



education review // reseñas educativas

editors: david j. blacker / gustavo e. fischman / melissa cast-brede

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

September 5, 2012

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>

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Earley, Penelope M.; Imig, David G. & Michelli, Nicholas M. (Eds.) (2011) *Teacher Education Policy in the United States: Issues and Tensions in an Era of Evolving Expectations*. NY: Routledge

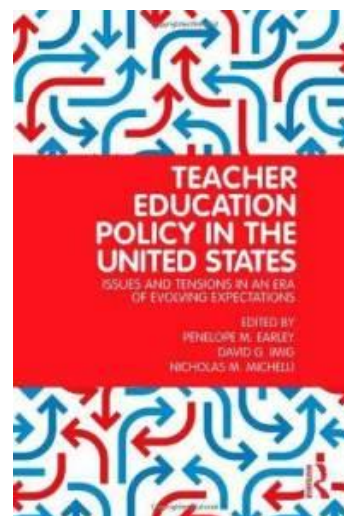
Pp. xi + 242

ISBN 978-0-415-88361-0

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In the book *Teacher Education Policy in the United States: Issues and Tensions in an Era of Evolving Expectations*, the editors and contributing authors set out to examine various teacher education policies and the extent to which these policies have been considered successful or considered as failures. The outcomes of these policies, many unintended, are also discussed in relation to the heightening expectations of students, teachers, school leaders, and higher-education teacher preparation programs.

This book begins by placing educational policy in a historical context and provides an extensive overview of the history of teacher preparation entities in the United



Citation: Jordan, Jennifer. (2012 September 5) Review of *Teacher Education Policy in the United States: Issues and Tensions in an Era of Evolving Expectations* by Earley, Penelope M.; Imig, David G. & Michelli, Nicholas M. (Eds.). *Education Review*, 15. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1178.pdf>

States. Much of the conversation revolves around the fact that many policy makers believe that changes in policy should result in immediate changes to teacher preparation programs and teacher practice in the field. When these changes are not immediate, new policies are generally enacted before any results, positive or negative, can be observed and examined. This can be seen in the example of Florida's struggles in chapter four and throughout the book.

Historically, after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) there was a shift in focus in education towards standards and objectives. The passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT) have heightened this focus and established a federal presence in teacher preparation standards that once exclusively resided in the hands of individual states.



Penelope Earley

As a policy, NCLB makes little sense. It is essentially a law divided against itself, making strict, sanctions-based demands about standards, testing, and student proficiency, but leaving it to states to provide the substance of all those things. In so doing, NCLB all but forces states to set low standards but call them high, lest they and their districts be punished for kids not clearing proficiency bars. (p. 23)

As faith in previous educational policies has begun to wane, new enthusiasm for alternative routes to licensure, differentiated pay based on student test data and value-added measures, and complete overhaul, or dismissal, of tenure has entered the discussion surrounding educational policy.

Teacher Education Policy in the United States: Issues and Tensions in an Era of Evolving Expectations discusses the value-added model developed in Louisiana and driven by competition to receive RTTT funds. Value-added “refers to the ability to quantify the contribution teachers, schools, districts, or teacher preparation programs make toward achievement or growth of students” (p. 32). The Louisiana VAA-TTP is designed to provide effect scores for teacher preparation programs only, not individual teachers in the field. One of the criticisms of this type of model is its overreliance on standardized test scores as a valid measure of teacher effectiveness. Unintentionally, this may cause teacher preparation programs to focus solely on “teaching to the test” (i.e.: mechanics and skills of curriculum

delivery) while ignoring other factors that many educators believe are integral to successful teaching practices. “Do issues of diversity and personal philosophies of education have any place in teacher preparation programs housed in universities if teaching effectiveness and program quality are predominantly measured by value-added statistics which do not capture the multiple dimensions of the art of teaching?” (p. 38). It worries me to think about my university and others shifting our emphasis so narrowly on achievement data which in many ways is not linked to the welfare of the children we are educating.

Next the authors switch the book’s focus from teacher preparation reform policies in Louisiana to examine how alternative pathways to teaching are threatening the viability of teacher preparation programs housed in colleges in Florida. In Florida there is a high need for teachers and as alternative routes to licensure proliferate, “the potential downside is that students in low-income schools are far more likely to have teachers prepared without a strong grounding in clinical preparation, which may impact future achievement” (p. 58). Due to recent policy changes, to obtain a teaching license in Florida potential candidates may enter a classroom with a bachelor’s degree and the first year teaching can be substituted for the traditional teaching internship, they can receive a passing score on the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) examination, or they can opt for a professional training option in which students already enrolled in a Florida University can minor in education and observe teaching in a K-12 classroom. None of these options require candidates to work side-by-side a quality mentoring teacher to learn research-based pedagogy. That leads to the discussion surrounding teacher preparation programs and the reform measures currently taking place.

As part of RTTT awards, states are required to illustrate the quality of their teacher preparation programs. Florida, Texas, Delaware, and my home state of Tennessee are now struggling to determine how accountability will be measured. In the past, the approval process was based on classroom observations by university supervisors which can be an unreliable determinant of candidate quality. An examination of other professions reveals that many require passage of a national licensing exam, but Zeichner warns

that “multiple measures of beginning teacher effectiveness are needed and that decisions about licensing should not be made on licensure tests alone” (p. 81). My university is piloting a Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) and “this assessment has been shown in some cases to be able to predict teacher effectiveness according to student learning and to support teacher learning and teacher education program improvement” (pp. 82-83). The teaching segment analyzed occurs over three to five days and focuses on planning, instruction, assessment, and academic language. The assessments are scored by trained scorers outside of the candidate’s university. These assessments are formative and have led to curricular changes at our university. Perhaps the focus should switch from determining whether or not teacher education programs are working and focus on determining an accountability system that provides accurate feedback to implement curricular design changes. TPA may be a step in the right direction towards this end.

The bright spot in this book is the chapter describing the successful partnership between Montclair State University and local K-12 schools. The benefits of open lines of communication for both organizations are obvious. Montclair benefits from access to conduct applied research and the local school districts benefit from experts in the field of research that can assist in designing new curriculum initiatives and providing professional development. The driving force behind the partnership’s success may be attributed to their shared vision and their ability to examine failures as lessons learned. Take the example of the Harold Wilson PDS. This school was composed of coaches and it was decided that the school would be shut down and the coaches would be dispersed across the school district. The bright side of this move was that there was now an expert teacher in every school to encourage and cultivate new relationships between the K-12 schools and the Montclair State University. Another driving force most likely leading to the successfulness of the partnership is the longevity of the players. “Two deans over 30 years, both with a common vision for teacher education at the institution, are part of this case. The same provost over 20 years of that time who understood the work played a critical role” (p. 153). The partners trust and collaborate with one another which is important when contemplating change which tends to be time consuming.

The book concludes by examining social justice and its connection to teacher education policy. The authors of this chapter argue that social justice should be an integral component and goal of any teacher education program or alternative pathway. By taking a discourse approach to the analysis of teacher education policy, the authors were able to draw conclusions regarding the most important topics for policy makers to discuss. Social justice is mentioned frequently in think-tank reports and new policy proposals particularly when related to teacher quality. The argument is as follows; teacher effectiveness is one of the most influential indicators of student achievement so therefore, by redistributing the most effective teachers to the students in most need, the achievement gap will narrow.

Unfortunately, these policy makers tend to ignore other contextual factors such as student home life and curricular goals. Reallocating the most effective teachers “can lead to the untenable situation in which ‘equal access to a faulty curriculum’ – or, we would add, equal access to teachers governed by a faulty accountability system – is assumed to constitute justice” (p. 191). Additionally amidst controversy NCATE has dropped the language of social justice from its standards based on the argument that programs should be based on core knowledge and objective standards rather than ideology. One could assert that without the language of social justice explicitly stated in the standards, there may be an assumption by teacher candidates and teacher preparatory faculty that social justice is not required or should not be emphasized in the curriculum. If our goal is to educate our youth and provide them with the mechanisms to be successful in the world, social justice must be present in teacher education.

In conclusion, this book explains the intended and unintended outcomes of many teacher education policies across the United States. Teacher leaders, educators and policy leaders should heed the book’s warnings as we move forward in an ever increasing climate of accountability. Who should direct educational policy and what should these policies focus on? The answers to these questions are essential in steering educational reform in a direction that will directly impact the futures of our students in a positive way. The current stance on educational reform has taken a very narrow view based

exclusively on accountability and “racing to the top”. I question what we are racing to the top of? A citizenship that can answer multiple choice standardized tests with ease? Kindergarten through twelfth grade classrooms led by teachers with little content or pedagogical background? As a country we need to conceptualize teaching and learning in a way that enhances the overall child, not the wallets of policy makers and test makers.

About the Reviewer

Jennifer Jordan is a clinical Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Her scholarly interests include the professional development of pre-service elementary teachers, emergent literacy, and the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. She is particularly interested in how language shapes literacy development, especially writing development, in the early years of school.

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