.

Compensation

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Cost of Participation

There is no cost to participate in this study.

Participant's Initials _____

Opportunity to Ask Questions

You may ask any questions regarding this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may call the investigator at any time at 205-910-6562. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore, Director of the UAB office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB). Ms. Moore may be reached at 205-934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816, and press the option for an operator/attendant to ask for extension 4-3798 between the hours of 8-5 CT, Monday through Friday.

Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Legal Rights

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and discussed the information presented. You will be given a copy of this signed consent form to keep.

Signatures

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol – Principals

Project: The Professional Preparation of Alabama Urban High School Alternative Certified Teachers: A Grounded Theory Study

      Time of interview:_____

      Date:_____

      Place:_____

      Interviewer:_____

      Interviewee:_____

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in this study. I am going to ask you a series of questions. I will take notes during this interview. This interview will also be recorded. Your name, school, or school system will not be mentioned as a part of this study. Are you ready to begin?

Research Interview Questions for Principals:

1. Tell me about yourself (personally/professionally). [Probing questions: How long have you been a principal?

2. How do you feel about the number of ACTs in your school? [Probing questions: How many ACTs do you currently have in your school? Why do you have this number of ACTs in your school?]

3. How well do you think ACTs are prepared when they enter your school? [Probing questions: What are their strengths when they enter your school? What are their weaknesses when they enter your school?]

4. Describe the teacher effectiveness on student achievement of first year ACTs. [Probing questions: Describe them as it relates to the following: Knowledge of subject matter; teaching strategies; classroom organization; student discipline; and student achievement.

5. Describe the effectiveness of ACT as 2nd and 3rd year teachers (how did they grow? [Probing question: How do they affect student achievement as 2nd and 3rd year teachers?]

6. What are some specific needs of first year ACTs? [Probing Questions: Describe some of the professional development sessions specifically designed to address those needs.]

7. What are some of the major issues ACTs face during their 1-2 years of teaching? [Probing questions: How did you address these issues as a principal? How did mentor teachers address these issues? What role did professional development play in addressing these issues?]

8. Describe the planning process for providing professional development for ACTs. [Probing Question: Who is involved in the planning process? Describe your involvement, as the principal, in this process. What professional development opportunities do you provide such as workshops, inservices, etc.?]

9. Describe the mentoring program for ACTs in your school [Probing questions: What role does mentoring and induction play in ACT teacher growth? How does your mentoring affect ACTs? From your perspective, how do mentor teachers assist ACTs in teacher development?]

10. How do the everyday structure and routines of the school (school's culture) assist ACTs in teacher growth and development? [Probing questions: Describe your view of your schools culture as it relates to the following: Providing support to new faculty and staff members; providing a formal mentoring and induction program; professional development; adult learning; and student achievement.

11. What else can you tell me about your experiences with the professional preparation of ACTs?

I appreciate you for taking the time to provide valuable information for my study. If needed, will you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview for any clarifications that may be needed?

Interview Protocol – Alternative Certified Teachers
Project: The Professional Preparation of Alabama Urban High School Alternative
Certified Teachers: A Grounded Theory Study

Time of interview:_____

Date:_____

Place:_____

Interviewer:_____

Interviewee:_____

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in this study. I am going to ask you a list of
questions verbatim. I will take notes during this interview. This interview will also be
recorded. Your name, school, nor school system will be mentioned during this study.
Are you ready to begin?

Research Interview Questions for Alternative Certified Teachers (ACT):

1.   Tell me about yourself. [Probing questions: What was your occupation before
     becoming an alternative certified teacher? Why did you decide to become a
     teacher? What do you teach?]

2.   What type of ACT program did you complete? [Probing questions: What factors
     contributed to the decision of becoming a teacher? Describe the process of
     becoming alternatively certified.]

3.   How well do you think you were prepared when you entered the school setting?
     [Probing questions: How were you prepared to address the following:
     individualized instruction; lesson planning; using student data; classroom
     organization and management; and offering a variety of teaching strategies?]

4.   Describe your experiences as a first year alternative certified teacher. Please
     address the following: student discipline; professional development; and
     mentoring and induction.

5.   What were some of the difficulties you faced as an ACT during your first year of
     teaching? [Probing questions: How did your administrator address these
     difficulties? How did your mentor teacher address these difficulties? How did

any other teacher address these difficulties? What kind of professional development were used to address these difficulties?]

6. What kind of support did you receive from the principal during the first year? [Probing questions: Tell me how this support assisted you as an ACT. Tell me how you wanted to be supported by the school principal or other administrators. How did you want to be supported as it related to the following: professional development, and mentoring and induction?]

7. What kind of support did you receive from your mentor teacher during the first year? [Probing questions: Describe the mentoring relationship. How did your mentor teacher contribute to your professional development? Tell me how the mentor support assisted you as an ACT. Tell me how you wanted to be supported by your mentor teacher.]

8. Excluding your mentor teacher, how did other faculty and staff members assist and support you as a new alternative certified teacher? [Probing questions: Describe any experiences in which other colleagues assisted you in addressing an issue or problem.

9. What types of professional development took place within the school? [Probing questions: How beneficial were these to you as an ACT?]

10. How did the everyday structure and routines of the school (school's culture) assist you in your teaching experiences? [Probing questions: Describe a typical day for you at school as a first year ACT. Describe your view of your schools culture as it relates to the following: Welcoming new faculty and staff members; providing a formal induction program; professional development; adult learning; and student achievement.

11. Describe any advantages of entering the teaching field through ACT programs. [Probing Questions: Describe one of your most joyful experiences as an ACT.]

12. Describe any disadvantages of entering the teaching field through ACT programs. [Probing Questions: Describe one of your most frustrating experiences as an ACT.]

13. What else can you tell me about your experiences an ACT?

14. If you could offer any type of advice to principals, the state department or anything on how to make the transition for alternative certified teachers easier or less stressful that first year, what would it be?

I appreciate you for taking the time to provide valuable information for my study. If needed, will you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview for any clarifications that may be needed?

Interview Protocol – Mentor Teachers
Project: The Professional Preparation of Alabama Urban High School Alternative
Certified Teachers: A Grounded Theory Study

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in this study. I am going to ask you a series of questions verbatim. I will take notes during this interview. This interview will also be recorded. Your name, school, or school system will not be mentioned during this study. Are you ready to begin?

Research Interview Questions for Mentor Teachers:

1. Tell me about yourself (personally and professionally). [Probing questions: How old are you? What type of degree(s) do you hold? How many years have you been a teacher? What do you teach? How long have you mentored new teachers? How many teachers do you currently mentor?]

2. What other leadership roles or responsibilities do you hold within the school? [How do these affect your job and time as a mentor?]

3. How do you manage your time with teaching duties, mentor duties, other school responsibilities?

4. What are your responsibilities as a mentor teacher? [What types of formal mentor training have you received?]

5. Describe your experiences as a mentor teacher. [Tell me of one of your most joyful experiences as a mentor.]

6. What do you view as advantages of having a formal mentor teacher? [Disadvantages of not having a mentor.]

7. How well do you think alternative certified teachers are prepared when they enter the school setting? [Please speak to lesson planning, student discipline, teaching strategies, individualizes instruction, using student data. As a mentor teacher how do you provide assistance with any weaknesses the first year?]

8. What are some of the major issues ACT face during their 1-3 years of teaching?

[Probing questions: How did you address these issues as a mentor teacher? How did you involve the principal in addressing these issues? How did any other teacher play a role in addressing these issues? What kind of professional development were used to address these issues?]

9. What kind of support did you receive from the principal as a mentor teacher? [Probing questions: Tell me how you want to be supported by the principal. Describe your working relationship with the principal]

10. How do other teachers (informal mentors) assist in the progress of ACT?[How do they hinder the progress?]

11. How do the everyday structure and routines of the school (school's culture) assist you in your mentoring experiences? [Probing questions: Describe your view of your schools culture as it relates to the following: Welcoming new faculty and staff members; providing a formal mentoring and induction program; professional development; and student achievement.]

12. What else can you tell me about your mentoring experiences or ACT?

I appreciate you for taking the time to provide valuable information for my study. If needed, will you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview for any clarifications that may be needed?

APPENDIX D

IRB Compliance Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Institutional Review Board for Human Use

DATE: **May 9, 2007**

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Sherene Carpenter**
Principal Investigator

FROM: Charlene Walker
Assistant Director, Office of the IRB

RE: **IRB Protocol #X070413015**
The Professional Preparation of Alabama Urban High School Alternative
Certified Teachers: A Grounded Theory

The IRB Vice Chair has reviewed your expedited application for above the reference proposal
The protocol has been approved with the exception that you will not be allowed to review the
discipline write ups of alternative certified teachers for this research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

cw