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Back to the Future . . . Again: (re)Turning to Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education

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Book Review: Grossman, P. (Ed.). (2018). Teaching core practices in teacher education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. 224 pages.

Reviewed by Todd Alan Price
National Louis University, Chicago, USA

Background: What Is Teacher Education?

The purpose of this study is to inquire into what teacher education as a profession in the USA imagines itself to be, and what are the subsequent implications for the professional education of teachers given that imagination. A concern shared amongst critical educators is that teacher education is too instrumental. What happens to teachers and teaching when the teacher preparation profession is too narrowly defined? Knowledge, skills and dispositions, and teacher pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) are supposed to be the hallmarks of the teacher preparation program. But when these features are reduced further to the acquisition of tips, tricks, and techniques (Lemov, 2015), teacher education loses its otherwise possible critical, intellectual edge. In the early 20th century, John Dewey (1904) "felt that the best possible preparation of teachers was solidly rooted in the study of education (psychology and philosophy of education, for instance) and subject matter" (Rury, 1986). Alternatively, he worried that "too much effort" was being waged toward making young teachers "immediately proficient" (Rury, 1986). What would Dewey say about the "boot camps" for teacher candidates as is a common feature amongst the residential programs in traditional colleges and educational maintenance organizations today?
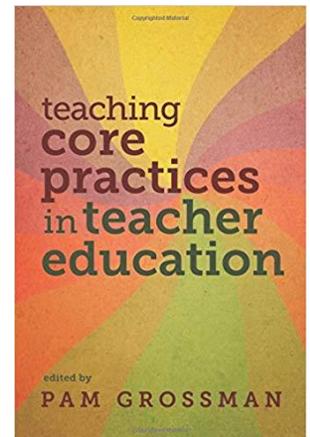
The general claim I'm making may be somewhat nostalgic, that teacher preparation once had a golden age, was once imbued with an intellectual edge. I'm thinking of, for example, the Progressive Education Era when George Counts and others in the social meliorism camp raised the all-encompassing question, "Dare the school build a new social order?" (Kliebard, 2004). Not too long past, teachers were intellectual leaders and aspired to play a role in shaping society, not

fitting students into it, merely to work. In more contemporary times, some teachers might call the intellectual, leading part of their work taking a "pedagogical stance" or engaging in "critical pedagogy" like Paulo Freire.

In fact, all is not well today concerning the status quo of teaching and teacher education[1], and this unease amongst teachers and within the teaching profession is being reflected in the recent return to teacher strikes. The growing movement(s) for an increase in otherwise stagnant, low wages and calls for better working conditions (including demands for smaller class sizes) are omnipresent in the 21st century. Emerging are protests concerning the more generalized privatization of public education, and there are many teachers fighting for a more equitable school-funding formula. The indication is that teachers are becoming more politically active. Some are indeed running for office, winning the public mind, even if they lose the election (Price, November 8, 2018). In teacher education, great concern exists because of the reduced number of applicants to the colleges of education. Something is afoot, and teacher preparation needs to be more vocal in identifying the problems and advocating for solutions.

My interest in this essay, however, is not political. It offers no solution as to what ails the seemingly chronically struggling field of teacher education, though some insights provided in critically reviewing the writing of practitioner scholars may indeed provide a clue. In attempting to understand and talk about the perennial problems of the teacher education field, my aim is to shift our focus from teachers to a view of teacher education reform steeped in history, philosophy, policy, and educational theorizing. I engage in this scholarly work in the hopes of making more evident the truth claims, assumptions, and perceptions regarding the teacher education field, one said to be in "crises," and thus in need of educational reform.

Many educational reforms have been called for: for example, the movement from content-based teaching to skills-based teaching; the legislative enactment of the "highly qualified teacher"; and the "value-added" performance assessment of teachers. Of these, what should be of most interest to critical educators is how the operations of reforms are normalized in discourse. Placing schools under report cards by way of *No Child Left Behind*, or pitting schools against one another in order to win a lottery called *Race to the Top* are a few of the examples of how otherwise innocuous phrases can seem to be common sense, yet dramatically impact and change the culture(s) of education. White paper policy reports suggest that others besides the teacher educators are at the policy-making table, supposedly doing something to solve the problem they identified. In point of fact, teacher educators are infrequently invited to speak to policy making.[2]

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1. This from the National Research Council, (2010): "The incentives that attract aspiring teachers, the status of the field, the compensation teachers can expect, the conditions in which they do their work, and their opportunities for professional advancement are just a few of the factors that affect who becomes a teacher and who stays in the field." (vii)
2. Notable exceptions being celebrated and renowned faculty such as Linda Darlings-Hammond, for example, who testified on behalf of Race to the Top (2010). Along with the Obama administration's *Our Future, Our Teachers* (2011) and *R.E.S.P.E.C.T.* (2012) white papers, Race to the Top advanced the idea that teaching is an important profession that deserved more support but was too important to be left up to the educators.

In this essay I identify, examine, and deconstruct the theoretical frameworks guiding teacher preparation in colleges of education, studying the not-so-distant past and the immediate present. Furthermore, I reflect upon teacher education coursework and programs and suggest implications for faculty, using several steps.

First, I summarize a prominent book in the teacher education profession which advocates for a contemporary (yet, I would argue, not new) teacher education reform initiative; developing and sustaining core teaching practices; and a return once again to pragmatism. Second, I analyze teacher preparation policy making in the past, comparing the past with the current return to practice-based theory for teacher preparation, by referencing white papers (education reform proposals) and responses to the white papers made from within the field. Third, I analyze my own role serving in a few of the higher education advocacy organizations and describe the specific disciplinary work I engage in as a college of education faculty member: redesigning educational foundations curriculum in service to our teacher preparation program(s). I conclude with a synthesis to make meaning.

These steps—conducting the book review, deconstructing white papers/education reform initiatives, performing policy advocacy on behalf of teacher education, and engaging in curriculum development for teacher preparation work—are all described to provide a picture of what is happening in teacher preparation in the USA. One preliminary experienced observation is that "performativity" (Ball, 2003, 2006) largely drives professional teacher preparation. To define performativity is a challenge; better it seems to explain what it does, hence Stephen Ball's soliloquy:

> New roles and subjectivities are produced as teachers are re-worked as producers/providers, educational entrepreneurs, and managers and are subject to regular appraisal and review and performance comparisons. We learn to talk about ourselves and our relationships, our purposes and motivations in these new ways. The new vocabulary of performance renders old ways of thinking and relating dated or redundant or even obstructive (Ball, 2003, p. 146)

This observation corresponds with the past of "Taylorism" that likened schools to factories, teachers to workers, and students to products to be made (Kliebard, 1987). My work suggests a "new Taylorism" is emerging (Price, 2017, 2018) with a powerful twist; it is the same old Taylorism but with advanced technology infusion.

But another observation is that complexity is growing. Indeed, "producing" highly qualified, effective teachers as a Taylorism model would afford is becoming increasingly complex because the context under which teaching and learning is taking place is changing. Context is the key feature of a white paper on teacher preparation forwarded by the premiere teacher education professional organization: "Because local context matters when considering how to best operationalize clinical practice, we avoid making sweeping national recommendations, other than the guiding statements provided" (AACTE, 2018). This is an interesting shift away from

nationally mandated standards and reform, yet retaining external pressure on the teacher education profession.[3]

Subsequently, the role(s) of teachers are being infused by national prerogatives while national oversight is being largely eviscerated through the dynamism of rapidly changing technology and different cultures. (Much more needs to be said here about the current administration's deregulation efforts; this will be acknowledged later in the essay.) But older theoretical constructs such as scientific management and social efficiency persist (Taylorism in effect translated into education, see again Kliebard, 2004). This in turn socially constructs what is of value in teacher education and, subsequently, politics and ideology enter into the teacher education conversation: what to do?

Curricular Theory Approach: Critical Policy Analysis

To describe what teacher education as a profession imagines itself to be, I use a curricular theory approach, critical policy analysis. Critical policy analysis is also a course I teach in the Curriculum Advocacy and Policy doctoral program. This course includes the following:

> **Course Learning Outcomes**
> Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
> CLO 1: Identify the characteristics of policy.
> CLO 2: Explain ways in which policy discourse interacts with ideology, culture, professional practice, globalization, and social change in one's chosen field.
> CLO 3: Apply tools and strategies of critical policy analysis to policy problems in one's chosen field.
> CLO 4: Articulate ways in which policy work and policy analysis can be used as tools of social change.

This study understands curricular reforms as belonging to one of two typologies[4]: one kind responds to *external forces*/pressures from above and fear of sanction. The other emerges from *internal desires*/imaginations from deeply committed professionals for improvement of their profession. This study explains how terms such as "method," "practice," "representation(s)," "approximation(s)," and "decomposition," as defined by Pamela Grossman (2018), frame how we think of teacher preparation. We might better understand teacher education if we as

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3. Corresponding with the call for PBT in the 21st century are professional organizations including the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), which released a major white paper on this subject matter. In *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice* (2017) by the AACTE Clinical Practice Commission, the virtues of clinical practice are lauded, along with a noticeable focus on "context," an homage to, I believe, the idea that while practice is central, teaching is nonetheless a complex activity subject to nuance. Otherwise, *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice* strikes me along the same lines as *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education*. It is a strident and self-assured approach to teacher preparation, that "practice makes perfect."
4. For the sake of brevity, it is also to affirm that there are many different interests represented in reform, but reduction to these two simplifies the inquiry.

curriculum theorists deconstruct the ideology surrounding the profession's truth claims, assumptions, and premises. We might, as a result of examining the culture of teacher education, suggest ways to reclaim teacher education as a critical, *reflexive*, even intellectual project, one that would have major implications for teaching and learning in PK–20 classrooms across the country. All I am able to do in this general but critical book review is to leave an impression based in this critical policy analysis approach.

Returning to Practice-Based Teaching: Why Now?

In summarizing *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education*, (Grossman, 2018), I'm presented with a few interesting and compelling challenges. In the first instance, I believe a good book review would aspire to summarize with fidelity the substance of the book, while also providing some insight and reflection on the value of the book, what the book means. As a member of a community of teacher educators whom I find are largely steeped—not exclusively, but primarily—in the "methods," this book makes a significant contribution. The summary of "what to do" to improve the "methods"—what is no doubt in contemporary teacher education preparation the primary part of teacher education—is insufficient, however, if it stops there. This work calls for analysis, and to historians and philosophers of educational reform in particular, what I aspire to do is place *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education* into both an historical and philosophical context in order to create meaning.

Those are the two challenges, to summarize and analyze the book with an acknowledgement that this approach might not be of interest to those to whom advancing methods is a primary concern and that to provide a review that creates some meaning for historical, philosophical, and policy implications is a tall order.

Old Wines in a New Bottle

Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education is not introducing a new concept; rather, it is repackaging an old one, that of practice-based theory (PBT), advocated in "Developing Practice, Developing Practitioners: Toward a Practice-Based Theory of Professional Education," by Ball and Cohen (1999), and somewhat more recently in "Teaching Practice: A Cross-Professional Perspective," by Grossman herself (Grossman et al., 2009), and by others (Lampert, 2010). "Learning teaching in, from, and for practice: What do we mean?" In essence, *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education* is a contemporary version, a sprucing up of PBT. Second, there are what I would characterize as friendly critics (Zeichner, 2012) of practice-based teaching educational reform who argue that this recent (re)turn toward PBT dates back even further, to the period of the early 1920s when scientific curriculum making and the idea of tabulating practice was deemed worthy of study.

So now let's turn to the matter of the substance of the book, *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education*. This as mentioned is an edited book with Pamela Grossman the lead editor, having assembled a number of other professors, directors, and some doctoral candidates, essentially a team of devotees, to the teaching core practices concept. It is divided into eight chapters of which the first is an introduction to the concept but also a reflection of potential critiques of the concept. This confirms that PBT as a concept has been around for some time, and the next

several chapters are in general small case studies where teaching core practices have been placed into effect.

To wit, the first chapter is an interesting one because it acknowledges what could be articulated concerns of "core" practices being narrowly defined as stand-alone "techniques" (Lemov, 2015). Grossman acknowledges this concern in the very first few passages: "focusing teacher education on practice runs the risk of emphasizing decontextualized skills and routines in ways that erode the agency of the teacher." (p. 1) She then parries with ". . .we have undertaken this book project to share pedagogical approaches for preparing teachers . . . that foreground the practical, but see practice as complex, sophisticated, and thoughtful work" (p. 2). Having dispensed with the purpose and responding to the already imagined critics of the practice, the book goes on to provide case studies and specific examples of the models or frameworks for core practices in teacher education. To simplify, the following appear to my reading the key parts of the overall purpose of the book, to advocate for adopting core teaching practices (key ideas are **bolded**):

Representations: The key articulation here is that representations "make visible" for novices what is going on behind the scenes, that make effective teaching seem to work so seamlessly and smoothly. Also, another point made is that representations allow for the novice not only to see teaching as a "whole" but, in coordination with the teacher educator, to be able to identify various "components" of the teaching practice so as to be able to "unpack" what is occurring.

An interesting section in the beginning of this chapter is the manner in which the authors liken teaching and education more generally to be similar to medicine or law. In particular, using a legal example, the authors state that the legal brief is a core practice in law and to study that component one is able to prepare better, to become a lawyer, we can assume. Likewise, education is the same way, the authors argue. It can be broken down into components and each component studied carefully, a **decomposition** of practice.

Models: This chapter was broken up into several vignettes, each with a description of the activity, and each vignette had a "debrief, framing, and contextualization" section that further described modeling strategies.

The key part of this chapter was to make "explicit" the thinking around historical evidence and what that evidence portends for understanding and engaging in substantive discussion. Stated another way, the exercise herein was to point teacher candidates who are, ostensibly (as in the vignette example 1), working to become history teachers, to a close reading and regard for the text. Stated another way, this vignette aims to make meaning of the historical record of what happened and direct teachers how to make meaning of that evidence.

One example in vignette 1 was to describe the use of a conversation around race from a rather oblique yet historically interesting conversation: "Was Lincoln a racist"? The teacher's intention was to make explicit the discussion between two students, with the teacher also going beyond facilitation to "step out" to "make her thinking visible".

The next two vignettes provide other examples of "making thinking explicit." Indeed, it seems that the purposes—alternately in the exercise on poetry (vignette 2) and the review and

discussion around close reading of primary source materials in relation to a meeting between Montezuma and Cortez (vignette 3)—are essentially about modeling thinking. In vignette 2 the writer states that her teacher candidates struggle with making their thinking visible when it comes to explaining their meaning-making of poetry. In the second the writer brings up that primary sources might be considered circumspect, or less than authentic if they do not take into account the reasons for a particular account of history (for example, Cortez's rendition of the meeting vs. Montezuma's).

All told, the point in this essay is to suggest that modeling thinking makes thinking visible, explicit, and discernable for teacher candidates to utilize in their own practice. The writer explains that the teacher educator used concise, brief statements, not lengthy "monologues" about metacognition, and also used strategic "pauses" and debriefs to step out and again make thinking explicit. The writer notes that the teacher candidates, among other activities, would video-record themselves teaching to provide an opportunity to reflect on their own instruction.

Approximations: This chapter is broken up essentially into two parts: university-based approximations and K–12 approximations. The general idea is that "approximations" are close to the real thing; teaching children as teachers of record with all the responsibilities, procedures, and expectations that such entails. The chapter also, once again, draws some comparisons between teaching in the K–12 world with that of the legal and the medical worlds, and in one of the vignettes a comparison is made with psychology. More on this in the concluding analysis.

To continue, the university-based approximations include what are identified as the following: video extensions, fishbowls, and "partially scripted simulations." Of interest, and embedded in each approximation explanation, is a section called "a peek inside teacher education," which pays homage once again to seeing; this section aims to reveal, make explicit the thinking behind the practice or teacher educator's approximation usage. The peek inside section was fairly comprehensive, with a lengthy explanation, rationale, and closing comments of why this practice, for example the "fishbowl," was used, as described in the passage below:

> Sarah used the fishbowl as an approximation to help candidates see, name, and experience how the practices are enacted in teaching. She viewed the creation of the public record as a necessity in helping novices come to understand what practices look like when enacted, as opposed to only understanding what is represented in a lesson plan. (p. 68)

In another of the "a peek inside teacher education" sections, the writer explains the value of the partially scripted simulation to generally provide prompts for teacher candidates to, in turn, provide helpful cues to their assumed students to correctly read words. In this exercise it was the intention to help the teacher candidates to reflect upon what their own students were doing to make the correct sound in reading a difficult word and how the teacher candidate could provide the best prompt or feedback to the student. The writing provided in this chapter section some of the supposed advantages of a "partially scripted simulation" over a more traditional script (direct instruction, for example, comes to mind):

> One could imagine a partially scripted approximation being used in a variety of disciplines, where instead of scripting how a student reads a text, a teacher educator could script certain understandings and misunderstandings, that a student brings to the instructional interaction. (p. 73)

It struck me that this was a good idea if the idea is to not entirely dictate what the teacher does but to allow for some discretion on the part of the teacher to think through, for example, what are common ways in which students struggle with words that are frankly, as provided in this example, not easily aligned to a phonetic rule. (For example, "tow" and "cow" have different intonations but are structurally the same.)

In the example of the K–12 classroom approximations, two practices were cited: "deliberative co-teaching" and the use of the "processing pauses." Both of these instances, the writers noted, called for careful attention to the "quality," "as opposed to the frequency" (p. 73). It seems in the case of the "deliberative" coteaching as an approximation, the teacher candidate would likely be paired with a teacher of record or the teacher educator, and by "deliberative" the type of teaching the teacher candidate would be doing would be highly structured, co-planned, and co-taught with the partner as is afforded in a less "deliberative" co-teaching practice. In the case of the "processing pauses" approximation, this too seems to be a structured activity where the teaching and learning process is slowed down to essentially allow for a pause. The writers acknowledge that this is difficult to do in a K–12 classroom, and thus has to be structured in to "freeze" the "moment" for consultation and reflection with their "teacher educator or peer" (p. 73).

This chapter ends with a reflection on what approximations to choose, noting that complex practices are never easy, and encouraging narrowing in on and drawing from one or another "component" such as "eliciting student thinking" (p. 74). It seems in this sense that the approximation, not surprisingly given the aim of the book, is to aim at a very small number of "core practices" to focus upon.

Rehearsals: This is another big ticket item, a significant part of the "approximation" of practice: rehearsals. This chapter was interesting in that it focused on one such approximation, rehearsal, begging the questions: How to choose? What to rehearse? Toward what ends? Essentially this chapter takes us on the structured sequence of working in, working through, and moving beyond the rehearsal with descriptions at every step of the way.

Benevolent Instrumentality

My analysis, impressions, or "takeaways" are large. Indeed, there are several, because the implications of this work are significant for teacher education and resonate deeply with assumptions, implications, and the direction of teaching, teacher education, and classrooms across PK–20 schools in general. I find this to be a challenging task, to take up the issue of *Core Practices in Teacher Education* and Practice-Based Teaching as a theory and have subsequently aimed at summarizing the actual content of the book as is customary of a book review, but then to do a critical review of what this content means. I found along the way two examples of the kind of book review I aspire to do in the form of earlier works by Nancy Zimpher reviewing Schön (Zimpher, 1986) and John Rury reviewing Dewey (Rury, 1986). This really supported my

effort to do the same: to put Grossman's work in conversation with Dewey and Schön, and to emulate what Zimpher and Rury did in the past, which is to engage in a critical book review rather than one which merely summarized and analyzed with only limited theory.

Hence, what are the implications of *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education*? What are the theoretical foundations of PBT? How do these ideas relate to other similar ideas from the past (namely Dewey's *The Relation Between Theory and Practice in the Training of Teachers,* 1904, and Schön's *Reflective Practitioner*, 1983)?

A little bit utilitarian, a little more instrumental, with some reflection mixed in. I always thought decomposition an unfortunate use of terms, like a castle crumbling into sand. Or a piece of clothing, a sweater, that if one of the threads is pulled, starts to unravel. Decomposing even strikes me as the foundation giving way. But in the worldview of Grossman et. al., unpacking, breaking down, or taking apart the composition of a lesson is critical to getting to the essence of what is important and what needs to be elucidated and enacted.

Another word I prefer is (de)construction. Starting from construction—the lesson, the learning environment itself, the dynamic relationship between teacher-learner-text—we might reveal much more, create a greater understanding of what is going on in the broadest sense when we see the classroom in context, when we think of the curriculum as "currere" (in motion) and the experience as it were a construction, a social construction to be precise. In this sense, (de)construction, as related to education, has the aim of making meaning in the critical or, some would say, hermeneutic sense. It also creates something more, a new construction, new meaning. Not to isolate the educational protein or atomistic part, as decomposition to my thinking subscribes to do, but rather to reveal the theory behind the teaching and learning experience, as imagined and as enacted.

Return (did we ever leave?) to the medical model. There are apparently themes throughout Schön's work and Grossman's work to compare and make the case that teaching and teacher education need be more closely aligned as a profession to legal and medical models. Going back further this is also exemplified by the call for the same in the *Flexner Report* (1910) which is sort of the germinal piece, likening teaching and learning to a discipline to be studied as diagnostic practice, the clinical, medical model.

I'm struck by, in this instance, a few perceptions about teacher education that at least in my own orbit have certain assumptions that beg consideration for their veracity. I'll share mine first.

It is my observation that teacher education has long relied on the clinical over the theoretical and foundational for drawing insight into effective teaching practices. This stands to reason as practice is the part that teacher candidates are evaluated upon, largely so, because it is the "doing" part and the "performative" part. So the idea of the clinical being key in importance is no surprise here.

It is noteworthy too that the theme of the "clinical" is pursued, I would argue stridently and at times with a somewhat shrill tone, in the aforementioned white paper, *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice* (AACTE, 2018). It resembles, in my thinking, the argument of a scholar in recent years

who opined—with dripping irony—that what *public education* desperately needed was more tests. Does teacher education need more assessments? More reports and evaluations to assess? To the point, if the intent was to drill down further the argument that the clinical is important, *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice* seems to go well beyond *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education*, calling for indeed a utilitarian approach to teaching. Grossman's work does not go that far, and takes pains to distinguish itself as a reflective (perhaps in an environment that is devoted less to "audit" and more to "craft" or "the art of teaching," reflexive) exercise and teacher preparation as drawing much value being housed in the university.

Discussion: Backwards Design, Redux

It seems necessary to begin to wrap up this exercise with a few precise statements and subsequent remarks that correspond with the political times that we live in. First is to establish that this book is an advocacy one for practice-based teaching (PBT) and stems from a vigorous engagement with teacher education research, activities, observations, and study. It represents the culmination not only of Grossman's work, but of others equally prominent who share the sentiment that all is not well in teacher education, and, following some major initiatives that imply that teacher education is lacking, have endeavored to right the ship. A constant refrain as long as I have been in a teacher education college is that teacher education is missing the mark; usually this is accompanied by some official or professional standpoint, that "we" are essentially failing to produce highly qualified teachers. First and foremost it seems to me, wearing the two "hats" of being a director of policy studies and as an educational foundations faculty member, that it is impossible to read, study, and examine the text of this book without drawing from the insights of both of those "hats" in order to make meaning of the book's organization, theoretical frame, and subsequent case studies. *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice* largely provides what I would call *testimonies to the viability and substance of the advocacy of and claims for PBT.* Let's start with what I mean and what is implied by using each hat.

From a policy lens, it is important to establish that there have been several educational reforms in recent memory or in the lifeblood of career educators that could demonstrably be referred to as *influential* on the profession of education, and somewhat more recently on the teacher education profession. For example, any careful study of policy, politics, and reform in education would by necessity acknowledge the significant philosophical shift, how influential was *Brown v. Board of Education (*1954). *Brown v. Board* noted that de facto segregation was harmful for kids, and hence made it (segregation by design) illegal. This was an advocacy that aimed at social justice, righting a wrong. *Brown vs. Board* was followed by the *National Defense Education Act* (1958) which equated (for all time?) education reform as being in the interest of national security. Fairly weighty umbrage here. Following several years later was the supposition that *public education is failing,* as was claimed in *The Nation at Risk* (1983), by far the most influential and widely emulated "white paper" on American education in modern times.

Of course with No Child Left Behind (2002), which in an echo of *The Nation at Risk*, schools have been placed on report cards, threatened with sanction. A refrain that followed, Race to the Top (2009), somehow does not to have carried the same gravitas.

On the other hand, fewer, save for the more accomplished and lauded educational researchers of the professional, higher education field (Darling-Hammonds & Bransford, 2005), would acknowledge the critical influence for the teacher education profession of the germinal *Spellings Report* (2006). Named after Margaret Spellings, who was at the time the effective and influential Secretary of Education under the second George W. Bush administration, this white paper essentially placed educator preparation programs and their colleges of education on notice that if they didn't do better, the federal government would intervene and audit them. This sentiment (threat of sanction, and going after the books for external audit) was clearly understood by deans of education (my own dean at the time took careful note) and reverberated throughout professional educator associations, most notably the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Both organizations since then have sought to allay fears (promulgated in large part by political actors in government, sensationalist reporting in the mainstream media) in general of *teacher education is failing*. AERA and AACTE have endeavored (some would say mightily and others would argue frantically) to ensure that teacher education is seen to be a professional profession, of high quality. Their missions have largely been to ensure that teacher education in professional organizations of higher education are made necessary for moving children "incredibly forward," as one of my own students would say.

There is a caution here. It is important for the historical record to not advance that one calamitous event changed teacher education for ever more, since *Spellings* (2006). Indeed, a panel of educational researchers (notably those whom have benefitted largely in their careers for proposing and performing reform solutions to the "education crises") put out their own white paper, a series of articles, chapters in books, and a largely celebrated symposium at AERA[5], the premiere educational researcher conference in the nation, decrying that teacher education was failing to live up to its mission, and was needing to *upgrade its standards*. Additionally, several insiders (educational researchers whom have shared the spotlight on stage for educational research conferences, in teacher education publications, and in some instances at select policy making venues) argue that teacher education needs to *update its mission* for a new educational paradigm/challenge/society. In the words of one particular education researcher, there was no such thing as teacher education research.[6] Somehow, to these teacher educators, an authentic profession for teaching teachers how to teach was still needing to be raised from the earth; the level of knowledge around teacher preparation and the status and respectability of the teaching profession would soon follow.

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5. See Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. (Eds.) (2005). *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

6. See Shulman, L. S. (February 01, 1986). Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4–14: "What we miss are questions about the content of the lessons taught, the questions asked, and the explanations offered. From the perspectives of teacher development and teacher education, a host of questions arise. Where do teacher explanations come from? How do teachers decide what to teach, how to represent it, how to question students about it and how to deal with problems of misunderstanding?" (p. 8)

In a nutshell, from a policy standpoint and in summary of the aforementioned, what appears most prominent and influential in providing a critical lens on policy and therefore providing a background for where this book came out of is to acknowledge that:

1) Education reform in the current period (since the latter part of the 20th century into the 21st) has been driven by external, government and quasi-market forces—and those forces have largely sought to sanction teacher preparation. Internal reforms directed by teacher education itself, from the government's point of view, have become ever more circumspect. This suspicion is well on display beginning with the *Spellings Report*.

2) Colleges of education (where the bulk of teacher preparation have come out of) have aimed to comply with the idea that there is a pressing need for teacher education reform. Their efforts have been complicated by:
   a. Challenges in attracting good candidates. Students must consider debt and the higher education "value proposition"
   b. Accreditation problems; staggering amount of data accumulation, calculation, and dissemination (the subject of a much larger essay)
   c. The paradigm of "continuous improvement" largely (not exclusively) driven as a result of the former value proposition and accreditation/compliance demands.

3) Professional organizations *do evaluate* their own practices and *make improvements*. But government forces from the Department of Education, Congress, the National Governors Association (NGA), and State Legislatures, for example, have increasingly played a more demonstrative role to place their own set of rules, procedures, and accountability mechanisms on teacher preparation. Paradoxically these same rule-making bodies often as much seek to deregulate entry into the teaching field by loosening restrictions on alternative teacher licensure entities and processes, creating a dual-track system. In the dual-track system, one "pathway" is highly regulated and prescriptive, and another is almost devoid of traditional teacher licensure regulations.

4) Perhaps obvious to critical educators, but only appreciated in the main by others as fully transparent, are the efforts of some in the current administration, a neoconservative cabal it would seem, to dismantle public education, deregulate teacher education, and privatize both.

Conclusion

In conclusion, higher education adjustment and recalibration in response to government intervention has correspondingly related to heightened activity and advocacy amongst teacher preparation professional organizations. Prospective students must increasingly consider the cost and "value proposition" of deferring entrance into the workforce in lieu of further education with the hopes of becoming a teacher, currently a status with slightly increasing respect as indicated by polls of the general population, but still chronically undercompensated given the requirements, responsibilities, and conditions of the job. Stated simply, teacher preparation is under intense scrutiny and pressure and student prospects and teacher candidates are anxious

about their profession of choice. Given this climate, it is questionable how helpful proposed education and curricular reforms will be; each and every one of them should be evaluated carefully before a full investment is made. To what ends are these reforms aiming, and at what cost?

Curricular reforms across the teacher education spectrum, including PBT as advanced by Grossman and her co-researchers, need to be evaluated as to whether they are either responding to greater circumspection from external forces or are growing as a result of internal desires by the teacher educators for improvement. The practice-based teaching curricular reforms as exhaustively described in *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education* do both.

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