



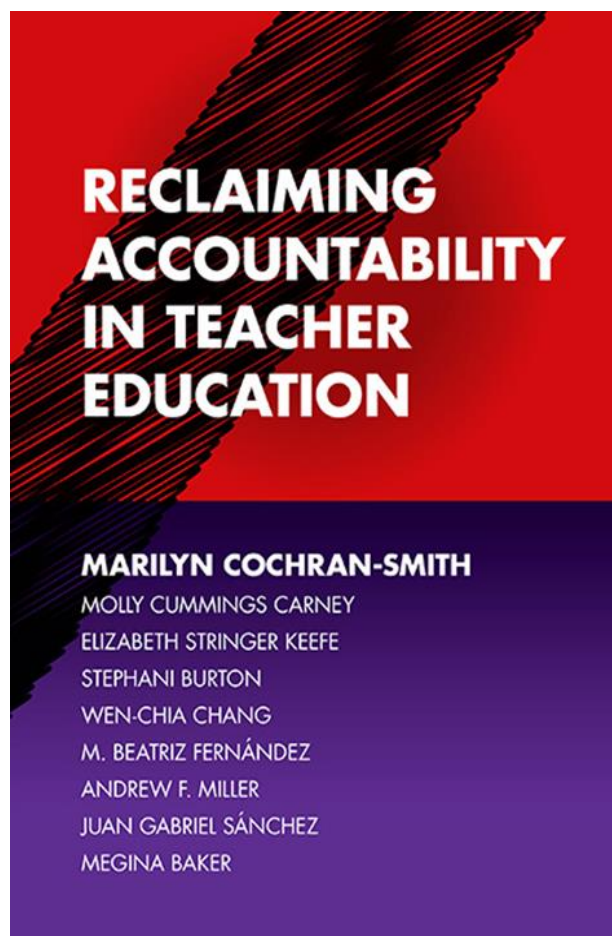
Cochran-Smith, M., Carney, M. C., Keefe, E. S., Burton, S., Chang, W., Fernández, B., Miller, A. F., Sánchez, J. G., & Baker, M. (2018). *Reclaiming accountability in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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Marilyn Cochran-Smith and colleagues offer a timely and important examination of accountability in the book *Reclaiming Accountability in Teacher Education*. The authors, a team of teacher educators and researchers, argue that a dominant accountability paradigm has taken hold within teacher education over the last two decades. This paradigm, they contend, has elevated the emphasis on outcomes-oriented, test-based accountability in teacher education and has diminished space within teacher education for learning and advocacy related to equity and social justice. Importantly, the authors *do not* argue that accountability should be abandoned altogether; instead, they implore that individuals invested in teacher education “...embrace teacher education accountability as a lever for reconstructing its targets, purposes, and consequences in keeping with the larger democratic project” (p. 3). The authors advance a multidimensional framework to (1) evaluate and critique four major teacher education accountability initiatives and (2) propose a democratic alternative to teacher education accountability.



Understanding the Teacher Education Landscape

The authors help their readers understand the accountability era by covering some important terrain in the opening chapters. They begin by illustrating how global capitalism and neoliberalism have shaped the current teacher education landscape in the United States and effectively brought market-based accountability initiatives to the center of teacher education reform. The authors draw on the logic of human capital theory (Tan, 2014) to suggest that accountability in teacher education is deeply rooted in a logic that positions education as central to individual economic prosperity and the economic growth of a country. The authors illustrate how a human capital paradigm has prompted members of both major political parties to establish policies related to accountability, choice, competition, and performance incentives for teachers and schools.

The accountability era in teacher education, the authors explain, gained momentum in 1998 with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Since then it has been fueled by a powerful narrative that university-sponsored teacher education has failed and continues to fail despite efforts at reform. The authors describe how this powerful failure narrative brought about accountability schemes aimed at achieving compliance and uniformity across teacher education programs and a movement to discredit university-sponsored teacher education programs, thereby promoting alternate pathways to the profession. The authors also illustrate how, as a result of this narrative, teacher education came to be largely constructed as a public policy problem resolvable through heightened accountability for student and teacher outcomes, as measured by students' test scores and value-added models of teacher effectiveness.

According to the authors, as policymakers turned their attention to teacher preparation in the early 2000s, control of teacher education shifted from the local level to state and federal levels. This shift brought a host of external agents and regulators who were wedded to the idea that federal mandates and state-enforced regulatory policies were the key to fixing teacher education once and for all. The authors explain how the threat of privatization and the loss of government funding worked to turn national teacher education organizations, such as National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE) and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), toward the outcome-oriented accountability measures of this new era. As a result, the authors contend, "Today the accountability discourse is pervasive and normalized both within the university-sponsored teacher education establishment and outside of it...it is now a fact of life that nearly everybody in teacher education focuses on outcomes either willingly or reluctantly" (p. 28).

A Multidimensional Accountability Framework

After covering this background, the authors introduce a multidimensional framework for analyzing accountability policies and initiatives. The framework includes eight interrelated dimensions that are organized into three thematic clusters. The authors explain that the framework is a necessary tool for educators, researchers, and policymakers who wish "to unpack and interrogate accountability regulations and policies by drilling beneath the surface level of rhetoric and highly politicized debate" (p. 34). They describe each of the eight dimensions before employing the framework to critique four national accountability initiatives: the reporting regulations stipulated in Title II of the 2016 Higher Education Act (HEA); the accreditation system and procedures of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator

Preparation (CAEP), the biennial evaluations conducted and disseminated by the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), and the widely adopted Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). Each analysis is followed by an empirical examination of the impact and implications of the initiative or the policy in question. Throughout, the authors argue that there is little evidence that any of these major accountability initiatives will produce the desired change.

The Accountability Paradigm

While the individual analyses illustrate the utility of the accountability framework and offer the reader insights into the specific ideologies and power relationships operating below the surface of each initiative, I found the chapter discussing the crosscutting themes to be the most compelling. In this chapter, the authors draw from their earlier analysis to argue that an “accountability paradigm” exists in teacher education – one that is deeply rooted in a market ideology that undermines a democratic vision of society. They identify the key presumption of this paradigm: “The quality of the country’s educational system – defined by the quality of its teachers and measured primarily by students’ test scores – is the sine qua non of the nation’s ability to compete in the global knowledge economy” (p. 142). The authors contend that this underlying market ideology serves to consolidate economic power for the benefit of some, while obscuring the systems and structures that reproduce inequities for marginalized groups.

The authors then deconstruct the notion of equity that animates this accountability paradigm, in line with others in teacher education who are drawing similar attention to the consequences of market-based initiatives (Philip et al., 2018; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2018). The authors acknowledge that virtually all accountability initiatives promote equity as

one of their goals. However, they argue that the accountability paradigm is predominated by notions of *thin equity* – the assumption that equal access to good teachers will redress inequalities and mitigate the impact of poverty. They contrast the *thin equity* of the accountability paradigm with a notion of *strong equity*. Strong equity recognizes the intersection of historical, economic, and social systems that create inequalities; challenges the aspects of those systems and structures that reproduce inequalities; and acknowledges the racialized nature of using high-stakes testing to evaluate teacher candidates and preparation programs.

The authors also identify how the “problem” of teacher education has been framed within the accountability paradigm. Drawing on Stone’s (2011) proposition that policy problems are constructed as narratives, the authors draw from their earlier analysis to make visible the misleading narrative that undergirds the accountability paradigm. This narrative is centered on the failure of teacher education to collect and utilize meaningful effectiveness data. Consequently, they operate blindly and lose the trust of the public, coming to a happy conclusion with the implementation of a rigorous accountability system with cutting-edge tools that hold teacher education systems accountable and force them to improve or shut down. The authors point to the many flaws of this narrative, specifically the use of test scores as decisive measures of teacher and program effectiveness and the use of uniform, standardized, and universal approaches that ignore the importance of local communities and contexts. While long-time teacher educators might be well acquainted with this narrative, early career practitioners and researchers will benefit from the authors’ critical analysis and discussion around these important points.

Lastly, the authors illustrate how power in the accountability paradigm is largely held by agencies and regulators that exist outside of

teacher education institutions and programs. They argue, based on their earlier analysis, that participants rarely have a choice in determining measurement tools and accountability content, and they have little control over whether they join in or opt out of accountability initiatives. The authors recognize that some systems and tools, such as the edTPA, were originally created within the profession and for the profession; however, they contend that the manner in which the edTPA has been widely implemented and managed has left little room for stakeholders to influence its content or voice their perspectives. This, they argue, runs counter to the goals and priorities of democratic education and limits the possibilities for teacher education. They write, "...democratic education and preparing students to live and work in a deeply divided but avowedly democratic society have no part in what teacher education programs and teacher candidates are held accountable to" (p. 151). The authors unequivocally call for those invested in teacher education to reject the accountability paradigm on the grounds that it promotes narrow conceptions of teaching and purposes for schooling that are largely at odds with the democratic project.

Conceptualizing Democratic Accountability in Teacher Education

In the final section of the book, the authors employ their framework to conceptualize a model of accountability that holds teacher preparation programs responsible for preparing their candidates to enact deliberative and critical democratic education. The authors articulate a vision of democratic accountability that is built on notions of *strong democracy* (Barber, 1984) and *strong equity* (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016) and one that squarely rejects the assumption that the goal of teacher education is to produce teachers who boost test scores. They argue that such a model must reject market-based enterprises and reclaim teaching and teacher

education as public enterprises for the common good. Additionally, they argue that participation and dialogue should involve a wide group of stakeholders, including not only those in the teacher education establishment, but also school-based teacher educators, families, and communities.

To illustrate the potential for democratic accountability, the authors highlight nine promising practices that build institutional capacity for strong, local, internal accountability and how external agencies and organizations can help to support such initiatives. One of these practices is making democratic education both the focus of the teacher education curriculum and the standard of evaluation for teacher candidates. The authors provide readers with two examples of teacher education programs that have developed strong, internal democratic accountability measures. One is UCLA's Center X, which aims to prepare teachers to identify and challenge inequities in schools and society and evaluates their candidates, in part, on their skills for working with and advocating for minoritized students, families, and communities. Such programs, the authors explain, forward a democratic approach to accountability that holds teacher education programs responsible for preparing candidates to act and teach in ways that serve democracy.

Another promising practice for advancing democratic accountability is that of working to reframe the accountability debate. The authors describe how the national advocacy organization Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) works to reframe accountability narratives by exposing false justifications for market-based enterprises and calling for education to be upheld as a universal public good, rather than reduced to an actor in a competitive marketplace. The authors write, "EDJE intends to bring to public consciousness the threats to our democratic society that are implicit in much of the rhetoric and reality of education policy and

public discourse” (p. 178). With more than 230 education deans and 17 national organizations endorsing its recently released public statements, the EDJE is gaining momentum and illustrating the potential for advocacy groups to reclaim accountability for the democratic project. By selecting a range of promising practices, the authors effectively illustrate that forwarding democratic accountability requires diverse efforts targeted on specific aspects of teacher education, from the design of local programs to the development of national policy.

Envisioning Democratic Accountability

In *Reclaiming Accountability in Teacher Education*, the authors judiciously describe an accountability paradigm and its consequences that leave little room for debate. This book provides theoretically, empirically, and socio-historically grounded understandings of accountability in teacher education and inspires those who work in teacher education to challenge the current accountability paradigm and envision democratic alternatives. This book should be read by teacher educators, education deans, program directors, and graduate students who desire to understand how and why market-based

accountability initiatives have taken hold in their institutions and how they might begin to reclaim space in teacher education for equity and social justice.

Over the last four years, my colleagues and I have spent an inordinate amount of time helping teacher candidates prepare for the edTPA and the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test (WFOR T). While doing so, we have lamented the fact that we have little choice but to comply with accountability measures that we have no say in – measures that are distanced from the realities and challenges of preparing teachers to act and teach for social justice, that promote narrow conceptions of reading and marginalize cultural responsiveness, and that serve as gatekeepers to the profession for our teacher candidates of color and bilingual teachers whose first language is not English. For us, this important book provides a much-needed analytic tool that we can use to expose the underlying logic and power relationships that live below the surface of these highly consequential accountability measures. It also offers the hope that we can begin to reclaim accountability for purposes that properly align with the true mission of our teacher preparation programs.


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