Teacher Certification Essay, Research Paper

Teacher Certification

The whole issue of teacher certification is one of great importance and

when discussed must be done in a delicate and thoughtful manner. The reason for

this increasing importance is because the education of our nation’s teachers is

important to the creation of an ideal education system, which is one of the

goals of our national government and State governments. Over the years the

whole educational reform movement has become an increasingly “hot” topic.

Reforms in the administration of school systems and in curriculum theory and

practice have been asked for and a4re currently being put into effect. Recently,

reform of the education of teachers is being added to the lo9ng list of reforms

needed. Many reform activists feel that direct changes need to be made on the

methods of training and certifying the teachers of our country. Before looking

at the reform movement, however, one must first look at the so called problem of

inconsistency in teacher certification.

In our country today there is a general consistency among the

requirements for state certification of teachers. Most states require their

teacher institutions to establish a teacher education program that includes

coursework and fieldwork. The coursework includes those courses that prepare a

student to become a professional teacher and those classes that include major

and minor fields of specialization. Fieldwork, which is probably the most

important of the two forms of requirements, involves the individual interested

in being a teacher going out and observing, practicing, and preparing to enter

the educational world as an instructor. There is no argument that all schools

in every state has these basic requirements of teacher certification. However,

the inconsistency lies within how the numerous institutions go about in teaching

these requirements. Each post-secondary school is given the jurisdiction to

choose how they are going to go about meeting these basic teacher certification

requirements. For example, many states require a different amount of field

hours. An inconsistency can also be seen in the various models of teacher

education that are used throughout the nation. Two education researchers,

Howey and Zimpher conducted a study on this variety of models in 1989. They

came up with three different attempts of teacher training. The first, known as

the teacher’s college model, involves certification students entering a separate

school within a university that is a “teacher’s college”. The second approach

is called the liberal arts model by the researchers, and is a method that

requires and individual to become specialized in a certain liberal arts subject

in order to create “capable and cultured human beings”. The third and final

model discussed by Howley and Zimpher is entitled the competency-based model.

This method trains individuals in the arts o motivation and understanding. As

one can see by this case study, there have been a variety of approaches to

teacher certification. An inconsistency can similarly be detected by looking at

the various new and innovative ideas in teacher education. Among these include

the alternative route, a topic discussed earlier, and the five-year degree

program, and issue to be discussed shortly in this section. Altogether, one

could state that there is some inconsistency in teacher certification, and this

inconsistency brings about a small problem in the educational spectrum of our

world. In my opinion, there is no national and universal set of requirements

for teacher certification. The variety of different methods and forms of

teacher education programs is causing an inconsistency in how teachers are being

trained nationwide. When this is realized, the whole issue of reforming teacher

certification becomes very relevant to our society.

As stated earlier, reforms in the training of future teachers are

beginning to really be requested by the general public. Various groups have met

to discuss the various issues surrounding the reform movement. Among the most

notable are the Holmes Group, the Association of American Colleges of Teacher

Education (AACTE), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), and Goodlad’s

group. These various groups and many others have come up with a variety of

reforms and new standards that most likely should and will be integrated into

the current teacher certification requirements. One certain similarity that all

of these recommendations have with each other is that they all call for higher

regulations and an increase in the education of future teachers. Many of the

group0s called for an increase in providing individuals knowledge on the

profession of teachi8ng, and some groups also called for a more intense training

in the various fields under a liberal arts education. Increases in the amount

of fieldwork required seems to also be a major issue discussed by the reform

groups. The issue of selection under standardized testing was also discussed,

with respect to increasing the required SAT/ACT or GRE scores. Finally, the

research groups came up with various new ideas involving the creation of

professional teaching schools or tiered systems that would require a teacher to

go through more training even after they received their bachelor’s degree. All

in all, these reform groups have come up with some very unique and interesting

ideas to change teacher certification for the better. It is the best interest

of our nation to make changes in our current teacher education program, for, in

this case, change would be for the better. To conclude, I would like to take a

brief but in depth look at an innovative idea established by the Maine State

Department of Education in conjunction with the University of Southern Maine.

This program, entitled the Extended Teacher Education Program, involves future

teachers continuing on for a fifth year after completing their undergraduate

studies. This fifth year involves the individual taking part in internships.

These internships give the future teachers a chance at more fieldwork in order

to gain more experiences before they become full fledged teachers. Nonetheless,

the results of the initial year of the program seem to indicate that the idea

around this new program is a successful one. Those individuals who took part in

the program obtained various skills and understandings that all ideal teachers

should have. The excellent outcomes of this program leads one to believe that

it might be a good idea to implement this structure nationwide. The idea of

creating professional schools for teachers has become a popular one in recent

times. After all if doctors and lawyers have to go to a professional school,

then shouldn’t teachers as well?

In conclusion, the issue of teacher training and certification brings up

many questions, especially in reference to reforming. The inconsistent and

somewhat outdated education of teachers today needs change, in order to create

an ideal educational system. Numerous reforms have been discussed and

recommended by various research organizations and now is the time to take action

and implement some of these reforms before our education systems continue to

fall downwards into the depths of degradation. Change I needed and change must

come now.