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Hess, F., & McShane, M. (Eds.) (2014). *Teacher quality 2.0: Toward a new era in education reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

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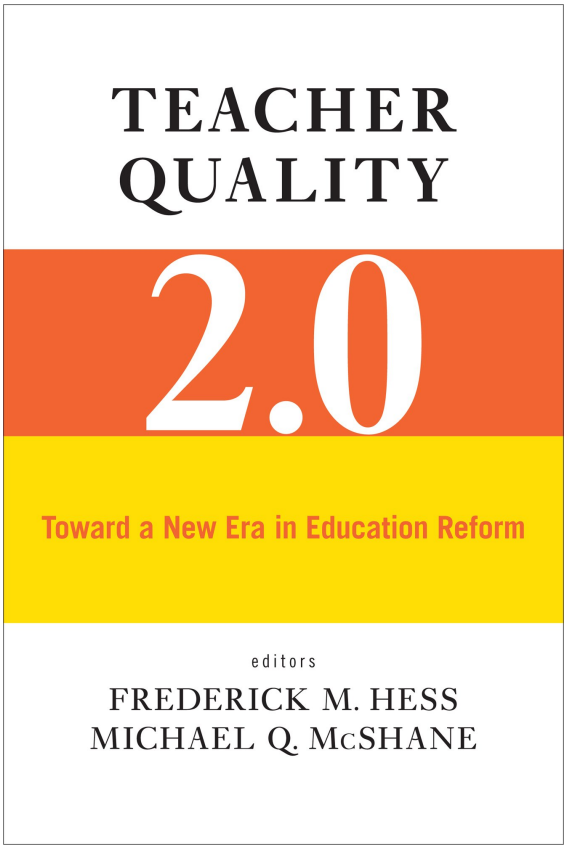

From certification rules for online teachers, to staffing and human resources, to the details of value-added measures, along with several other questions in teacher education, the authors contributing to Fredrick Hess and Michael McShane's edited volume *Teacher Quality 2.0: Toward a New Era in Education Reform* address very timely issues in teacher preparation and offer thoughtful, practical ideas for how states, districts, and schools might consider them. The quality of the chapters is consistently high, detailed, and creative. The authors as a group provide a wide-ranging discussion of both existing and looming problems and potential solutions in teacher recruitment and quality.

Part I of this volume is titled "From Teacher Quality 0.0 to Teacher Quality 2.0" and contains a single chapter, by Sara Mead, Andrew Rotherham, and Rachael Brown, and focuses on needed changes in teacher evaluations. These authors discuss the need to address teacher evaluations, as they provide such little actionable information, and then go on to make the also reasonable point that we are probably putting more

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weight on the data than they are able to bear. They go on to make several points about the need for flexible evaluation systems, as the role of "teacher" is quickly being redefined. For example, evaluation requirements can become barriers to creativity. As the authors write, "teacher evaluation requirements could become a barrier to the expansion of blended learning models…Charter school authorizers may be unwilling to approve schools using new models if those schools cannot explain how they will comply with state teacher evaluation laws" (p. 36) These arguments present a theme that runs throughout the book: the need for both purposeful policymaking, but also for humility in policymaking (for example, most of the authors either tolerate or explicitly call for exceptions or special allowances to foster creative but unpredictable solutions).

Part II is titled "Elements of a New System," and includes chapters on staffing, human resources, teacher preparation, and the professionalization of teaching.

Chapter 2, on staffing, by Bryan Hassel, Emily Ayscue Hassel, and Sharon Kebschull Barrett mentions early on a strong statement, but one that has grown louder over the years: "…the only way to get traction in the teacher quality quest is to change the composition of the teacher workforce" (p. 45). But such a transformation, the authors argue, is impossible given the way schools are currently structured. Pay increases large enough to do the job would be impractical (or impossible). Career advancement is limited as well (teachers' only real, consistent promotion possibility is to become an assistant principal – which requires a very different skill set from teaching). The authors do offer suggestions. Specifically, they call for: "extended-reach teaching roles that increase pay sustainably" (p. 48) via larger online classes, "multi-classroom leadership" (pp. 48-49) which would go beyond current department or grade chair roles, but which would include accountability for student outcomes, the ability to evaluate and select teachers, and enhanced pay, and "specialization" combined with class size changes. This last suggestion might replace four teachers with three higher-paid teachers focused solely on their specialty subjects, or change roles such that some teachers would do large-group instruction while

others worked only in small groups. These authors provide several current examples of schools experimenting with some of these ideas, and also list policy barriers that can constrain further experimentation (such as class size and seat time rules, certification and evaluation policies, and funding inflexibility).

Chapter 3, by Betheny Gross and Michael DeArmond, focuses on human resources reform, and the authors take a path in favor of treating teachers and leaders as context-specific hires, rather than as interchangeable widgets, arguing that "A single approach to identifying, evaluating, and placing talent is unlikely to work for all schools" (p. 83). They call for schools to do more "purposeful hiring" for their specific needs, and they write that "purposeful HR systems need to identify, place, develop, and retain teachers who are right for 'this school doing this work with these kids'" (p. 83). While the authors do call for better use of data at the system level (to find the best fits for teachers and schools), their arguments push back against state-level, one-size-fits-all teacher evaluation systems, and echo the call in other chapters for a more local, small-scale, humble approach to teacher quality and school reform.

In chapter 4, Billie Gastic describes potential reforms to teacher preparation, which she calls Teacher Prep 2.0. She argues that "...a single institutional type (that is, public, state-subsidized colleges and universities) are monopolizing the supply of teachers and dictating the quality of their preparation" (p. 93). She describes the unsatisfactory nature of the graduates these programs turn out as a whole, and then discusses new standards from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), meant to increase teacher quality. Unfortunately, this chapter does not take on the argument that a standardized nationwide accreditation system may be contributing, perhaps greatly, to the lack of creativity and experimentation in teacher preparation. Gastic discusses some reasonable characteristics of "Teacher Prep 2.0": intentional design of programs, evaluation and accountability, a focus on clinical practice, and use of technology (though it should be noted that the technology section also positively cites the growth of edTPA,

which, like CAEP, is a method for standardizing teacher preparation, not for enabling creativity or experimentation). Gastic also discusses some existing new teacher preparation programs, but they all either lead back to, or were in some cases created by, the "public, state-subsidized colleges and universities" (p. 93) criticized earlier in the chapter for monopolizing teacher preparation. While these examples are largely different from existing programs, and this discussion is useful, these programs are not major breaks from the existing system. They seem more like "Teacher prep 1.2," rather than 2.0.

Jal Mehta and Steven Teles explore the professionalization of teaching in chapter 5. They start with the disagreement over how much teaching can be professionalized: can a Flexner Report-style event solve the problem, as it supposedly did for medicine? Is teaching too much of an art to be professionalized like law or medicine at all? Or do we face the worst of both worlds: a kind of "faux professionalization" which "…gives monopoly control to a group that has no track record of success and no knowledge base on which to claim its authority" (p. 110). Fortunately, these authors offer one of the more practically plausible and also creative answers in the book: "plural professionalism." Rather than choosing a "one best system" for teacher preparation, professionalism could be defined in multiple ways and programs could define multiple forms of "professionalism." For example, a prospective teacher would choose among education approaches or traditions, rather than among (mostly similar) institutions. She might choose to learn to be a teacher under approaches like "…classical education, IB, project-based, no-excuses, and a new network of blended learning schools" (p. 125). The truly radical element of this chapter consists in its suggestion that states move toward certifying networks rather than individual teachers – creative schools should be enabled to hire teachers who can implement their (certified) approach to education, rather than certifying individuals to teach. The authors feel that "Today's insistence that all schools be measured by the same standards is a critical impediment to plural professionalism. Holding teachers and schools accountable to one set of tests inevitably focuses

attention on those assessments…[and leads to] incoherent education" (p. 127). Rather than force-fitting a definition of "professionalism" onto all schools, the authors argue for allowing multiple groups of educators to self-define "professionalism," subject to state verification – yet another example of humbly allowing for more creative, decentralized approaches to improving teacher quality rather than imposing solutions.

The title of Part III, which includes the most chapters, is "When Policy Meets Practice." While the chapters in Part II involve grander rethinking of teacher quality, Part III's chapters attempt to be slightly more practical.

Dennis Beck and Robert Maranto lead off this section with a chapter on the specific issue of teacher quality in online schools. These authors argue in chapter 6 that online schools will need new types of human capital pipelines – the job of being a teacher in an online program is qualitatively different from the job of being a traditional classroom teacher. This problem is not helped by the fact that online public school teachers require the same credentials and are typically trained in the same programs as traditional classroom teachers -- programs which usually do not consider the practice of online teaching at all. Online schools themselves often hire teachers based on these credentials, rather than on other factors which might be more predictive of their ability to teach in an online environment. Beck and Maranto suggest a rethinking of these teacher preparation and hiring strategies, and also discuss the need for differentiated accountability for such schools. Regulators tend to want schools to follow the same rules as brick and mortar schools, despite their very different physical and academic natures.

Katharine Strunk discusses collective bargaining in chapter 7. As with several of the other chapters, Strunk explores her topic using online and blended learning examples to show that policy is having trouble keeping up with practice. Asynchronous online school days, or teachers with the ability to teach students from multiple school systems online are examples of schooling arrangements that regulators likely did not consider when creating policies. But Strunk has some approaches to offer as solutions. Her chapter

echoes another recent book by editor Rick Hess, *Cage-busting leadership,* when she encourages teachers and administrators to "work within the open spaces in CBAs to aid the implementation of reforms and programs that may not conform to traditional school structures and operations" (p. 175). Finally, "next-generation CBAs" (p. 179), Strunk argues, should have two key features: simplicity and flexibility, which rely on guiding principles, rather than on restrictive, prescriptive, and strict regulations.

In chapter 8, Matthew Di Carlo explores "the future of value-added" (p. 181). Di Carlo treats value-added as an intrinsic feature of education policy for the foreseeable future, in fact saying, "[l]ost in the endless back and forth about *whether* to use value-added is the more important question of *how* to do so" (p. 182). Many who are well-versed in VAM would likely disagree with that framing. Within these constraints, though, Di Carlo discusses various uses of value-added – for policy evaluation ("VAM-P"), and for accountability, especially of teachers ("VAM-A"). Di Carlo offers four "key issues" surrounding the future of value-added: 1. The calibration of VAM for teacher evaluations; 2. The importance of the "under-the-hood" (p. 190) details of any VAM system (including their inherently arcane nature, even to most school officials, and the need for flexibility for districts in how they configure their use of VAM); 3. The "proliferation" of VAM (to more grade levels) and its competitors, including "Student Learning Objectives, and more tests in more grades and subjects; and 4. How to think about VAM in alternative contexts (including, again, online or blended learning in which assigning a teacher to a student can be especially problematic). Ultimately there is a tension in this chapter. Di Carlo advocates letting school systems and states experiment, but VAM is inherently data-hungry and needs standardization. He nearly advocates a humble approach to policymaking, as other authors in this volume have, when he writes that "it bears remembering that policy is inherently a trial-and-error endeavor" (p. 202), and calls for a slower approach to state adoption of VAM-based teacher evaluations. But in practice, might this mean allowing experimentation in this "transition

phase" in the education sector until a great VAM solution is found…at which point states or systems should impose it all over? This chapter brings up thoughtful and important issues surrounding VAM implementation, but this tension is not quite resolved.

Jonathan Plucker discusses teacher quality innovation in other countries in chapter 9 and works from the idea, noted in other chapters, that education is very context-specific and policies from one locale may not be successful in another. Overall, rather than being too defensive or too critical of U.S. education policy, Plucker offers three "Tenets of International Education Comparisons": 1. Americans always think other countries are doing much better than the U.S. is; 2. Test scores usually show that the U.S. is actually not that different from other countries; and 3. Where there are significant differences between the U.S. and other nations, we almost always accept the wrong takeaway messages. He also suggests that, because of the size of the United States, many of the policy experiments researchers examine in other countries are often already being conducted somewhere in the U.S. He argues that this is healthy and favors relatively small pilot projects (which have the promise that they will scale well), as large-scale policy prescriptions are as likely, he feels, to preserve the status quo as to change it. Plucker feels that states, rather than the entire U.S., are better units of comparison with other nations because of their size and comparative homogeneity. Still, Plucker considers why, if small experiments are actually happening all over the country, does U.S. student performance not look better. He comes back to the idea that perhaps what works well in one locale is not well-suited to another, making scaling difficult. And he goes on to question teacher certification policies and whether colleges of education are actually innovative, eventually working toward the suggestion that faculty should be able to develop independent, creative programs within colleges of education. Ultimately, Plucker calls for more creativity and experimentation to be fostered within the U.S., rather than looking abroad for quick fixes.

In chapter 10, Dan Goldhaber suggests a path forward for teacher quality research. He argues

that what he calls the "1.0 reform agenda, based on teacher quality research of the past decade or so, has tended to find three things: "teacher quality appears to be the biggest influence on student achievement; teachers differ substantially from each other in their effectiveness; and what makes teachers effective or ineffective is only weakly, at best, linked to the characteristics used for such high-stakes purposes as determining employment eligibility and compensation" (p. 220). Goldhaber goes on to suggest a "2.0 reform agenda" which includes looking more closely at specific digital tools in their various manifestations, exploring how those 1.0 findings are affected by new types of school and teacher roles, and finally, researching the major changes that have occurred in the teacher labor market over the past decade, such as new types of governance structures, institutions, and the fact that younger people are more and more likely to change employment over the course of their careers.

As noted above, one theme that may pull these chapters together is the idea of the need for humility in how we conceptualize teacher quality, and especially in how we craft policies to define and promote it. The majority of these issues revolve around the way technology is changing our definitions of "school" and "classes." As these words come more and more to mean "individualized" schools and "individualized" classes, the authors in this volume tend to argue that teacher quality policies will need to be much more flexible, and much more open to creative, unpredictable solutions. Every chapter confronts the intricacies of a meaningful topic in teacher quality. Overall this volume provides a substantive discussion of practical issues that schools, districts, states, and other institutions will need to confront at some point in the near future if they have not already.

References

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