

The University of Southern Mississippi

**GEORGIA ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL BOARD**

**CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS**

by

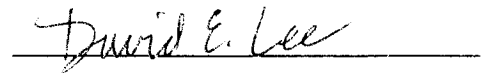
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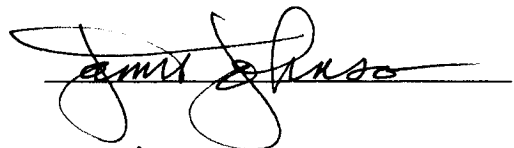
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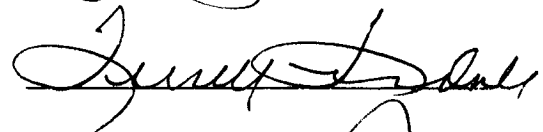
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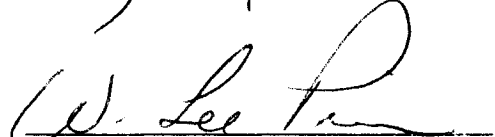
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2004

PREVIEW

The University of Southern Mississippi

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CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

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Abstract of a Dissertation  
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## ABSTRACT

### GEORGIA ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

by Amanda Kelly Richie

May 2004

Teaching is one of the most important careers in our society. There are many reasons why people wish to become teachers. The most prominent reason is a desire to work with young people (Ornstein & Levin, 1993). Like all professions, teaching has changed considerably over the years and with these changes, the expectations of what a teacher should know and be able to do has changed as well.

The National Board was established in 1987 as a result of several published reports on the condition of American's schools and through an effort to reform schools and the process of schooling. The mission of the board was to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet the specific standards and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools (Kelley, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to gain information based on the perceptions of randomly selected administrators throughout the state of Georgia regarding National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and in particular the hiring practices that might be affected by this certification. The study explored several areas to determine the value of National Board Standards and National Board Certification as perceived by administrators. Administrators completed a survey instrument developed to acquire

knowledge about the quality of Board Certified teachers and hiring decisions based on the standards and assessment of Board Certified teachers.

The study investigated administrators' perceptions based on three socio-economic levels of schools. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of the administrators in low, medium, or high of socio-economic levels of schools. The study also looked at the administrators' perceptions in relation to whether or not there was a Board Certified teacher at that administrator's school. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of administrators that had Board Certified teachers and those administrators that did not have Board Certified teachers within their buildings.

The findings of the instrument suggested that administrators did not perceive National Board Certified teachers as superior educators and most did not use the standards or the certification in hiring or evaluating teachers. Administrators, however, did believe that teachers should be supported and rewarded for the certification.

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PREVIEW

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

As education in our country has evolved and continues to change, so have the expectations and standards for those who educate. The expectations of what constitutes a quality teacher have been a recurring theme throughout the history of American education and have been a goal of most educational reforms (Hunt, 2003).

Efforts to professionalize teaching began during the 19th century, as expectations of teachers broadened to include less subjective qualifications. By the 20th century teachers were expected to be scientific experts with a concern for the character of the pupil and a mission to educate (McNergney & Herbert, 1998). Teaching is different from other professions in that teachers do not control their own entry into the profession. Physicians, lawyers, accountants, and other professionals control the people who enter their professions by setting minimum standards for professional practice. In the teaching profession, other people who are not typically teachers or even in the educational field such as school board members, state legislators, and governors, control decisions regarding professional practice, professional progress, and curricula to be followed and taught to the student by teachers. Despite the differences found in other professions, teachers are still regarded by the public as professionals based on how they perceive a teachers thinking and behavior (Fenstermacher, 1990). Teachers are held accountable for possessing specialized knowledge and applying it when conditions warrant. Successful educators are perceived as caring deeply about others, having a passion for teaching and learning and serving as models for their students (McNergney & Herbert, 1998).

To become a teacher, one must typically be admitted to an accredited teacher

education program. Upon completion of general, professional, and clinical studies a teacher then can earn a bachelor's or master's degree in a given educational field. The student must then acquire a teacher certification that is established and monitored by each state. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS), forty-three states in the U.S. require a national teacher examination as a test of teacher competency (2003). These must be taken for state certification. In recent years, many states have promoted alternative certification or approval to teach without having participated in the standard educational programs (Darling-Hammond, 1995).

In the late 1980's, many organizations called for the reform of teacher education. Some of the more influential groups pressing for reform included the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), the Holmes Group, the Task Force of the Carnegie Forum, the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), and the National Governor's Association (NGA). These reform agencies have played and will continue to play an important role in the teaching profession (McNergney & Herbert, 1998). One report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, issued by the Task Force of the Carnegie Forum, placed some of the greatest emphasis on reforming schools and the processes of schooling. In this report a proposal was made to create a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This board would be comprised of regional and state membership to establish high standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do and to certify teachers who meet these standards (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was established in 1987 by the Carnegie Corporation. The mission of the board was to

establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet the specific standards and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools (Kelley,1999).

The board's goal has been to establish a system of national certification for individual teachers who represent the best and the brightest in the teaching profession. It was developed to complement, not replace existing state licensure and to allow teachers to be judged by their peers on their competence and professionalism. The board developed Five Core Propositions based on educational theory and practice that identify behaviors and attributes of professional qualified teachers. These propositions provide the foundation for the subject area standards and assessment exercises involved in the certification process. The core propositions are as follows:

Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

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

Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

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

Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 1991 pp. 17-21).

National Board Certified teachers demonstrate these attributes by voluntarily paying a fee of \$2300 and participating in a yearlong process that identifies them as highly qualified teachers by the National Board for Professional Standards. As of

November 2003, more than 32,131 teachers had received National Board Certification (NBPTS, 2003).

What value is National Board Certification to a teacher? Does it give a teacher more status as a professional? Does the certification carry more weight on a resume? Does the teacher become a better educator? The people most likely to answer these questions are the people who hire, observe, and evaluate the teacher, the administrators of the school. The principal usually determines if a teacher is a qualified educator by the interviews he holds with the teacher, the background of the teacher including credentials and certification examinations, and observations and evaluations of the teacher within the classroom (Wheat, Cramer & Cramer, 2000).

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) and its emphasis on teacher quality was a result of the growing teacher shortage in the late 1990's due to class-size reduction initiatives and teacher retirements. During this time, many untrained candidates were drafted into teaching on emergency certificates. These teachers most often were placed in areas of critical shortage and in high poverty schools. The new ESEA requires a highly qualified teacher for every classroom by 2005 (Firetag & Solmon, 2002).

Educational leaders across the United States are focused on teacher quality as the essential factor for improving American public education (Firetag & Solmon, 2002). In January, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law H.R. 1, *No Child Left Behind Act*, passed by Congress acknowledging the importance of having highly qualified educators in every classroom. The act will provide federal funds to support a candidate subsidy program and outreach and recruitment initiatives. The law defines "highly

qualified” as being fully licensed through traditional or alternative routes and demonstrates subject matter competency, generally by having an academic major or its equivalent or by passing an approved test (Quality Counts, 2003). The NBPTS announced in January 2003 that National Board Certified teachers would be recognized as “highly qualified” teachers by the *No Child Left Behind Act* and that state and local education agencies could use federal funds from this act to develop grants and provide funds for National Board Certification of teachers (NBPTS, 2003).

#### Statement of the Problem

This study was guided by the following problem statement: What are the perceptions of Georgia administrators regarding teachers who have acquired certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and in particular their hiring practices that might be affected by the certification? This problem was selected based on the research and knowledge that school administrators have the most influence in the hiring process of teachers and the most intimate knowledge of the actual performance of teachers on a daily basis within the classroom. This study sought to determine whether principals perceived teachers with National Board Certification as more qualified and more knowledgeable than those teachers who have not received National Board Certification. Specifically, this study looked for answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Do Georgia administrators perceive National Board Certified teachers to be superior educators based upon this certification?
- 2) How do administrator’s perceptions regarding National Board Certification influence hiring decisions of teachers?

- 3) Do administrators believe that National Board Certified teachers should be rewarded for their efforts?
- 4) Do administrators use National Board standards as a reference during the hiring and evaluating of teachers?
- 5) Do administrators perceive National Board as the ultimate staff development and do they believe each school should be required to hire national Board certified teachers as leaders within their schools?

The ultimate goal of this study was to provide information to administrators, teachers, and others that make decisions about the quality of teacher performance based on a teacher acquiring certification from The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The study also sought to investigate the value and what value this certification has for teachers regarding employment as a quality teacher.

#### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>-There will be a significant difference between administrators who have had or have National Board Certified teachers within their school and those administrators who do not have National Board Certified teachers within their school in regard to perceptions and hiring practices.

H<sub>2</sub>-There will be no significant difference between administrator's perceptions of National Board Certification in regard to socio-economic levels of the school.

#### Definition of Terms

The following clarifying terms are offered for the purpose of this study:

Attributes of Exemplary Teachers-The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards define 13 attributes of exemplary teaching based on an analysis of an extensive



body of published research studies on the qualifications that are needed to be an expert teacher.

Certification Field-Certification fields for National Board certification were initially established based on the standards, fairness, structure of the education system and parsimony. Originally there were a limited number of certification fields, but in succeeding years the NBPTS created additional fields for certification. Certification fields are based on developmental age levels and subject/discipline areas. The NBPTS has completed 24 certifications with the development of at least 10 more planned for in the future. (NBPTS, 2002).

Highly Qualified Educator-a fully licensed educator. Either licensed through traditional or alternative routes and demonstrates subject matter competency, generally having an academic major or its equivalent or by passing an approved test (Quality Counts, 2003).

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate-The recognition of accomplished teaching in one or more teaching fields received by a teacher upon successful completion of the NBPTS certification assessment process.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards- A non-profit organization funded by private and governmental agencies and primarily governed by practicing teachers to improve the standards of teaching in the United States. The abbreviation NBPTS is used throughout this study.

Socio-economic level of a School-this is based on the percentage of free and reduced lunches purchased within a school to determine the average socio-economic level of a school.

Standards- Each certification area of the NBPTS has a unique list of identified standards for that field of teaching. These standards must be demonstrated at a high level to achieve certification and are based on the five core propositions of the NBPTS.

#### Delimitation

The following delimitations will be applied to this study:

The sample was delimited to administrators of elementary, middle, and high schools in public school districts in Georgia.

#### Significance of the Study

This study was conducted to examine Georgia administrators' perceived value of certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The population who has the most contact, data, and information about teachers within the school setting are the school administrators (Kirst, 1990). The study sought to find answers that may help teachers and others see the value in obtaining National Board Certification by examining Georgia administrators' knowledge of Board Certification, their perceptions of teachers that possess certification, and their hiring practices of teachers with certification. Teachers are voluntarily paying for and giving up valuable time to achieve this certification (Jenkins, 2000). Some teachers receive monetary bonuses from their state, others are given more roles of leadership and responsibility, while others go through the process for validation that they are quality teachers. But what do those who evaluate these teachers think about this certification?

A study by Brooks (1992) explored the attitudes of school administrators toward National Board Certified teachers. A national survey of 1,499 school administrators was conducted. The study found that administrators strongly agreed with the statement that

teaching could be made more attractive with national certification. They also agreed that teachers with certification should have more authority and responsibility. The administrators also agreed that teachers with national certification should have priority over other teachers for vacancies that must be filled in schools. However, administrators disagreed that school boards should hire specific percentages of teachers with national certification and disagreed with paying those with the certification a higher salary. Those administrators with the highest knowledge of the NBPST had the most favorable attitudes in regard to hiring practices, roles of leadership, and rewards for teachers gaining the certification (Brooks, 1992). This study was conducted in the early stages of National Board Certification. Administrators were not as familiar with this certification and only 177 teachers in the nation had the certification in 1993, the first year that it was awarded.

This study examined administrators' perceptions of National Board after 12 years and 32,134 certified teachers. Does National Board Certification make a difference? Is there a distinction between those teachers who receive the certification and those who do not? Is National Board Certification truly a way to decide if a teacher is highly qualified or is it just a union dominated progressive ideal (Petrosky, 2001)? By examining the perceptions of administrators, a better understanding of the true value of National Board Certification can be obtained. This information could be used to make decisions about the future of National Board Certification and where these teachers need to be placed. It could also help in making decisions about the leadership roles and responsibilities that these teachers are given within the school setting. The study could help guide hiring practices of National Board Certified teachers and the allotment of funds to promote and fund Board Certification in the future.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### History of Educational Reform

In Colonial America, teachers were very poorly prepared; most had received no special training at all (Cohen, 1974). The single qualification was that they themselves had been students. Teaching was considered a temporary job for women who had not yet found husbands or for those men not suitable to be a husband. The main objective of these schools was strictly religious. Between 1820 and 1860 an educational transformation took place in America. Horace Mann influenced this movement. As secretary of the State Board of Education, Mann helped to establish common elementary schools in Massachusetts. These schools were designed to provide a basic elementary education for all children. In his journal, The Common School Journal, Mann kept educational issues before the public (Cohen, 1974).

By 1900, thirty-two states had passed compulsory elementary school attendance laws (Cohen, 1974). As the public became more aware of education, the need for more teacher preparation was expected. The first teacher training school, a private school called the normal school, was established in 1823. These schools were the beginning of teacher training in the United States. Most of these normal schools did not require a high school education until 1900. Again, Horace Mann was instrumental in establishing the first state-supported normal school in 1839. States began to establish these state-supported normal schools until the early 1900's. As the population grew, the enrollment in elementary schools also grew. There was a need for more and better qualified teachers. The demand for teachers increased from about 20,000 in 1900 to more than

200,000 in 1930. The length of teacher education programs expanded from 2 years to 4 years. As the normal schools extended their programs to 4 years and began granting degrees, they became known as state teachers' colleges. Today, some of our largest and most highly regarded universities began from a normal school and a state teacher college (Cohen, 1974).

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many changes took place in the educational arena. Three main reasons have been cited for these major changes (Ravitch, 1983): the rapid growth of our society and educational systems, the increased complexity of the educational enterprise, and the growing trends in education. With these many changes, the perceptions of public education and teaching have become more complex. As teachers became more trained and educated, a movement to develop more professionalism has developed throughout the educational field (Ravith, 1983).

During this time period, each state established requirements for a teaching certificate. The states determined their own standards for the certificate and these varied from state to state. Observational scales were developed to assess teachers in different ways. Flanders studied communication between students and teachers (Flanders, 1970). Other studies were conducted using time-motion theories used in industry studies and applied to education (McNergney & Herbert, 1998). Further advancements in education took place through the involvement of the federal government. The Vocational Education for National Defense Act prepared workers needed in industry during wartime. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill of Rights) provided education to veterans of World War II, Korean Conflict, and later to veterans of the war in Southeast Asia. The National Science Foundation was established in 1950 and emphasized the need for

scientific research (Ravitch, 1983). These advancements were some of the first federally financed programs during the postwar era. Although many federal programs have been successful, all have proved to be problematic because of special interests groups and unique political dynamics that come with federal aid legislation (Ornstein & Levine, 1993).

In 1957, the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union stimulated widespread demands for more rigorous academic standards and programs (Dow, 1991). Sputnik broadened the debate over the quality and condition of American public education that had been going on since the early 1950's. The emphasis was placed on math, science, and foreign language (Dow, 1991). The National Defense Act of 1958 offered low-cost loans so that more of the population could attend college (Clowse, 1981). Federal funds were appropriated to improve curricula and instruction in areas considered crucial to national defense and security. More funds were expended to better prepare more teachers for more classrooms. This produced a mood of national crisis that "something was wrong with American schools" (Ravitch, 1983, p.176).

As the 1960's approached, the citizens of the United States were expecting better quality schools and better qualified educators. In 1962, President J.F. Kennedy urged efforts to raise standards in teacher education programs (1962). The president stated that:

.....the key to educational quality is in the teaching profession.

About one out of every five of the nearly 1,600,000 teachers in our elementary and secondary schools fail to meet full certification standards for teaching or has not completed four years of college work. Our immediate concern should be to afford them every

possible opportunity to improve their professional skills and their command of the subjects they teach. (p.5)

As Lyndon B. Johnson moved into office after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, his goal was to be recognized as the “education president”. His Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) provided more than a billion dollars to equalize educational opportunities and produce Title funds for the states (Irwin, 1992). These funds were to help the minority groups that were educationally disadvantaged because of social and economic conditions. A range of early childhood educational programs for these children was created known as Operation Head Start. The 1960’s also brought about several new teaching methodologies such as team teaching, flexible scheduling, and non-graded schools. The decade produced new instructional technologies such as educational television and computer-based instruction. At the closing of the 1960’s, American schools had been changed but the effects of the change proved to be limited (Heath, 1975).

The next decade brought with it a great deal of social and economical transitions (Ornstein & Levine, 1993). These changes restructured the character of American life and the expectations of the American people. One of these changes was the creation of Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination against women in education programs that received federal assistance. Another change was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) that helped improve opportunities for handicapped children to have an appropriate public education (Orstein & Levine, 1993). During this time, the rising cost of energy and incessant inflation slowed the rate of economic growth in the country. Schools had to

reduce spending and their work force. Teachers' salaries were low and many lost jobs. American corporations lost their supremacy in world trade to Japan, West Germany, and other countries. Out of this decade came the creation of the Department of Education. It coordinated federal education initiatives by bringing various programs under the direction of one agency and raised educational issues to national prominence. Opponents of the new department charged that it would not only add to federal interference and bureaucracy but would involve the federal government in an area that properly belonged to the state and local governments. Congress enacted the department in 1979 by a narrow margin (Ravitch, 1983).

Throughout the 1980's, the condition of American education once again became, a hotly debated topic. This decade brought a shift from a stress on equity and solutions of societal problems to a focus on academic and technological achievement that would enable the nation to compete in an increasingly difficult world market. (Altbach, Kelly, & Wise, 1993). Unlike earlier shifts in education, the new Reagan administration of 1980 reduced federal financial support for education, transferring much of the responsibility to state governments. During this time, a series of national reports spotlighted failures in American schooling, much as the critics of the Sputnik era had done. These reports began a new wave of reform for the nation's schools.

President Reagan appointed Terrell Bell to be the new Secretary of the Department of Education. He appointed the National Commission of Excellence in Education to write a report on the condition of American education. The report was entitled The Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983). The report