Preparing the Standardized Teacher: The Effects of Accountability on Teacher Education

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EMPHASIS ON STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY has been increasing since the emergence of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). While there have been many attempts to bring attention to the negative effects these reforms have on students in P-12 public education, less consideration has been made for teacher education. This article addresses the role the marketplace has had in the proliferation of accountability measures and how this has affected teacher education. This article attempts to address the following questions: who is determining what constitutes a *quality teacher*, what are their motives, and what effects does this have on those in teacher education?

The Marketplace as a Driving Force

The evolution of public education to its current state has been driven by the desire for money that has been disguised by the altruism of standards and accountability (Taubman, 2009). In P-12 education, corporations have developed curriculum and testing materials that respond to the increase focus on accountability. In higher education, corporations such as Pearson noticed an opportunity to appeal to teacher education associations by producing performance assessments for pre-service teachers as a means to professionalize the teaching profession. As a result, these corporations benefit from increased revenue. Apple (2001) identifies a combination of neoliberal, neoconservative, and managerial tendencies that are responsible for the "proposals to totally deregulate teacher education so that competition among institutions of higher education, private for-profit training agencies, and school districts themselves will supposedly reinvigorate teacher education and make these programs more cost-effective and efficient" (p. 182). Amongst the most demanding of the *masters* of teacher education are not the teacher educators but those operating under the philosophy of market economics residing outside the institution (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2000). It is clear that these *masters* who take an interest in teacher education are driven by the desire to increase their capital as they reap financial benefits, rather than improve

the quality of our teachers.

The policies of NCLB opened up a myriad of opportunities for businesses to develop products that appeal to educators and institutions by promising to assist in meeting policy demands. Spring (2011) asserts that the motive for businesses in the education industry to influence policies revolves around ensuring the purchase of their products. There is a tremendous amount of evidence indicating for-profit corporations are beginning to take over education (see Taubman, 2009). Even nonprofit corporations, such as the Educational Testing Service, are motivated to make money and increase salaries for their managers (Spring, 2011). Teachers, teacher educators, and administrators are aware of the fact corporations are consuming the market in education, a market that was created by the corporations themselves, but there appears to be little resistance (Taubman, 2009). It is clear to see the marketization in P-12 education with textbooks aligning with standards, high stakes testing, for-profit professional development, and data systems for student measurement tracking. However, businesses have penetrated teacher education as well.

The education industry has grown and there are several reasons why it is likely to continue expanding including the desire for businesses to claim their territory to obtain some of the billions of dollars available (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005). In addition, the negative press education has received creates opportunities for businesses to sell products and services as an attempt to remedy the problems in education (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005). It is alarmingly clear the future of teacher education lies in the power of the business-controlled world of education and is confirmed by the marketed materials for training and development of teachers (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005).

Corporations and organizations have gained control of pre-service teacher evaluation systems. While standardized assessments in teacher education are not new, the additions of a required performance based assessment controlled by corporations outside the institution are something different on the rise. These systems focus on teacher education students meeting pre-determined standards and fitting a specific mold, therefore differences among students thoughts and actions related to curriculum and pedagogy are not embraced. Because to value these differences, would not serve the political agenda of conforming to one American norm (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005). This agenda aims to maximize profit and minimize conflicting ideologies, which situates capital above educational improvement for all (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005).

The business community is visibly involved in the formation of policy at the state level and can be seen by the use of language to communicate the policies (Taubman, 2009). Corporations that are involved in producing educational resources have profited off of their alignment with standards and accountability (Taubman, 2009). Corporations and organizations that are designing the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) used in teacher education are attempting to appeal to the desire to professionalize teaching by creating standards and measurement instruments.

Pinar (2012) states "teacher education today threatens to become culture-in-the-unmaking as it is deprofessionalized by anti-intellectual interventions by government and presumably professional organizations" (p. 35). These professional organizations require evidence that standards are met and this evidence comes from Teacher Performance Assessments produced by corporations, which gain profit or increase salaries as a result. These corporations are concerned with their own interests, not those of teacher education students. The process in which teacher education students and institutions are evaluated is a move backward and reveals

the shifting power in education (Apple, 2005). The power is shifting away from the individual teacher education institutions toward oppressive and increasingly bureaucratic processes of evaluation (Apple, 2005).

Standardization in Teacher Education

In addition to the increase of more market-based approaches in education, there are attempts to create uniformity and a more centralized authority to determine what are important teacher skills and knowledge (Apple, 2012). The motives to increase education for all by creating uniform standards in teacher education does not guarantee results out in real schools (Apple, 2012). These standards and assessments increase the pre-service teachers' workloads and promote the use of dominant teaching models instead of encouraging diversity in curriculum and pedagogy (Apple, 2012). Performance assessments do not prepare teachers to understand the current ideological and political restructuring that surrounds them and think strategically about what these larger forces mean (Apple, 2012). Many of the keywords that surround these assessments such as accountability, evidence, and quality are *sliding signifiers* because they have no essential meaning but are used by different groups with different agendas (Apple, 2005). Many would agree that teacher education needs improvement. However, increasing standards and accountability fails to address major issues such as deciding on what counts as standards, who should make decisions about them, what purpose they have in practice, how they should be used and what counts as meeting them (Apple, 2005). Dominant groups put in place *safe reforms* that fail to deal with the real causes of the problems but allow bureaucratic and managerial interests to occupy the driver's seat (Apple, 2005).

The emphasis on accountability in teacher education has called for a change in the evaluation systems. Teacher or Teaching Performance Assessments (TPA) are used in teacher education as an instrument to evaluate pre-service teachers in their field setting. In a report by Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) titled *Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: How Teacher Performance Assessments Can Measure and Improve Teaching,* the use of TPAs to create a common standard for the teaching profession is mentioned to be similar to the assessments in other professions such as accounting, medicine, and engineering. This makes the assumption that these professions are comparable and simplifies teaching by refusing to take into account its complexities. The report states:

> A reliable and valid system of performance assessments based on common standards would provide consistency in gauging teacher effectiveness, help track educational progress, flag areas of need, and anchor a continuum of performance throughout a teaching career. Such a system could also be used to establish standards for a National Teacher License that would allow mobility across states, ensure school districts that a new hire meets the requirements necessary to become an effective teacher who can advance student learning, and enable districts to identify and recruit the most able teachers to the most needy schools. (pp.3-4)

It seems clear the goal is for tracking, standardization, and competition: not creating an assessment tool that considers the intricacies of teaching. The report states TPAs can help novices improve their practice, a bold assumption for a tool designed to assess performance at one point in a teachers' preparation. Aren't there other ways to help novices improve their practice besides using standardized evaluation rubrics created for all by one organization? Why

not give the teacher education programs the control to create an evaluation system that can be tailored for individual students? The report's assumption that TPAs will ensure effective teachers who can advance student learning is a daring statement.

The report concludes by stating the TPAs can provide data that states can use to issue licenses, start teacher quality initiatives, make accreditation decisions and create teacher induction and in-service development. Again, the focus is not on how the TPA is benefiting the teacher education student but how it can measure and produce quantitative data. This is another example of Taubman's (2009) theory of *teaching by numbers* in which he asserts that every aspect of teaching, education, and teacher education has been reduced to being recorded by numbers including test scores, numerical data, and dollar amounts. He blames this transformation on the increased emphasis on standards and accountability. The TPA is one example of how Taubman's theory has penetrated teacher education and the how the obsession with numerical data to determine student performance is exhibited in all levels of education.

California has been a pioneer for the type of teacher performance assessments that are becoming a common feature in many teacher education programs. However, the newly packaged version of this type of assessment called the edTPA is the first nationally available standards-based assessment program claiming to measure candidate performance and quality (AACTE, 2013). The edTPA is available in 27 licensure areas and has undergone two years of field-testing and can now be used for teacher licensure (AACTE, 2013).   The edTPA is aligned with several sets of standards including the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards, state professional teaching standards, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation standards and the Common Core State Standards (Board of Trustees for the Leland Stanford Junior University, 2013). The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), in partnership with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) provide support for implementation of the assessment including evaluation training, curriculum mapping and embedded assessment design, and other resources for cooperating teachers and candidate orientations (AACTE, 2013).

The edTPA usually takes place toward the end of a teacher candidates' student teaching experience and consists of three-to-five continuous days of classroom instruction that is subject-specific and standards-based. The candidate completes and submits the assessment, which addresses the areas of planning, instruction, assessment, and analyzing teaching. The assessment requires candidates to included unedited video recordings of their teaching and examples of teaching materials that demonstrate how they planned instruction, adapted instruction, and assessed students work. The assessment is either scored using analytic rubrics by a qualified and trained P-12 educator or teacher educator who is a content area specialist. When all is said and done, the rubrics will be utilized to assign the pre-service teacher with a numerical rating. How is a number able to accurately display the pre-service teacher's qualities? Is it really fair to rely on a number to describe the complex nature of teaching?

Another component of the TPA is the submission of student work in which the pre-service teacher is evaluated on the performance of the student. This product assessment disregards too many variables that are outside the teacher's control (Hollis & Warner, 1995). For example, a teacher is unable to regulate students' home life or habits that may affect their performance on an assessment. In law and medicine, the practitioner is responsible for following a particular process and accepted procedures, but the outcome is peripheral when evaluating the practitioner (Hollis & Warner, 1995). It seems these other professions take into account external factors that can affect the desired outcome, however the teacher is expected to prove student

learning despite the numerous variables that play a role in student performance. The point is not to belittle student learning. After all, it is the main goal of teaching. However, it is crucial that external factors are considered when deciding to look at student performance as a factor in evaluating teachers.

Chung (2008) points out some weaknesses in the research that supports the use of TPAs. She explains the impact of the assessment cannot be separated from the other factors of pre-service teacher learning such as coursework, field experiences, and mentorship. Also, there is a lack of evidence that suggests what pre-service teachers' enact as a result of learning through practice is actually a result of completing the TPA (Chung, 2008). It would seem clear that the extent and manner in which the student and university personnel used the assessment would make a difference in the effects (Chung, 2008).

Apple (2001) doubts that creating uniform standards in teacher education will improve the quality of education and have positive effects out in real schools It appears that the TPA was created as an alternative to the standardized paper-pencil tests, however they are still standardized and produce numerical data to describe the pre-service teacher. Teacher evaluation forms standardize the teacher, student and work (Taubman, 2009). These standardized evaluations ignore the fact that teaching is an "endeavor whose results are impossible to predict because they are subject to the vicissitudes of subjectivity and the unconscious, these ways of teaching are excluded" (Taubman, 2009, p. 124).

So if the teacher candidate is not benefiting from the edTPA, who is? The testing giant, Pearson, is responsible for distributing, collecting, and managing the scoring of the edTPA (AACTE, 2013). Teacher candidates pay hundreds of dollars to submit this assessment and Pearson and Stanford Center for Assessment. Learning and Equiry are the beneficiaries. In Diane Ravitch's (2012) blog titled *The United States of Pearson?,* she asserts her disapproval with Pearson's controlling role in which they receive billions of dollars to calculate the value of our teachers. Ravitch states, "Pearson's tentacles have grown too long and too aggressive" (para. 1) into all aspects of American education and she raises an important question, are we prepared to hand over our definition of knowledge to Pearson? Whether we are prepared or not, the control Pearson has over defining a quality teacher is real and there are implications for teacher education programs, teacher candidates, and our students.

Implications for Teachers

A concern for the implications of standards-based assessments in teacher education is not a new thought. Hollis and Warner (1995) assert that the negative effects of the prescribed curriculum for teacher education programs are causing a loss of academic freedom and professional control over the teacher preparation content. These effects are visible in teacher education today as the standards set for teacher education forces a narrow curriculum. Pre-service teachers are expected to accept the methods they are told are *best practices* without critique and there is little in the discourse about questioning the standards based K-12 education and the high-stakes tests that have taken over schools (Cochran-Smith, 2001). There is no encouragement for pre-service teachers to question which of their students are or are not having their needs met or whose interests are being served as they are pushed to accept a curricula that focuses on preparing students for standardized tests (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

Institutions are aligning their curriculum with the requirements necessary for pre-service teacher evaluations and accreditation. By doing this they are providing programs that are basic and fail to go above and beyond what is necessary to meet the minimum state requirements for

licensure, despite literature that supports early field experiences and induction programs (Morey, 2001). When teacher education programs focus on the practical basics they often ignore the importance of theory and fail to incorporate it within the curriculum. This can impair the teacher to be able to make judgments about effective practices (Morey, 2001). Curriculum theory goes beyond teaching strategies and aims to look at the overall educational significance of the curriculum by focusing on how the curriculum, the individual, society, and history are intertwined (Pinar, 2012). This is a vital component of teacher education that is frequently left out.

Cochran-Smith (2001) recognizes what is missing from teacher education standards and suggests the need for a richer curriculum. She states:

> What is needed and generally missing from the discourse so far are discussions of outcomes measures that—ironically—make teaching harder and more complicated for teacher candidates rather than easier and more straightforward. Such measures would recognize the inevitable complexity and uncertainty of teaching and learning and acknowledge the fact that there are often concurrent and competing claims to justice operating in the decisions prospective teachers must make from moment to moment, day to day. The new teacher education ought to make room for discussions about outcomes that demonstrate how teachers know when and what their students have learned as well as how they manage dilemmas and wrestle with multiple perspectives. Outcomes ought to include how prospective teachers open their practice to public critique and utilize their own and others' research to generate new questions as well as new analyses and actions. They ought to include how prospective teachers learn to be educators as well as activists by working in the company of mentors who are also engaged in larger movements for social change. (p. 180)

With the current structure of many teacher education programs we run the risk of perpetuating the acceptance and use of standards and accountability in P-12 education and preparing teachers who fail to recognize the bigger issues in education.

Teacher education often simplifies the art of teaching to a mechanistic approach, which follows very linear procedures. By stressing this linear approach to instruction pre-service teachers are not provided the opportunity to consider the complexities of teaching. A challenge is to avoid linear views of teaching and learning that consider teaching a process where instructional practice leads directly observable learning gains from our students (Cochran-Smith, 2001). It is important to not ignore what teachers do beyond the walls of their classroom including how they understand and theorize what they do, develop curriculum, and take on leadership and community roles (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

It is not acceptable to only provide teacher education students with the bare minimum, as it is unfair for K-12 students as well. Despite how unacceptable this may be, it is currently happening in education at all levels. Giroux (2013) finds the commercialization of higher education, punitive evaluation schemes, and deskilling of teachers accountable for reducing great educators to compliant workers and technocrats while distributing more wealth to corporations.

Conclusion

In a time where the emphasis of education is on the need for quality teachers to improve student achievement, teacher education is experiencing challenges that will not strengthen

teacher preparation but diminish it (Morey, 2001). Teacher education needs a "new and different rhythm" which emphasizes creativity and individuality in teaching (Pinar, 2012, p. 35).   This new and different rhythm is difficult to achieve due to the infiltration of corporations in education that wish to reap the benefits of the standards and accountability movement. Creativity and individuality in teachers are difficult to emphasize when the goals of teacher performance assessments appear to be for tracking, standardization, and competition.

 "A narrow interpretation of higher standards—and one that is lurking beneath the surface of the discourse that heralds the paradigm shift in teacher education from 'inputs to outputs'— threatens the idea of teaching for change" (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 180). As a result of standards and accountability reforms, all levels of education have been fixated with the measurement of these inputs and outputs. In addition, teaching for change is threatened as these structures make it difficult for teachers to avoid the narrow, mechanistic views of teaching that they promote. In teacher education, the standards fail to address the complexities of teaching and fail to embrace the differences among pre-service teachers.

The issue of utilizing these types of standardized assessments is significant as there are currently 500 teacher preparation programs in 34 states implementing the edTPA to determine teacher licensure, make program completion decisions, and/or for institutional accreditation (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, n.d.). The AACTE expects that all higher education institutions, state education boards, and professional standards boards throughout the US will implement the use of the edTPA as a requirement for an education degree and/or teaching license.

As the edTPA invades teacher education programs, its requirements affect the students' experiences as they prepare for the classroom. Lack of research on the edTPA can be attributed to its recent launch in 2011. However, the field tests conducted over the first two years of implementation studied candidate's performance, score distribution, analysis of content and construct validity, reliability of the edTPA scores, candidate pass rates, and a bias and sensitivity review (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2013). The report claims the edTPA is well aligned with the professional standards it was designed to measure and is an important tool to assess the more sophisticated skills that are being demanded of teachers. However, throughout the field test results, there is limited qualitative data and lack of information regarding the perspectives of teacher candidates and teacher educators, those directly affected by the assessment. There is a need for research that conducts an in-depth investigation of the experiences pre-service teachers have with the edTPA, including how the quality of their education is impacted by this assessment. In addition, research investigating how this assessment has impacted teacher education programs and curricula is necessary.

Separating standards from standardization is thought to be an impossible task because standards must be standardized in order to be applied across time and space as they are used as consistent measures for comparison (Taubman, 2009). With the infiltration of standardized assessments, corporations continue to control higher education and mine aspects of teacher education for profit (Giroux, 2013). This disturbing reality allows corporations to determine the quality of our teachers and proliferate the preparation of the *standardized teacher* as the one who occupies the critical role of educating students. For this reason it is necessary for those involved in teacher education to make an effort to better understand how these assessments are impacting their students and make efforts to combat the uniformity they demand.

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