



Chard



Cibulka

The Quest for Better Educators

Education Next talks with DAVID CHARD and JAMES G. CIBULKA

The past few years have seen a raft of efforts to reform teacher evaluation, pay, and tenure. Amid all this, less attention has been paid to another thorny question, the role of teacher preparation in licensing teachers for the field. In this issue's forum, both contributors agree that teacher preparation requires some big changes. Making the case that teacher preparation demands innovation and ongoing evaluation is David Chard, dean of the school of education at Southern Methodist University. Arguing that teacher licensure ought to be retooled but retained is James G. Cibulka, president of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

Training Must Focus on Content and Pedagogy

by DAVID CHARD

What happens inside the classroom is the most critical ingredient in ensuring that all students are able to achieve their career goals. Improving educational attainment for all students in today's schools can only happen if we improve the quality of teaching.

Just over 30 years ago, I decided to become a classroom teacher, specifically a teacher of mathematics and chemistry. I was prepared at a midsize university in the Midwest. Despite the university's great reputation for teacher preparation, faculties in mathematics and chemistry discouraged me from the profession, noting that I was not going to be adequately compensated, would work in difficult conditions, and would be much happier in industry. This should have been a message to me that as a

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Strengthen State Oversight of Teacher Preparation

by JAMES G. CIBULKA

As the president of the sole specialized accreditor for educator preparation, I certainly agree with Dr. Chard's assertion that "[i]mproving educational attainment for all students in today's schools can only happen if we improve the quality of teaching." As Dr. Chard mentions in his essay, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is already working toward some of the solutions proposed through development of the next generation of accreditation standards for educator preparation as well as convening a data task force to provide guidance and help determine some of the very research questions for studying and strengthening educator preparation, as Dr. Chard suggests.

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society we had moved down a path that dissuades the best and brightest from seeing teaching as a viable career option.

Nevertheless, I was hired to teach mathematics in California in 1985. At the time, like today, far fewer individuals were being prepared to be mathematics teachers in California than the state needed. Many of us were hired from the Midwest and from eastern states, and given emergency certification in California conditioned on passing a course on California history and the National Teacher Exam in mathematics. I didn't realize then that my experience in California was the beginning of 30 years of slow but steady decline in the quality of candidates we were attracting and preparing to teach in our schools.

Over that period, it has become clear that current state control of teacher preparation and licensing does not ensure that teachers will be of high quality. State regulations that promote a one-size-fits-all approach to teacher preparation have limited our ability to innovate, customize, and study features of preparation programs that may positively affect student achievement. Bold new approaches to teacher preparation that are thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness in the classroom are long overdue.

What's Wrong with the System

Each state sets standards for teacher certification largely through its regulation of the teacher preparation programs that are operated by the institutions of higher education located within its boundaries. With few exceptions, this approach is unsatisfactory. In most states, in order for a program to recommend teachers for certification, it must meet a series of requirements that read like a laundry list. In my home state of Texas, for example, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) requires that in addition to the content standards specified for each grade band, the curriculum for teacher preparation programs must include 17 specific subjects of study. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with any of them. However, given as a list, none appear to have any particular emphasis (i.e., learning theories (#5) seems as important as

parent communication (#13) and motivation (#4)); they are not tailored to fit the needs of teachers in any specific context (i.e., urban or rural, turnaround or successful); and they do not consider the developmental stage of the student as it relates to each topic. Perhaps most importantly, this approach assumes a state-held knowledge base on optimal teacher preparation, which simply doesn't exist. The insistence that all preparation programs cover these topics discourages innovation or research on more effective approaches to teacher preparation.

What Makes Teachers Effective?

By all accounts, it is difficult to define precisely what sets good teachers apart from ineffective teachers or even average teachers. We do know that effectiveness in today's classroom is multidimensional.

It is difficult to conceive of an effective teacher who doesn't have a deep understanding of content knowledge. Deep understanding starts with the content itself (e.g., proportional reasoning, Shakespeare, the Krebs cycle), learned through disciplinary study. Content knowledge has to be backed up with experience in designing instruction that conveys content most effectively, enabling students to achieve mastery. In other words, knowing how to solve mathematical problems using proportions falls short of the content knowledge needed for teaching proportional reasoning. An effective teacher must be able to determine where students' understanding has broken down and how to support their cognition.

Unfortunately, it is difficult and time-consuming to master content knowledge and even more so to become an expert teacher. Mastery comes only with adequate experience and professional support. Certainly, in the process of preparation, we can instruct new teachers in how to recognize when students don't understand and how to identify their needs, but the numerous possible variations that underlie students' difficulties reduce the likelihood that new teachers will be experts from the start.

Pedagogical knowledge and skills require an understanding of a child's development involving biology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, behavioral psychology, and cultural anthropology. That's just to work with one child. When we place students together in groups, we have to consider sociocultural factors, systems dynamics, learning histories, and relationship histories. Then we get down to the engineering of instruction: how to plan and deliver content to groups of students who enter the classroom each day or each period. Teachers must estimate students' level of understanding and take an approach to teaching that will stimulate curiosity and engagement with the content.

I highlight these two components of teaching because they seem to be the most central to the



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While one of the hallmarks of CAEP as a new kind of accreditor is its focus on research and evidence that will further advance the field of educator preparation, this does not negate the need for a reformed teacher-licensure system.

Like many other features of our Pre-K–12 school system, the current design of teacher licensing, or certification as it's often called, has outlived its usefulness. It was suited to a bygone era when the nation's principal concern was to produce teachers that “do no harm” to their students. This concept of *primum non nocere*, originally applied to medical ethics, set a low bar for entrants to teaching. It seems strangely out of place today, when expectations for teachers emphasize their competence to help all learners become successful in a knowledge-based, globally competitive economy. Yet eliminating teacher licensure altogether likely would be to *worsen* the current dysfunctions. I will offer strategies for reforming teacher licensure that I believe have greater potential for success.

The Impact of Teacher Licensing

Some economists argue that the social and economic costs of licensure outweigh its benefits by reducing economic growth and/or the distribution of economic benefits. They argue that by invoking licensure, government improperly values the special interests of the practitioner over other interests. These criticisms date back to Adam Smith, but were given currency by Milton Friedman, who argued that government and professional associations were using licensure to reassert the monopoly of cartels by creating market entry restrictions.

Other economists, however, reject this critique of licensure in favor of a theory of “market failure.” According to this perspective, governmental intervention in the market, via such activities as professional licensing, can be justified when the market fails to operate efficiently. Market failure occurs when it is difficult for the consumer to judge the qualifications of a provider or the quality of a provider's work.

The empirical evidence is mixed. With the pathways into teaching growing in number, including training programs offered outside of higher education, it is hard to argue that current licensure policies substantially restrict entry, for example. And even critics acknowledge that licensing may lead to benefits such as higher-quality outcomes for those who obtain services from licensed professionals.

For many critics of teacher licensure, the gold standard is whether it promotes or impedes student learning. Yet research on the impact of licensure on student outcomes is inconclusive, with some studies finding little, if any, difference among traditionally certified and uncertified teachers and others finding substantially higher student test scores among traditionally certified teachers.

Licensure tests must be redesigned to focus on the more rigorous content required for Pre-K–12 students.

The comparisons in a number of such studies are complicated by the fact that teachers self-select into teaching with different skills sets and training, and they are not, of course, randomly assigned to schools, making inferences about their productivity imperfect at best. Moreover, labels can be confusing. Alternative approaches to licensure often are equated with the term “uncertified,” yet individuals taking an alternative route are typically intending to become fully licensed while they teach. Alternative paths to certification may produce different outcomes in the field than traditional paths. An analysis by Paul Peterson and Daniel Nadler found that states that encourage alternative licensure have greater diversity in their teacher pools, for example (see “What Happens When States Have Genuine Alternative Certification?” *check the facts*, Winter 2009). Given these complications, the most that can be said is that the research has not shown licensure by itself to have a negative or positive effect on student learning.

Teacher Licensure in the States

Current licensure requirements vary significantly among states, as reported by the testing company Educational Testing Service (ETS):

Praxis: Thirty-six states accept the Praxis exam to establish basic skills proficiency (Praxis I), content knowledge (Praxis II), or both. Thirty-four of these require either the Praxis I or II specifically for at least one level of licensure, generally for the initial level. However, the score required to pass varies considerably: on a 100-point scale, the most demanding states tend to set a cut score 20 to 30 points above those of the least-demanding states, whose cut scores are below what is recommended by ETS.

Bachelor's degrees: All states require some form of bachelor's degree, yet requirements for content-specific degrees are variously defined and inconsistently applied. The standard requirement is a major in the subject, although most states



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work of teacher preparation programs. In short, they represent the development of a teacher's knowledge of the "what" and "how" of teaching. Recent advancements in education research have brought a new lens to these two areas and suggest that in many cases, teacher preparation programs are not currently designed to provide adequate content knowledge or to teach pedagogical practices that are supported by research evidence. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) (see "21st-Century Teacher Education," *features*, Summer 2013) has launched an initiative that will identify those teacher-preparation programs that set high standards with regard to content and pedagogy. As NCTQ found in its analysis, far too few teacher-preparation programs currently provide what is necessary for a new teacher to be successful.

There is compelling evidence that the quality of the individuals who are attracted to the field may be more powerful than differences in teacher preparation programs.

Ideally, our system of teacher preparation would also determine who has the personality and disposition to be a teacher before preparation begins, and ensure that they develop the skills and professionalism needed to be effective within a school. These areas lie on the margin of what is currently in the purview of teacher preparation programs. In addition, there is compelling evidence that the quality of the individuals who are attracted to the field may be more powerful than differences in teacher preparation programs. Recent efforts by the newly formed Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) to establish stronger criteria for selecting top-notch candidates are a step in the right direction.

Setting the bar higher is only the first step, however. Over the past several decades, fewer and fewer well-qualified candidates have seen teaching as an acceptable career choice. On average, U.S. teachers earn only about two-thirds of the salaries of other professions with comparable preparation, there is little room for advancement within the profession, and the working conditions in many public schools are challenging at best. Teacher preparation programs alone can't adequately attract a pool of strong new teachers to the field. One of the most promising outcomes of initiatives such as Teach For

America (TFA) is that it helps bring to schools well-educated college graduates who might otherwise not have considered education as a career option. But even TFA falls short of filling the need for new teachers in the next decade. Without powerful new incentives, it seems fewer high-quality teachers will be drawn to the field.

What's the Solution?

In an effort to create immediate and enduring improvements in student outcomes, most states have adopted Common Core State Standards or other content standards that reflect higher expectations for student learning than previous iterations. Efforts to establish similarly comprehensive standards for teacher preparation, such as those being developed by CAEP, should be applauded. We should not simply adopt new teacher competencies, however, without a thoughtful and strategic plan for evaluation and evidence-based revision of our teacher-preparation programs.

I envision the first steps in this process to be a broad and inclusive conversation that brings the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors together to forge a concrete plan for studying and strengthening teacher preparation. While the conversation would be broad, the agenda should be narrow and focus on three immediate needs: 1) radically improving the quality of candidates coming to the field; 2) identifying the specific content of coursework necessary to improve teacher knowledge; and 3) detailing the practical experiences that new teachers need in order to ensure they are effective in the types of classroom contexts in which they plan to teach. This conversation will require a thoughtful analysis of why our system of teacher preparation has not changed appreciably for decades and what we need to do to make needed changes happen.

In terms of the optimal content of teacher preparation programs, we have only begun to understand what specific amounts of knowledge and skills one needs to possess to be an effective classroom teacher. We also know very little about how those needs change depending on students' developmental stages (e.g., pre-K, middle school) and the teaching context (e.g., urban, suburban, rural). It's easy to see where content is absent, however. Even without empirical evidence, we can make logical decisions about how to improve the quality and quantity of the most important knowledge and skills. For example, it is common in many elementary-educator preparation programs to see few courses on the science of reading instruction or on mathematics content. These limitations should be immediately addressed. Another example involves how little teachers understand about the home language and culture of their students. This is particularly important given the dramatic demographic shifts



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allow substitution of a major with course credits. Due to the inconsistent approaches within higher education, the Praxis examination has, by default, become the threshold for entering the profession.

Master's degrees: Twenty-five states require a master's degree in order to obtain one or more kinds of certification. However, states are moving away from this type of requirement toward outcome-based induction programs.

Alternative routes to licensure outside of higher education: According to a 2010 U.S. Department of Education report, 8 percent of teacher preparation programs were designated as "alternative, not based in institutions of higher education," provided instead by for-profit or nonprofit organizations. Combined, the states of Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Texas produce 74 percent of teacher candidates trained outside of institutions of higher education. There is wide variation in the quality of teachers produced both within higher education and via alternative pathways, a signal that the systems of quality control need to be overhauled through regulation and market mechanisms.

Licensing Can Be Improved

Teacher licensure has little impact on teaching quality because it sets too low a bar for entry into teaching. Also, licensure policies have often been relaxed to assure that an adult is in each classroom, but not necessarily a *qualified* adult. In short, educator licensure suffers from weak controls:

- Licensure regulations in some states focus only on courses and degrees for some pathways into teaching. As soon as they enter the classroom, graduates of preparation programs should show evidence of their ability to teach diverse learners according to rigorous college- and career-ready standards.
- Many licensure tests lack rigor. Worse still, most states use low cut scores that further weaken their rigor. Licensure tests must be redesigned to focus on the more rigorous content required for Pre-K–12 students, general pedagogy, and pedagogy within a discipline (pedagogical content knowledge).
- Current licensure policies make little use of performance-based assessments that capture a candidate's actual preparedness to teach on entering a classroom. Some states are moving away from licensure based on paper-and-pencil tests in favor of assessments that demonstrate competence to teach and to raise Pre-K–12 student learning.

Addressing basic licensure issues could have a considerable impact on teacher quality. More focus on performance assessments such as those noted above would, among other things, lessen unduly burdensome course requirements for nontraditional applicants entering college and university preparation programs. A shift to a focus on measuring outcomes will open the licensure process to high-quality

alternative pathways into teaching and encourage innovation among higher education providers who wish to compete on cost and quality rather than on traditional curriculum and seat-time requirements.

Relicensure requirements for practicing teachers should be aligned with improved initial licensure requirements. They should specify a more advanced level of practice with accompanying evidence, including instructional practices, student learning, and other measures. Similarly, advanced master's programs should be redesigned to serve this purpose as well.

More rigorous licensure requirements should focus on meeting the needs of today's diverse learners, whatever the school setting. Also, licensure requirements should complement new, more rigorous teacher-evaluation systems that

More focus on performance assessments will open the licensure process to high-quality alternative pathways and encourage innovation.

capture the context within which teachers work, using teacher observation protocols, student learning measures, and student surveys that measure student engagement and related evidence of a teacher's effectiveness. Neither a licensure system nor evaluation alone can accomplish what these quality-control mechanisms can do if they are complementary and rigorous.

Leverage State Authority

If the teacher licensing bar is to be raised, more rigorous state program-approval authority for teacher preparation programs is also needed. The recent report of the Council of Chief State School Officers found that state program-approval policies for preparation programs, both those for "traditional higher education programs and for new pathways, suffer from weak and inconsistent regulation." Weak controls at the front end lead to highly inconsistent quality among entrants to teacher preparation programs and ultimately new hires. This pattern contributes to high retraining costs for school districts and to destabilizing and costly turnover rates. States could use their authority over teacher preparation programs to strengthen the qualifications of



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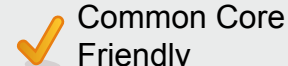
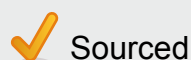


Jason Glass, PhD
Iowa Department of Education Director, Oct. 29, 2012

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we are witnessing in most of our country. Efforts to understand the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are critical to sustained success in the classroom are under way, but further state and federal investment in research is needed to guide the reform of preparation programs.

Finally, we need to encourage experimentation with the practical requirements of teacher preparation. At my institution, we assume that more experience in the classroom than is required by state regulation provides teacher candidates with valuable practice and important information regarding their choices of where to teach. However, the “more is better” approach has not been adequately evaluated. As an example, teacher residency programs have captured interest nationally, but we have only limited evidence of their effectiveness compared to more traditional teacher-preparation programs. Again, logical analyses remain our only short-term tool for making informed decisions, but more evidence is needed to improve our practice.

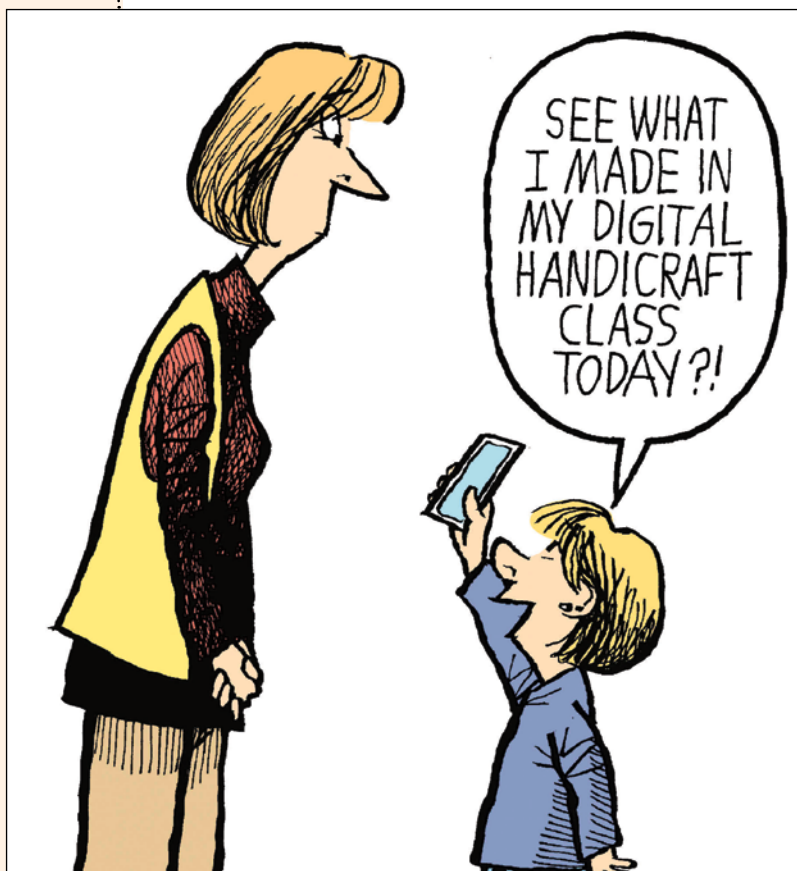
At a recent dinner for incoming merit scholars to our university, I asked several of them whether they had considered teaching as an option. There was collective nervous laughter. One young lady said that they would never teach because they knew it paid poorly, the working conditions were not good, there was little respect for teachers, and there were no opportunities to advance and lead. Here was a high school senior unwittingly communicating key changes that need to be made to attract high-quality teachers to our field. We will need to set a significantly higher bar for admission to the teaching field and, at the same time, muster financial and professional incentives (e.g., salary, retirement, and career opportunities) to boost interest among our very best candidates for teaching. In addition, attracting top-notch teachers will require more investment in our knowledge of the impact of pay-for-performance models.

Shortly after the turn of the last century, physician preparation in the United States was examined critically for its quality. The results were significant improvements in medical school quality, higher standards for admission, and higher medical costs overall. Similar improvements to teacher preparation could result in better teaching and improved learning outcomes for students. Likewise, these changes will likely require a significant investment in research and development to fuel improved practices and to inform teacher preparation. If we want better teaching, we will have to pay for it. ■

beginning teachers and lower costs to districts by focusing on the recruitment and admission of a qualified pool, rigorous clinical preparation, and collecting evidence of program impact (hiring rates, graduate and employer satisfaction, Pre-K–12 student learning, and related measures). States should work closely with CAEP, as the new accrediting body for educator preparation, in aligning program approval and licensure policies with accreditation standards.

Tightening regulation to assure candidate and program quality is likely to lead to a more qualified pool of graduates competing to teach, better hiring decisions, less attrition, and a more favorable learning environment for Pre-K–12 students. Markets have their place as mechanisms for introducing quality. However, the market will work much better if government regulates the providers more effectively and if preparation programs produce graduates whose readiness to teach can be clearly identified by the school districts that hire them.

As Dr. Chard indicated, the efforts of individual groups like CAEP are not enough: we must approach education reform holistically and at a systemic level. In coming years, a record number of new teachers will be hired to replace those retiring. As a nation, we cannot afford to fail. We will have a once-in-a-generation chance to get it right. ■



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