

SPECIAL ISSUE

Preparing Teachers: Highly Qualified to Do What?

education policy analysis

archives

A peer-reviewed, independent,
open access, multilingual journal

epaa | aape

Arizona State University

Volume 21 Number 54

July 1st, 2013

ISSN 1068-2341

**Preparing Teachers: Highly Qualified to Do What?
Editors' Introduction***Elaine Chin*

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Citation: Chin, E. & Wong, P. (2013) Preparing Teachers: Highly Qualified to Do What? Editors' introduction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 21 (54) Retrieved [date], from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1406>. This article presents the three articles of EPAA/AAPE's Special Issue on *Preparing Teachers: Highly Qualified to Do What?* Guest Co-Edited by Pia Lindquist Wong and Elaine Chin.

Abstract: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has had significant effects on teacher preparation programs, both in terms of changes required for policy compliance and through important program adjustments. These adjustments have largely been made in response to changes in partner schools and districts, where pacing guides, scripted curricula, benchmark testing and program improvement mandates are now the norm. In the context of anticipated robust policy activity in K-12 education and teacher education (e.g., possible re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, adoption of the Common Core State Standards, new teacher certification performance assessments, etc.), it is important to understand the ways in which the current federal law, focused primarily on K-12 education, has also shaped teacher preparation programs. Paying attention to the inter-connectivity of K-12 education and teacher preparation is the focus of the articles of EPAA/AAPE's Special Issue on *Preparing Teachers: Highly Qualified to Do What?*

Keywords: teacher education; teacher performance assessments; educational equity; NCLB

Preparación de docentes altamente calificados. ¿Calificados para hacer qué?

Resumen: la legislación NCLB de 2001 ha tenido efectos significativos en los programas de formación docente, tanto en términos de los cambios requeridos para el cumplimiento de las políticas como a través de importantes ajustes en los programas de formación docente. Estos ajustes en gran parte se han hecho en respuesta a los cambios en las escuelas y los distritos, donde las guías de coordinación, como los programas de formación altamente prescriptivos, y los mandatos de mejora de programas son la norma a seguir. En un contexto en que se prevé mucha actividad política en relación al sistema de educación K-12 y en la formación docente (por ejemplo, la posible re-autorización de la Ley de Educación Primaria y Secundaria, la adopción de las estándares comunes en los estados de la unión, nuevas evaluaciones para la certificación de docentes, etc), es importante comprender las formas en que la ley federal actual, centrada sobre todo en la educación K-12, tendrá en los programas de formación docente. Prestar atención a la interconectividad de educación K-12 y de la formación docente es el foco de los artículos de este número especial de EPAA/AAPE "Preparación de docentes altamente calificados. ¿Calificados para hacer qué?"

Palabras clave: Formación de docentes; evaluaciones de desempeño docente; equidad educativa; NCLB.

Preparando docentes altamente qualificados. ¿Qualificados para fazer o quê?

Resumo: A legislação NCLB de 2001 teve um impacto significativo sobre os programas de formação de professores, tanto em termos das mudanças necessárias para o cumprimento das políticas e através de grandes ajustes nos programas de formação de professores. Esses ajustes foram feitos, em grande parte em resposta às mudanças nas escolas e distritos onde guias de coordenação, programas de formação altamente prescriptivos e mandatos para melhorar os programas são a norma. Num contexto em que é esperada muita atividade política em relação ao sistema de educação K-12 e na formação de docentes (por exemplo, a possível re-autorização da lei que regula a educação primária e secundária, a adoção de normas curriculares comuns nos estados dos EUA, novas avaliações para certificação de docentes, etc), é importante compreender as formas em que a atual lei federal, focada principalmente na educação K-12, adotara em programas de formação de docentes. Prestar atenção para a interconectividade dos sistema de educação K-12 e a formação de docentes é o foco dos artigos desta edição especial de EPAA / AAPE "Preparar docentes altamente qualificados. ¿Qualificados para fazer o quê?"

Palavras-chave: formação de professores, avaliação de desempenho de professores, equidade educacional; NCLB.

Editors' Introduction

There has always been a divide between the world of K-12 schools and American higher education, with colleges and universities playing a key role in framing the curriculum for K-12 schools (see the 1894 Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies). The passage of the 2002 *No Child Left Behind* act changed that dynamic in some fundamental ways. Through the use of large sums of money tied to test performance, the federal government exerted enormous influence on the conduct of K-12 schools. What has come to pass in the past 11 years since the passage of *NCLB* is a "trickling up," from K-12 to higher education of policies and practices that

purportedly applied only to K-12 schools. *NCLB* made accountability and the idea of “highly qualified teachers” the new watchwords in public education.

That is not to say that higher education has ignored student learning as a measure of success. In the past, institutions of higher education have been governed by their accrediting agencies. The granting of accreditation was dependent upon demonstrations of program quality. Quality was translated into “inputs” such as numbers of faculty with advanced degrees, scholarly productivity for both faculty and students, credit hours for degrees, the allocation of appropriate resources for different types of student experiences, etc., etc. The better the “inputs”, the better the student learning, or so it was assumed.

American higher education is now feeling the effects from the concern with accountability that was the focus of *NCLB*. Colleges and universities are scrambling to build the same types of assessment systems found in K-12 schools. There is increased attention paid to retention and graduation rates. The inboxes of college administrator’s email accounts are filling with offers from various vendors for the assessment systems, student tracking software, webinars for increasing graduation rates, and consultants who can help institutions pass accreditation under the new set of expectations for higher education. “Metrics,” a term that sums up the focus on the quantification of quality in education, crops up in many conversations about the state of education at all levels.

Unlike other college or professional degree programs, teacher preparation has always had to attend to K-12 issues more closely because of the student teaching component in its programs. Teacher educators cannot ignore mandates imposed on K-12 schools; student teachers bring back to their faculty and programs their lived experience with these mandates. *NCLB*, however, ratcheted up the stakes considerably and in ways that teacher educators could not have anticipated. The three articles in this special issue of *EPAA* present the varying ways in which *NCLB* has affected three different teacher preparation programs. What each article depicts is how one federal policy directed at K-12 schools forced changes in teacher preparation programs in higher education.

We see the first sign of a “trickling up” from *NCLB*’s “highly qualified teacher” to the adoption of performance assessments for preservice teachers. The use of performance assessments to evaluate teachers is not new. It is central to how teachers gain National Board Certification. However, California was among the first states in the nation to mandate the use of a performance assessment in granting teaching licenses to newly minted teachers. No graduate of a California teacher preparation program can acquire a teaching credential unless they pass one of three versions of a performance assessment: the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), the California Teacher Performance Assessment (CA TPAs), or Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers (FAST), which is specific to Fresno State’s programs.

As Okhremtchouk, Newell and Rosa argue, the development of California’s teacher assessment policy was part of a larger cultural shift towards more stringent and complex teacher exit exams. The emphasis on “exit exams” has gotten a boost with the development of the edTPA, a nationwide pilot of a teacher exit exam that grew out of California’s PACT. Okhremtchouk and her colleagues conducted a study of student teachers’ perceptions of their confidence in completing the PACT early on in their final student teaching experience. They also surveyed the students to determine what types of support students felt they needed to be successful with the PACT. By viewing the PACT experience through the student teachers’ eyes, the authors were able to identify conflicts between how PACT is administered and what is intended to show about beginning teacher competencies.

Rodriguez-Valls describes a partnership between a teacher preparation program and a migrant education program sponsored by a county office of education in California – the Migrant Education Summer Academy. The Migrant Education Summer Academy was designed to provide

additional academic support to sophomore-level, migrant students who are English Language Learners. Migrant students are at particular risk of not passing California's High School Exit Exams, a requirement for obtaining a high school diploma in the state. The teacher educators partnered with the county office so that student teachers were able to do part of their clinical experience in this four-week summer program. During this clinical experience, student teachers observed and had opportunities to enact instructional practices that supported students' taking responsibility for their own learning. The learning spaces co-created by students and teachers stood in stark contrast to the "scripted" or highly prescribed pedagogies that too many struggling students often encounter and that have been many schools' responses to *NCLB* mandates.

In the final article of this issue, we encounter a university-based teacher education program that centers its work at the nexus of pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher professional development. Whitenack's and Swanson's article uses two distinct but connected vignettes – one focused on student teachers and another focused on teachers engaged in professional development – to explore the ways in which boundary spanners play critically important roles in translating *NCLB* mandates into practices that have greater potential for equitable educational practices implemented by K-12 and teacher education programs. Through their narrative inquiry, the authors highlight the work of boundary spanners at several junctures – teacher educators who connect university curricula to K-12 practices, mentor teachers who translate district policies into effective instructional practices reflective of those taught at the university, site administrators who find bridges between the school and university as well as between novice and veteran educators. They conclude that it is these boundary spanners that will potentially lead reforms that will mutually benefit the various units that make up the complex web of K-12 education and teacher preparation.

The conflicts between centralizing tendencies and local responses to federal mandates will only increase with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), currently adopted by 45 states. For many teacher education programs, there seems to be more inherent alignment between teacher preparation program standards and the CCSS. But, as our three articles remind us, we must continue to maintain a critical stance – particularly on issues related to performance assessment at all levels – while also actively and collaboratively creating those common spaces that allow for our systems to be mutually reinforcing and mutually transformative. Our children, especially those from low income and culturally, linguistically and racially diverse communities, deserve no less!

About the Guest Co-Editors

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Elaine Chin began her appointment as Dean of the Connie L. Lurie College of Education at San José State University on June 1, 2009. Prior to that, she was the Associate Dean of the Lurie College of Education from August 2007 to May 2009. She has held a number of administrative and faculty positions, including Department Chair and Associate Director of Teacher Education and in the College of Education at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and faculty in the School of Education at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is a former high school English and Journalism teacher. She has been active in research on alternative teacher certification programs, policies governing teacher licensure, socialization into the professions, and the development of professional expertise by novices in the fields of journalism, medicine, chemistry and K-12 teaching. Her publications include articles and book chapters in *Educational Researcher*, *Written Communication*, *The Journal of Learning Sciences* and *The International Handbook of Educational Policy*. She holds a Ph.D. in Education from Stanford University, an M.A.T. in English Education from The University of Chicago, and an A.B. with Honors in English from The University of Chicago.

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Pia Lindquist Wong, Ph.D., is the Chair of the Department of Teaching Credentials at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Her research focuses on urban professional development schools, teacher practices in the context of urban school reform and democratic education, and comparative and international education. She teaches courses on critical pedagogy, multicultural and bilingual education, and educational research. From 2000 until 2008, she was the Project Director for the Equity Network, an urban school reform and teacher preparation partnership that included 12 professional development schools, 5 districts, 2 teachers' associations and Sacramento Area Congregations Together and was supported in part by grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the California Post-Secondary Education Commission. She is a member of the Committee on Accreditation for the CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing and currently serves as co-chair of the Teacher Advisory Panel, convened by the CTC. Dr. Wong has collaborated with Brazilian scholars on school reform in Brazil and has served as a consultant to the Secretariats of Education in the states of Minas Gerais and Paraná. She co-edited (with Ronald Glass) *Prioritizing urban children, their teachers, and schools through professional development schools* (2009), co-authored *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Education Reform and Social Movements* (1998) with Maria Pilar O'Cadiz and Carlos Alberto Torres, and published other articles in journals such as *Comparative Education Review*, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, and *Journal of Educational Policy*. Dr. Wong received a B.A. with Honors in Latin American Studies and an M.A. in City Planning from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in International Development Education from Stanford University. She is married to Bruce Griesenbeck, a transportation planner, and they are the proud parents of Riley Hui (16 years) and Emily Ming (14 years).

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