

# Teacher Training and Pedagogical Methods

*J. E. Stone*

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*Recent studies have made it clear that significant differences in ability to improve student achievement exist among fully trained and experienced teachers. J. E. Stone's paper argues that these differences reflect the education community's view that student achievement is not public education's highest priority. Rather, achievement is only one valued outcome among many, and it often suffers from inattention.*

*The education community's priorities are consistent with ideals that have been taught in teacher training programs for decades, but especially since the sixties. They have come to constitute a pedagogical orthodoxy that the vast majority of educators treat as unquestionable.*

*The pedagogical concepts in which teachers are indoctrinated shape the education community's preference for schooling that is relatively ineffective and inefficient. Teachers are taught that it is more important to use stimulating and engaging practices than to use effective ones.*

Teacher training and pedagogy is a topic that has not attracted the attention it deserves—at least until recently. Now—because of studies like that of June Rivers<sup>1</sup>—it is becoming clear that despite all the teacher training, credentialing, and annual evaluations that teachers have undergone for

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<sup>1</sup>June C. Rivers-Sanders, "The Impact of Teacher Effect on Student Math Competency Achievement" (Ed.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1999).

years, there are enormous differences in effectiveness among fully qualified and experienced teachers. I am going to discuss teacher training's contribution to teacher effectiveness.

## OVERVIEW

The best research brings to mind several questions that we should ask about teacher training:

- Why is there so much variability in the effectiveness among fully trained and experienced teachers? All are trained and experienced, and all undergo regular in-service training.
- Why haven't the schools of education taken an interest in the success of public schools such as the "No Excuses" schools identified by Samuel Casey Carter and the Heritage Foundation? These are remarkably successful high-poverty schools, so they must have something to teach professional educators about teaching. The conventional wisdom is that teaching cannot overcome the effects of poverty.
- Why is value-added assessment not being studied and taught in schools of education, especially in areas where value-added data is used for school accountability? For example, Tennessee has had value-added assessment for eight years, and the Tennessee schools of education are ignoring it. None offers courses or workshops in it. Surely such a tool would be valuable to educators who are seeking the best ways to improve achievement.
- Why isn't the massive and unique value-added database being used for research by schools of education from all over the United States? If teacher educators are trying to find which types of teacher training work best, a database containing the value-added gains produced by graduates of various teacher-training programs would be a gold mine of information.

In my opinion, the answer to all of these questions is disquieting but clear: the schools of education are not really in-

terested in teaching that is primarily intended to improve achievement. In fact, they disapprove of such teaching. They frown on it because they disagree with the proposition that student achievement is the most important outcome of schooling, that is, that student achievement is the indispensable outcome. In their view, schooling that fails to produce achievement is not necessarily failed schooling.

I am going to try to show you why they have this view.

## BACKGROUND

Before I begin discussing teacher training quality, there are some things you should know about my background and my perspective. I am licensed as an educational psychologist and a school psychologist, and I am a professor in a school of education. I was trained in educational psychology at the University of Florida, Gainesville, and I have taught graduate and undergraduate courses in child, developmental, and educational psychology at East Tennessee for nearly thirty years.

My experience has mainly been in the front lines of teacher training. In the early nineties, however, I encountered a situation that strongly influenced my thinking about the need for teacher-training reform. The high school attended by my two sons decided to become a leader in educational innovation. I won't spend time telling you about their proposed innovations. I will say that something like 85 percent of the parents—including me—were opposed, but despite anything we could say or do, the school's plans were implemented.

That experience permitted me to see in a very personal way how schools treat outside influences and how the doctrines that prevail within the education community place it at odds with what most parents want, indeed with what most of the larger public wants. In 1995, it led me to found the Education Consumers ClearingHouse—a company that provides public education's consumers with access to consumer-friendly networking, information, and expertise.

Although I am an education professor, I have a consumer's perspective—and that makes a difference. The views of education's consumers are not necessarily agreeable to education's providers. The schools typically think of parents as the junior partners in the school-home relationship. To the contrary, ClearingHouse subscribers generally believe that schools—like hospitals—should offer advice but otherwise respect the aims of parents whether they agree or not.

## CONSUMER AIMS VERSUS EDUCATOR AIMS

A recent initiative of the ClearingHouse has been the formation of an Education Consumers Consultants Network—a group of educators and professors like myself who provide consumer-friendly expertise to parent organizations, school board members, legislators, and others on the consumer side of the education marketplace.

Recently, three members of our consultants' network—a professor at the University of Louisville, another at Western Washington University, and I—have been working on what we call a "Second Opinion." A consumer group in a Western state asked us to render an opinion with regard to a series of policies and legislative enactments that are being undertaken to reform teacher training in that state. Our objective has been to decipher the blizzard of information put out by the various organizations and agencies and to assess how well these plans and activities are likely to serve the interests and objectives of the consuming public.

As part of this project, I reviewed newspaper accounts of the various events, and I noticed a pattern. Events that drew positive comments from educators were often not well received by noneducators. The opposite was true, too. Events that were welcomed by noneducators were often not well received by educators.

I don't mean to belabor the point, but I find many of the differences in opinion that we hear in public conversations about schooling to be differences between consumers and



providers.<sup>2</sup> Obviously there are overlaps, but producers seem to be primarily concerned about how schools operate, whereas consumers are primarily concerned about whether they are producing expected benefits, that is, concerns about process versus concerns about outcomes. What I want to discuss is what these differences are, why they exist, and how they are related to teacher training.

### *Differing Educational Priorities*

The differences between consumers and providers go beyond factors such as professional expertise and familiarity with schoolhouse life. They stem both from different concepts of education<sup>3</sup> and from practical considerations. The discussion that follows centers on conceptual differences, but, as you will no doubt surmise for yourself, there are social, political, and economic factors at work, too.

In a word, both consumers and educators want the best for children, but they have different ideas about what is important. Consumers want results. Educators agree, but they believe that policy makers should defer to the education community's judgment in defining the result and setting the process by which it is measured.

Public education's consumers believe that schools should teach children the knowledge and skills that parents and taxpayers consider essential for happy, responsible, and productive lives.<sup>4</sup> Through their elected representatives, the public establishes curricula; states

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<sup>2</sup>"Reality Check 2000"—an annual survey conducted by Public Agenda and published by *Education Week* 19, no. 23 (February 16, 2000): S1–S8—reported marked differences between the views of employers and college professors and those of teachers. Professors and employers were highly dissatisfied with the knowledge and skills of high school graduates. Teachers thought schools were already doing a better job than most people think.

<sup>3</sup>J. Stone, "Aligning Teacher Training with Public Policy," *The State Education Standard* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2000).

<sup>4</sup>J. Johnson and J. Immerwahr, *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (New York: Public Agenda, 1994).

course and grade-level objectives; sets policies regarding report cards, standardized tests, and so on; and otherwise acts to ensure that students will learn that which their parents and other members of the community expect them to learn. Education's consumers believe that effective schools and effective teachers are those that are successful in bringing about prescribed results and that true educational reform should serve to improve these results.

Teachers, professors of education, educators who work for the state education agencies, and other members of the education community, that is, public education's providers, generally take a different view. They believe that the knowledge and skills that consumers consider important are only one part of a broad range of considerations with which schools and teachers must concern themselves. They value academic achievement, but not necessarily as a top priority. They believe that children have varied needs and that ideally schooling should be accommodated to those differences in a way that optimizes overall educational growth—they are concerned with the “whole child.”<sup>5</sup>

Education's providers hold as ideal those teaching methodologies that are intended to guide or encourage or facilitate “educational growth” in ways that are sensitive to student differences.<sup>6</sup> They denigrate and oppose the use of those methods that prescribe, expect, or require unaccustomed levels of student effort and accomplishment. They favor flexible curricula, narrative report cards, portfolio assessment, and teacher autonomy. They resist prescriptive curricula, letter grades, standardized tests, and teacher ac-

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<sup>5</sup>For an engaging account of the rise and fall of a school embodying all that is currently considered “best practice,” see D. Frantz and C. Collins, *Celebration USA* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999). “Celebration” is the name of the model school developed by Walt Disney World.

<sup>6</sup>S. Zemelman, H. Daniels, and A. Hyde, *Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heineman Publishers, 1988).

countability.<sup>7</sup> They believe that good schools and good teachers are those that maximize stimulation and opportunities for student enrichment, and they think of educational improvement as growth in the availability of enriching educational experiences.

By the way, the perspective I am describing is in education's mainstream. There are educators whose views lean more toward schooling as an instrument of social and economic reform, and their views are in much greater disagreement with the public than the ones I am describing.<sup>8</sup>

Both education's consumers and education's providers talk about learning and achievement, but they accord it very different priorities.<sup>9</sup> Educators believe that using correct pedagogical process is more important than attaining any particular level of mastery. Their reason for valuing process over outcome is that they believe optimal educational outcomes—that is, a kind of balanced growth of the whole—are possible only when the right kind of teaching is used. They refer to such teaching as “best practice.”

Best practice teaching is the open-ended, facilitative, guide-on-the-side type of teaching that is extolled by professors of education.<sup>10</sup> It is also called learner-centered instruction because it theoretically puts the overall interests of the learner first—in other words, ahead of the teacher's interest in the student's acquisition of knowledge and skills. In the world of teacher education, learner-centered instruction is the standard against which all other forms of teaching are judged.

In theory, learner-centered instruction permits the student to grow in a way that respects the full range of individual

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<sup>7</sup>Public Agenda, “Reality Check 2000.”

<sup>8</sup>See T. Jennings, “Developmental Psychology and the Preparation of Teachers Who Affirm Diversity: Strategies Promoting Critical Social Consciousness in Teacher Preparation Programs,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 46, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>9</sup>For a revealing look at the aims and views of teacher educators, see G. Farkas, J. Johnson, and A. Duffett, *Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education* (New York: Public Agenda, 1997).

<sup>10</sup>Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, *Best Practice*.

needs, not simply in ways that parents or teachers believe important. Instruction fitted to individual student needs is believed to be conducive to the emergence of a personal synthesis of understanding, that is, an understanding that is practical, not abstract and bookish, relevant to the learner's life, and fully integrated into the individual's worldview. For example, in *constructivism*—a popular learner-centered view—the desired outcome of an educational experience is for the learner to construct personal meaning.

Learner-centered instruction is intended to be naturalistic—the sort of learning that takes place when experience is the teacher. When experience teaches, however, one never knows whether that which was taught is that which was learned; and to education's consumers, uncertain outcomes are a problem. They believe that certain types of knowledge and skills must be attained for an individual to become a productive and responsible member of society. They also believe that schools should urge students to maximize their talents.

These are subtle but enormously significant differences. Learner-centered instruction is not simply an alternative means of arriving at the objectives sought by parents and policy makers. It is an approach that places a distinctly lower value on students knowing and understanding the accumulated wisdom of past generations. Instead, it emphasizes individuals forming their own ideas and assessing the worth of these insights from their immediate life experiences, that is, from the school of hard knocks. It is an approach that claims to equip students with thinking skills instead of knowledge. The public, by contrast, disagrees that thinking skills are sufficient even if it were possible to produce them in isolation.

I could go further in discussing the various ways in which the education community's ideal process is at odds with consumer expectations, but an example might be more helpful. Think of teaching tennis or golf. You could introduce children to either sport by just giving them a club or racquet and letting them have at it. Or you could start them with lessons in the basics. The former is more or less the approach that

the education community idealizes, and the latter is more or less what the public wants.

Kids might find the unstructured approach more fun and might consider the organized lessons boring, but few parents would be willing to pay for discovery-based golf or tennis instruction—and neither would taxpayers. Yet that is the ideal taught to most teachers.

More to the point, boring or not, starting with the basics is a far more certain means of producing skilled golfers and tennis players, and, plainly, that is the premier consideration with regard to basic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic. Kids can live without golf or tennis skills, but they can't do without sound academics. That's why parents want teachers to teach rather than just facilitate and hope for the best. Responsible adults understand what school success or failure means to a child's future, so they want children to learn certain things and they want those things learned to the best of the child's ability. Schooling is valuable precisely because it equips children with knowledge and skills that they do not yet recognize as important. Yes, most will figure it out on their own when they are thirty-five, but that is exactly the kind of trauma that loving parents want their children to avoid.

## HOW PEDAGOGICAL DOCTRINE INFLUENCES SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

As a practical matter, educators recognize that not all students respond well to learner-centered instruction, and they have an explanation: not all students are "ready to learn." They believe students fail to respond properly because their life circumstances have not adequately prepared them and/or because there is some mismatch between the student's unique characteristics and the opportunities afforded by the school. In principle, at least, if society can give proper support and if schools can respond properly to their unique characteristics, the talents, interests, and energies of each student will be freed for



intellectual pursuits. In other words, “all students can learn,” that is, all students can benefit from “best practice” teaching.<sup>11</sup>

Although described in a variety of ways, this concept of teaching’s relationship to learning has been a staple of mainstream pedagogy since the early years of the twentieth century. It was the foundation of the child-centered teaching of the twenties and the progressive education of the thirties and forties. It originated as an appealing alternative to the often-regimented classrooms of the late 1800s, and it has stood as an unquestioned norm ever since.<sup>12</sup> In theory, teachers trained in “enlightened” classroom methods would be helpful and sympathetic mentors, not taskmasters with a hickory stick. It was a concept that greatly bolstered public acceptance of the idea that teachers need specialized training, not mere subject matter expertise. It began as the “learning can be fun” approach, and it has become the “learning must be fun” approach.

### *Fitting Instruction to Diversity*

Over the last thirty or forty years, learner-centered methods have attempted to individualize instruction to a variety of cognitive, developmental, socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and personality characteristics.<sup>13</sup> The study of student diversity has become the overweening passion of education professors; and teachers, of course, have been thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea that their first responsibility is to

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>E. D. Hirsch, *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996). “Within the education community, there is currently no *thinkable* (Hirsch’s italics) alternative” (69); “. . . the heretical suggestion that the creed itself might be faulty cannot be uttered. To question progressive doctrine would be to put in doubt the identity of the education profession itself” (69).

<sup>13</sup>See L. Darling-Hammond, G. Griffin, and A. Wise, *Excellence in Teacher Education: Helping Teachers Develop Learner-Centered Schools*, ed. R. McClure (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1992). The widespread support enjoyed by learner-centered schooling is evidenced by its recognition among well-known educational leaders. Drs. Darling-Hammond and Wise are the directors of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, respectively.



be aware of and sensitive to such differences in their curricular and instructional planning.

There are mountains of research on the identification of student differences and an equally large number of studies showing degrees of relationship between student characteristics and success in school. However, what is lacking in most cases is any convincing evidence that teachers can fine-tune instruction to these differences in such a way as to produce significant improvements in measured achievement. In fact, the entire vein of educational research called “attribute-treatment interaction studies” is generally conceded to have been a failure.<sup>14</sup> What teachers are told, however, is that student differences are important and that if their teaching is truly creative, energetic, and engaging, they will succeed in individualizing and bringing forth the best from all students. In effect, teachers are being taught to make diagnoses that heighten their awareness of differences without advancing their ability to teach.

Attention to diversity may not have made teachers more effective, but it has influenced their ideas about how schooling should be improved. If individualization is necessary to learning, lower pupil-teacher ratios and the use of specialized personnel are the key prerequisites to any real improvement. Conceptually, more personnel permit greater differentiation of services and therefore a better fit for each student. Educators say to parents: “Does your child have different developmental needs? Then he or she needs a teacher specially trained to work with those needs.” “Your child has different talents? Then your child needs a teacher trained to maximize those talents.” “Your child is racially or culturally different? Then your child needs a teacher who can fit his or her teaching to those differences.”

One impact of this thinking as it has been applied over the last century has been an incredible expansion and diversification of school staffing. If there is an identifiable uniqueness

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<sup>14</sup>See R. Snow and J. Swanson, “Instructional Psychology: Aptitude, Adaptation, and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 43 (1992): 583–626.

(and a supportive constituency), the education community will create a specialty that is said to be skilled in maximizing the educational growth of such students. School personnel now include not only a variety of subject matter specialists but also teachers trained specifically for middle schools, primary schools, kindergartens, and preschools. In addition, there are arts, music, and physical education teachers as well as trained counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and a huge variety of special educators, all overseen by layer upon layer of supervisory and administrative personnel.

## EFFECTIVENESS AND COST

As Eric Hanushek points out, the academic gains garnered by adding personnel and lowering class size have been small and costly relative to other means of increasing achievement. For example, far greater gains are attainable—and at much lower cost—using proven, result-oriented teaching methods. However, educators rarely adopt result-oriented methods, much less experimentally proven methods because virtually all such methods disagree with the learner-centered, whole-child, balanced-outcomes ideals promulgated by the schools of education.<sup>15</sup>

Instead of seeking to accommodate to student differences, result-oriented methods seek first to bring about learning. If accommodating to a particular uniqueness—entry-level knowledge and skill, for example—is known to produce improvement in learning, result-oriented methods acknowledge and make use of them. Otherwise, they ignore them.

Teachers are taught that any methodology that ignores learner-centered ideals is, in effect, a step toward the return of the hickory stick. They are given to believe that any deviation from methodology intended to address the growth of the “whole child” is a risky scheme. Of course, such claims

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<sup>15</sup>A recent discussion of the issue is D. Carnine, *Why Education Experts Resist Effective Practices* (April 2000). Available at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation Web site, [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net).

are founded on belief, not research, but they have a profound impact on the kind of practices teachers favor and the kind they avoid. Instead of looking for the most stimulating and engaging methods among those that are known to be effective, teachers are taught to do the reverse. They look among the fun methods and try to find ones that produce results. The outcome, of course, is the sort of “edutainment” that is commonly found in today’s public school classrooms. These lessons may look very stimulating and appealing, but they produce little in the way of substantive results.

A prime example of an effective teaching methodology rejected on the grounds that it conflicts with pedagogical doctrine is Direct Instruction (DI), which is a highly structured approach with scripted lesson plans. DI is as thoroughly tested and proven a teaching methodology as has ever been developed, and it has been around for thirty years. In Project Follow Through—one of the largest educational experiments ever conducted—not only was Direct Instruction the most effective, but it also did the best job of boosting student self-esteem, the personal growth that teacher educators claim will be undermined by an overemphasis on achievement.<sup>16</sup> Teachers, nonetheless, have ignored and rejected DI because it deviates from the learner-centered ideal. Despite an absence of credible negative evidence, they suspect that it has an adverse effect on student and teacher creativity.<sup>17</sup>

In matters of pedagogical effectiveness, evidence has little impact because teachers are inundated with learner-centered propaganda.<sup>18</sup> For example, anyone reading the curricular

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<sup>16</sup>C. L. Watkins, “Project Follow Through: A Story of the Identification and Neglect of Effective Instruction,” *Youth Policy* (July 1988): 7–11.

<sup>17</sup>Carnine, “Why Education Experts Resist.”

<sup>18</sup>See J. E. Johnson and K. M. Johnson, “Clarifying the Developmental Perspective in Response to Carta, Schwartz, Atwater, and McConnell,” *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 12, no. 4 (1992): 439–457. The authors write about a committee meeting they attended at one of the formative gatherings of the National Association for Early Childhood Education. They describe how the pedagogical term “developmentally appropriate instruction” was adopted as a concept that might be used for public relations purposes.

guidelines of an organization like the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) would suppose that one of the greatest risks to the educational well-being of American children is academic burn-out resulting from premature attempts to teach the ABCs, teaching children before they were “developmentally ready.” Of course, the opposite is true. The greatest hazard to the educational well-being of American children is the *failure* of schools to teach them basics such as the ABCs. What the NAEYC and so many other educators fail to consider is that whatever the suspected risk from overzealous teaching, it must be balanced against the enormous and well-documented risk of failing to teach.

## CURRENT REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Forgive me if I seem to have gone overboard in discussing the thinking that prevails in schools of education, but I believe that the critical issue in understanding teacher training’s relationship to teacher effectiveness is the one of correctly framing the problem. What I have tried to show you is that *the core problem is one of wrongheaded training*, that is, training in pedagogy that treats measured student achievement as an incidental outcome of some ideal form of pedagogical practice in which the teacher education community’s notions about ideal process are considered more important than the consuming public’s desire for improved student achievement.

For decades, members of the lay public and lay policy makers have prodded, encouraged, and supported the education community’s efforts at improvement. What they have gotten in return is a seemingly unending cycle of innovations, fads, failures, and reforms, most of which have been variants or refinements of pedagogical ideals that have been around since the early part of the last century. *These “improvements” are coming right out of the schools of education, and they are creating problems, not merely failing to solve them.*

Taxpayers are spending zillions on educational reforms that have been necessitated by the faulty and ineffective practices in which teachers have been trained. The self-esteem-boosting fad of the sixties and seventies is an excellent example. Proponents believed that students fail to benefit from schooling because they lack positive self-regard. In many schools of education, teachers were taught that the student's need for self-esteem must be fulfilled before study, learning, and achievement can be expected. Whole courses were dedicated to teaching teachers how to facilitate the growth of self-esteem. Self-esteem improvement became so thoroughly ingrained in teaching that, at one point, U.S. students may have been world leaders in self-esteem despite their abysmal academic performance.

As is the case with class-size reduction, there was research showing a modest relationship between high levels of self-esteem and academic achievement. As it turns out, however, self-esteem was related to school success not because high self-esteem is necessary to learning but because academic success elevates self-esteem. In other words, the self-esteem researchers had it backward. Improved self-esteem is a by-product of educational success, not a cause of it.

One of the programs tested in the above-noted Follow Through Project of the sixties and seventies—the Open Education model—employed self-esteem boosting as its principal intervention. The students taught by this method did *significantly worse* on both basic academic skills and cognitive skills as a result of their participation.

To my knowledge, the cost of this and other mistaken ideas has never been calculated. Neither have costs of any other of the many, many ideas that schools of education have propagated without any credible evidence that they work. We could spend days cataloging them.

Think of what California alone is having to spend trying to retrain teachers trained in whole language. Look at the social and political costs of trying to change the sincere but ill-founded beliefs now held by a generation of teachers. Think of the numbers of students and citizens who may never be



able to read proficiently. Forget the costs to the taxpayers. Just look at the diminished prospects of the children who were the subjects of this experiment.

### *The NCTAF Initiative*

Now let's look at the current efforts to improve teacher training. Will they prevent the reemergence of nonsense like self-esteem boosting? Will they ensure that teachers are able to recognize the value of teaching models such as Direct Instruction? Will they require pedagogical enthusiasms such as whole language to be proven before they are disseminated? In my opinion, the answer is clearly "no." They are reforms instituted by the same organizational and institutional stakeholders who have led teacher training all along. They are reforms embodying the same pedagogical doctrines that have underpinned teacher training for at least the last fifty years.

The principal efforts to reform teacher training are being led by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF).<sup>19</sup> The NCTAF is aggressively urging policy makers at the state level to adopt the training standards set by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); the teacher licensure standards set by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, a group working under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers); and the advanced teacher certification standards set by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

*This entire initiative is premised on the idea that the chief problems affecting teacher quality are insufficient numbers of fully trained teachers, insufficient training for teachers, insufficient regulation, and inadequate standards. I could not disagree more. In my view, it is obvious that whatever short-*

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<sup>19</sup>See M. Kanstoroom and C. Finn, eds., *Better Teachers, Better Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, July 1999) for a discussion of the efforts being undertaken by the NCTAF, NCATE, INTASC, and NBPTS.



*ages and inadequacies may exist, they pale in comparison to the problems of misdirected training, misdirected regulation, and mismatched standards.*

Instead of training teachers to improve student achievement, current teacher-training programs—including those that are NCATE-approved—are indoctrinating them in pedagogical concepts that embody educational priorities at odds with those of the consuming and taxpaying public. Adoption of the NCTAF proposals may improve teacher quality as conceived by the teacher education community, but if anything, it will make matters worse for education's consumers. Teachers not indoctrinated in learner-centered views will become harder to find.

I want to be clear about my message. I am not saying that members and staff of the NCTAF and all the many individuals who are working in concert with them are not genuinely trying to improve teacher quality. My point is that these changes have little to do with advancing what most parents and taxpayers want. The NCTAF is mainly composed of representatives of the education community. That they subscribe to the principles that have guided the education community for years is not surprising. The NCTAF has reams of research supporting its proposals, but virtually all are studies that define teacher quality in ways consistent with the education community's aims, not with those of the public. The NCTAF-inspired reforms are one more attempt to improve teacher training by promoting the wider use of pedagogical practices that have failed for generations.

#### WHY VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS COULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

The NCTAF's strategy is to improve teacher quality through closer scrutiny of teacher competencies—a strategy with which I certainly agree. They propose to look at both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical expertise. The concept of testing teachers for subject matter competence is sound because knowledge is a valid prerequisite to successful teaching

and credible tests are available. As many have noted, teachers cannot teach what they don't know.

The assessment of pedagogical expertise, however, is another matter entirely. Policy makers and the public assume that tests such as the Praxis (formerly the National Teachers Examination) can measure a teacher's ability to bring about student achievement. In fact, they are not valid in that sense at all. Rather, they measure whether teachers have learned that which their professors taught them, which is the "best practices" favored by the schools of education. As was made clear by the recent report of the National Research Council's Committee on Assessment and Teacher Quality, "There is currently little evidence available about the extent to which widely used teacher licensure tests distinguish between candidates who are minimally competent to teach and those who are not." "[Teacher licensure tests] are not designed to predict who will become effective teachers."<sup>20</sup>

The same can be said about all of the various portfolios, rubrics, and classroom performance indicators that are embodied in the "competency-based" approaches to teacher assessment now recommended by the NCATE, the INTASC, and the NBPTS.<sup>21</sup> All afford the candidate the opportunity to exhibit his or her grasp of "pedagogically correct" methodology, not of practices that are known to bring about increases in measured achievement. From a consumer standpoint, these assessments

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<sup>20</sup>Committee on Assessment and Teacher Quality, Board on Testing and Assessment, National Research Council, *Tests and Teaching Quality, Interim Report* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

<sup>21</sup>For details of the evaluative procedures and processes used by the NCATE, see National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, *Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1999) and the just-released *NCATE 2000 Unit Standards* (Washington, D.C., 2000). The NBPTS uses portfolios and videotapes in their reviews of teachers seeking advanced certification, and its standards and principles are parallel to those of the NCATE. See National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, *What Every Teacher Should Know: The National Board Certification Process, 1998–1999* (Southfield, Mich.: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, April 1998). The latest revisions of both NCATE and NBPTS standards are available at their respective Web sites.

are nothing more than a new way of ensuring that trained teachers are all grounded in the same ill-suited doctrines.<sup>22</sup>

Several recent reports agree that sound methods of assessing teacher quality are sorely needed. A 1999 U.S. Department of Education report concluded, “. . . indicators of teacher preparation and qualifications do not directly address the actual quality of instructional practices.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, an April 2000 report by the American Federation of Teachers called for teacher-training programs to develop a credible core curriculum in pedagogy: “We can no longer tolerate a ‘do your own thing’ pedagogy curriculum.”<sup>24</sup> An improved exit/licensure test was one of its major recommendations. A fall 1999 report by the American Council on Education not only called for improved assessment of teachers but also bluntly urged college presidents to either strengthen the quality of teacher-training programs or close them.<sup>25</sup>

Tests of pedagogical knowledge and competency-based assessments of pedagogical skill are valid to the extent that they serve as proxies for effective teaching. In other words, they are valid to the extent that they predict what a teacher will actually do with students. The problem, however, is that the available tests and assessments have all been validated against the criterion of what *teachers and professors* think novice teachers should know and be able to do rather than

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<sup>22</sup>A recent article suggests that candidates who are successful in meeting the certification standards set by the NBPTS must adopt “NBPTS discourse values, which may be at odds with teachers’ ‘working knowledge.’” See R. Burroughs, T. Roe, M. Hendricks-Lee, “Communities of Practice and Discourse Communities: Negotiating Boundaries in NBPTS Certification,” *Teachers College Record* 102, no. 2 (2000): 2344–374.

<sup>23</sup>National Center for Education Statistics, *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, January 1999).

<sup>24</sup>American Federation of Teachers, Report of the K-16 Teacher Education Task Force, *Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction* (Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers, April 2000).

<sup>25</sup>American Council on Education, *To Touch the Future: Report of the ACE Presidents’ Task Force on Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1999).

what *the public* wants them to know and be able to do. In other words, buried in the debate about teacher quality are competing definitions of quality. One is quality as defined by the NCTAF et al., and the other is quality as defined by the public and by value-added assessment.

### *Teacher Effectiveness Defined by the Public*

Value-added assessment of a novice teacher's ability to bring about student achievement solves the problems of uncertainty and bias in the assessment of teacher competence by observing the criterion of teacher effectiveness instead of its fallible predictors. It defines teacher quality as the demonstrated ability to increase student achievement, the public's definition. With value-added assessment, policy makers would no longer be dependent on test scores and subjective interpretations that embody a hidden set of educational priorities. Instead, they would, in effect, stipulate the meaning of teacher effectiveness and teacher-training effectiveness in a way that is aligned with the public's educational priorities.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike training in law and medicine, teacher education has never had to respect consumer priorities because its graduates have never had to survive in a marketplace. Top-down regulation of teacher training has been largely ineffective, as well. The agencies in charge of regulating teacher education were originally formed to promote the expansion and enhancement of public education, not to perform oversight and control. They have been subject to what economists call "regulatory capture"—they are unduly influenced by the parties they are trying to regulate. The training, licensure, and certification standards now in place were all approved by state education agencies.

With value-added indicators of teacher effectiveness in place, policy makers would be able to identify successful

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<sup>26</sup>Stone, "Aligning Teacher Training with Public Policy," 34–38.

programs and adjust their support accordingly. School officials would have a much improved basis for making hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, and parents, of course, would be pleased to have assurance that their child's teachers were meeting objectively measured performance standards.

Teachers, perhaps more than anyone, would benefit from a change to objective assessment of their work. One of the most frustrating aspects of teaching is that you can do an excellent job of getting students to learn and your efforts may never be noticed, much less appreciated. Even if test scores are reviewed, they are subject to administrator interpretation; and teachers well understand that friendly administrators make friendly interpretations and unfriendly administrators make unfriendly ones. With value-added assessment, the results are visible and they speak for themselves.

Subjective job performance assessments flavored with favoritism are among the most demoralizing and demeaning aspects of teaching in public education. In the absence of objective performance data, it is no wonder that teachers prefer salary schedules based on time-in-grade and earned credentials. In Tennessee, where value-added assessments of teacher performance have been in place for some years, teachers are gradually being won over.<sup>27</sup>

Students seeking a career in teaching would also be able to make good use of value-added data. They would be able to see which schools of education were training effective teachers and which school systems were hiring them. Over time, teacher-training programs whose graduates get the good jobs would flourish and those whose graduates were less successful would decline.

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<sup>27</sup>For a description of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, its developer, Professor William Sanders, and its growth as a tool for assessing teacher performance, see D. Hill, "He's Got Your Number," *Teacher Magazine* 11, no. 8 (May 2000): 42–47.



Title II of the 1998 Higher Education Act required teacher-training programs to report on the quality of their graduates. One problem has been a lack of data comparable from one state to another. Teacher performance data, such as that now collected by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System, would be an excellent gauge of program performance, and it could be compiled in any state that has already been regularly gathering student achievement data.<sup>28</sup> Given the education community's aversion to standardized tests and its affinity for so-called authentic assessment, value-added assessment of achievement gains would seem to be an attractive alternative to the proposed exams of pedagogical knowledge.

Realistically, program assessments based on the value-added performance of novice teachers would have to be phased in over a period of several years. Substantial rethinking and curricular adjustment would be necessary. The change would not be easy, if for no other reason than shortages in appropriately trained faculty. However, with the growth of on-site training in local schools and similar alternatives, the need for trained teachers would be served by either reformed schools of education or their replacements.

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<sup>28</sup>Hill, "He's Got Your Number." Also see J. Stone, "Value-Added Assessment: An Accountability Revolution," in Kanstoroom and Finn, eds., *Better Teachers, Better Schools*.