

*Voices of Public School Personnel on the Effectiveness
of National Board Certification*

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There is a need to examine the effectiveness of national Board Certified teachers. In this research study, data were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of National Board Certification teachers. The purpose of this study were to (a) analyze the perceptions of public school principals on the effectiveness of National Board certified teachers, (b) analyze the perceptions of teachers on their effectiveness of National Board certified teachers, and (c) determine whether differences exist in their perceptions based on gender, ethnicity, school role, and school level. The results from the mixed-method analysis showed that public school personnel's perceptions on the effectiveness of National Board certified teachers varied.

The State of North Carolina leads the country in the number of teachers that are NBPTS certified. As of December 2007, about 12, 770 North Carolina teachers have achieved this certification (NBPTS, 2007). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is an independent, nonprofit organization with the goal of establishing standards for teaching effectiveness. National Board Certification process is highly extensive and it involves yearlong assessment of actual teaching practice based on rigorous standards established by NBPTS (NBPTS, 2002b). The assessment process for teachers has two parts. The performance-based part of the assessment is done at the teacher's school where they build a portfolio that contain videotapes of classroom teaching, lesson plans, student work samples and reflective logs. The written assessment part involves a series of timed, written examinations for subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge. There are currently more than 55,000 National Board Certified Teachers in all 50 states (NBPTS, 2007). Participation in the programs has dramatically increased over the years partly due to the financial incentives associated with the certification.

States like North Carolina has invested heavily on National Board Certification, and the state has the largest number of National board Certified teachers. North Carolina encourages teachers to seek NBPTS certification, and has implemented statewide incentive for the process. The state pays the application fees of \$2,300 for teachers who wish to pursue the certification and certified teachers receive an automatic 12 percent increase in their base salary. Limited research has been conducted on the perceptions of public school personnel on the effectiveness of NBPTS certification.

This study analyzed the perceptions of public school principals and teachers on the effectiveness of NBPTS certified teachers. In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the perceptions of public school principals on the effectiveness of NBPTS certified teachers?
2. What are the perceptions of public school teachers on the effectiveness of NBPTS certified teachers?
3. Are there differences in their reported perceptions based on gender, ethnicity and school level?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This research was based on the Five Core Propositions that described what quality teachers regardless of certification status should know and be able to do (NBPTS, 1989). The propositions states that teachers are committed to students and their learning, teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students, teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 1999). The basic goal of NBPTS is to promote and advance the quality of teaching and learning through established standards (NBPTS, 2002b). Prior work in the area of National Board Certification has evaluated the relationship between national board certification status of teachers and student academic achievement (Cavalluzo, 2004; Finn, 2003; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Podgursky, 2001; Stone, 2002). Cavalluzo (2004) concluded that national board certification is an effective measure of teacher quality. Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) concluded in their large scale study that going through the NBPTS assessment process add to teachers' human capital, but found mixed results on their effectiveness. Research has concluded that students exposed to high quality instruction learn more than other students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Shulman (1987) identified seven areas of professional knowledge for quality teaching, which includes academic subject knowledge, knowledge of teaching strategies, knowledge of curriculum materials and programs, subject-specific knowledge for teaching students with special needs. Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) concluded that certification status of teachers is a measure of subject knowledge, knowledge of teaching and learning, and teaching experience.

Method

Participants

The sampling frame for this study consisted of public school principals and teachers from three school districts in southeastern North Carolina. While North Carolina is the number one state in NBPTS certification, these school districts ranked high amongst the nation's top 20 school districts in the number of teachers receiving certification in 2006, and high in the number of school districts in North Carolina. Cluster sampling of schools within three school districts were done to include participants from different school levels - elementary, middle and high schools. The preliminary results from the study showed that seventy-five (75) survey questionnaires were returned representing a twenty-five (25%) percent response rate. Although the response rate was low, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were similar to the ones in the

school districts of the study. Table 1 is used to depict the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of ethnicity. The majority of the participants were Caucasians (54.7%), while African-American were 42.7%.

Table 1: Ethnicity of the Participants

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
African-American	42.7%	32
Caucasian	54.7%	41
Others	1.6%	2

The majority of the respondents were female (80.0%) compared to 20% of males (Table 2). About forty-eight (48.0%) of the participants have roles in elementary school level compared to 30.7% with role in high school and 21.3% in middle school (Table 2).

Table 2: Participants' Gender and School Level

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Male	20.0%	15
Caucasian	80.0%	60
<u>School Level</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Elementary	48,0%	36
Middle	21.3%	16
High	30.7%	23

The majority of the participants for this study are school teachers (61.3%) and non-National Board certified teachers (69.3%) as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants' School Classification and NB Certification Status

<u>School Classification</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
School Executives	38.7%	29
School Teacher	61.3%	46
<u>NBC Status</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
NBCertified	30.7%	23
Non-NBCertified	69.3%	52

The participants number of years in the field ranged from 30.7% for 20 years or more to 18.7% for 1 – 3 years in the field as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Participants' Years in the Field

<u>Years in the Field</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
1 – 3 years	18.7%	14
4 –7 years	10.7%	8
8 –11 years	14.7%	11
12 – 15 years	13.3%	10
16 – 19 years	12.0%	9
20 years and up	30.7%	23

Instrument

In this mixed-method study, the researchers constructed the National Board Effectiveness Survey (NBES) questionnaire after a detailed review of literature. The researchers employed the triangulated approach by using both qualitative and quantitative survey questionnaire to determine the perceptions of public school personnel on the effectiveness of teachers who are National Board certified. Johnson and Christenson

(2004) emphasized that the use of multiple perspectives strengthens educational research. Denzi (1978) identified the use of different types of measure as a good methodological triangulation. There is a strong indication that this methodology yielded stronger evidence for our conclusion through the collaboration of findings from qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christenson, 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Data Analysis

Data from the study were analyzed in two phases. Firstly, a qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis was used to categorize and make judgment about the perceptions of public school personnel on the effectiveness of National Board certified teachers. This procedure allowed important themes from the data to emerge. Reflective practitioners (89%), steps for higher earnings (71%), as effective as other teachers (68%), effective classroom skills (65%), and higher behavioral expectations for students (58%) were the themes that emerged from the study (Table 5). One participant wrote *“NBC is a long process with lots of reflecting and writing which makes them more reflective than others.”* One school executive emphasized *“teachers that are in my school that are NBCT are quality teachers that have positive impact on their students, and you can pick them out through personal observation that they are different from others.”* Another participant who is NB certified wrote *“the process makes you think and reflect about what you as a teacher should be doing to teach and motivate your students.”*

Table 5

Qualitative Data Themes	
<u>Themes</u>	<u>Rate (%)</u>
Reflective Practitioners	89.0%
Steps for Higher Earnings	71.0%
As Effective as Other Teachers	68.1%
Effective Classroom Skills	65.0%
Higher Behavioral Expectations for Students	58.0%

Descriptive statistics was used to determine whether differences exist among the participants in terms of gender, school level and roles. The mean scores of the participants’ responses were computed and presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Quantitative Data Results

Variables	Instructional Skills		Classroom Skills		Personal Skills	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std Dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std Dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std Dev</u>
School Executives	4.24	0.652	4.34	0.706	4.110	0.742
School Teachers	3.31	1.074	3.29	1.094	3.452	1.065
Male	4.53	0.847	4.67	0.928	4.25	0.765
Female	3.540	1.066	3.129	1.061	3.44	1.018
Elementary	3.15	1.152	3.36	1.081	4.17	0.716
Middle	3.31	1.024	3.68	1.004	3.35	1.065
High	4.04	1.101	3.88	1.028	3.45	1.152
NB Certified	4.34	0.486	4.42	0.506	4.41	0.486
Non-NB certified	3.26	1.109	3.21	1.048	3.25	1.059

There were some differences in the perceptions of public school personnel on the effectiveness of National Board certified teachers. The public school executives in this study overwhelmingly perceive NB certified teachers as being highly effective in terms of instructional skills, classroom skills, and personal skills than teachers. The Participants in this study with roles in elementary schools perceived NB certified teachers as being more effective in personal; skills than participants from middle and high schools. It is interesting to note that male participants perceive NB certified teachers as being more effective in instructional, classroom, and personal skills than female participants.

Conclusion

The use of mixed-method approach in this study yielded inclusive and useful results. The qualitative results complement the findings from quantitative analysis

(Creswell, 2007). Both analyses showed that public school personnel perceived NB certified teachers to be reflective practitioners. The public school executives in this study perceived NB certified teachers to be highly effective teachers in terms of instructional, classroom, and personal skills. This finding is very important since the major role of school executives is instructional leadership. The findings from this study have policy implications to educational leaders and teacher education programs.

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