

Teachers for a New Era Newsletters

Teachers for a New Era Quarterly Newsletter

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Connecting Teaching, Teacher Preparation, and Student Learning: The Importance of Theory Development

by Del Schalock, Research Professor, Teaching Research Institute, Western Oregon University

One of the three design principles for the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative is that teacher education programs should be driven by evidence, including pupil learning gains accomplished under the tutelage of teachers who are graduates of the program. This is an immensely exciting step toward the development of a research base on the connections among teacher preparation, teaching, and pupil learning. A better understanding of the connections among teaching, learning, and the K-12 school environment can act as a lens to guide practice. The more we feed this information back into our teacher preparation programs, the better our teachers will be as we are able to determine what they should know and do. Entry into teaching as a neophyte is then followed by massive and rapid changes as teachers develop into competent professionals within the school setting. We don't understand these changes well nor their links to preparation, teaching, and learning.

At Western Oregon University, we've been working for three decades on meaningfully connecting teaching and learning in the context of teacher preparation. In these efforts, we developed a methodology called teacher work sampling. Built around designing and implementing a five-week unit of study, pre-service teachers must determine what they want students to accomplish tied to one or more state standards for learning. They also develop and administer pre- and post-instruction assessments to measure the learning growth that occurred. As teachers analyze these results for different groups of students, they begin to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in instruction and can improve their teaching.

As we engaged in longitudinal research on new teachers trained in this methodology, we needed to connect the preparation of teachers with their teaching and the learning of their

students in a way that was sensible. Going to the research literature to think further about these connections, and determine measures, we found little that was helpful. Existing teacher education theory and research are piecemeal and fragmented. No common theoretical or research foundation connects teacher preparation, teaching, and K-12 learning.

There are several reasons for this lack. First, the profession of teaching and teacher preparation is organized by disciplines-sociology, psychology, and so on. Research is done from the perspective of different disciplines, and thus the knowledge that underlies the research is fragmented. Second, there's been a paradigm shift in the running debate over the last century and a half about the connections between science and education. While there was a strong sense in the 1960s and 70s that we should think about a science of education, contextualism became the predominant view in the 1980s. Educators thought about social equality and analyzed things in a situation-specific manner. Thus, the recent education research literature is qualitative and case study focused. Third, teacher education itself has very little history of research. Most teacher educators were not trained to be researchers, are not theory oriented, and do not come from a tradition of theory in teacher education. Finally, almost all of our knowledge on teaching, teacher preparation, and learning comes from the last century, which offered a normative model of schooling rather than a standards-based one. We need to know what it means for pupils to learn and teachers to teach in a standards-based learning environment.

My colleagues at Western Oregon University and I are beginning work, and inviting others to join us, in identifying, extending, and systematizing the fragments of theory and method currently connecting teaching, teacher preparation, and K-12 learning in standards-based schools. This agenda has the magnitude of biology's genome work, and similar characteristics. We will be unable to advance our research agendas without such theory development.

Our theory development initiative is based on a new book by Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa, entitled *How To Build Social Science Theories*. The first step is to identify, sort, relate, and organize existing concepts or constructs with the various literatures related to teaching, teacher preparation, and K-12 learning. Next, we will identify the variables within learning, teaching, schools, home, and community that influence what goes on between teachers and students. We will then line up measures with each of the major variables. At the moment, the field of teacher education lacks any catalogue of measures that are defensible for use in research, and we can begin to build these. If anyone is interested in participating in this initiative, or learning more about it, please contact Ella Taylor at taylor@wou.edu or me after October 1 by telephone at (503) 838-8791.

I believe TNE is one of the best conceived initiatives around. One of the reasons for its quality and importance is that the participating institutions are being required to do research on the impact of their teacher preparation programs on K-12 pupil learning. With the top tier universities that are participating, there is a great deal of intellectual power to move things forward in this relatively unexplored arena. While the TNE institutions may find it useful to draw upon our research in building their evidence base, strong theory would be more useful. Also, their efforts could contribute to a collective effort to develop theory through improving both the variables and measures that are its beginning focus. Many have high hopes for the evidence collected through TNE research, and we look forward to the contributions the

institutions will make in this regard.

RAND Releases First Evaluation Report on TNE

The RAND Corporation and MDRC were contracted by the Rockefeller Foundation to act as national evaluators for the Teachers for a New Era effort. They released a first report in June, titled "Reforming Teacher Education: A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era." It focuses on the first four grantees and can be downloaded from <http://www.rand.org/publications/TR/TR149/>.

This first phase of research on TNE aimed to lay a foundation for longer-term evaluation work. The evaluators collected baseline data, analyzed the institutions' proposals, collected early implementation data, and analyzed the state and district policy environments in which the first four sites are operating. As there had been only nine months of implementation at the time of data collection, the report is largely descriptive.

Cross-site observations from Year 1 include:

- Recognition by top-level university administrators and strong project leadership enhanced the credibility of TNE.
- Junior faculty and those close to promotion points were concerned about the effect of TNE on their advancement.
- Involving K-12 faculty in meaningful ways proved harder than expected.
- There was some redundancy in the work being done across the sites.
- Technical assistance played an important role in facilitating implementation.
- State policy environments have important implications for TNE implementation.

Four TNE Sites Begin Assessing K-12 Pupil Learning to Measure Teaching Quality

The first TNE design principle, that decisions in teacher education should be driven by evidence, is based upon the idea that high-quality teaching is best demonstrated by growth in pupil learning. All of the TNE institutions are therefore required to measure pupil learning gains as the most compelling indicator of teaching quality, but the initiative does not specify measures, research designs, or theoretical models to be used. The participating institutions are each designing their own approaches to determine whether their graduates are likely to be associated with strong pupil learning gains, and even which elements of their teacher education programs might be most responsible for contributing to teacher effectiveness. The evidence to be collected has the dual purposes of guiding program improvement and demonstrating the value of teacher education offered at colleges and universities, a broader policy agenda.

The four original TNE sites-Bank Street College of Education; California State University,

Northridge; Michigan State University; and the University of Virginia-are beginning to implement pupil learning growth pilots, performing a first round of assessment by fall of 2004 with a subsequent round of assessment in spring of 2005. The seven newer TNE institutions will prepare to begin pupil learning growth pilots in the fall of 2005. Representatives from the majority of TNE sites met in New York in June to share their plans for these pilots with one another and to discuss the TNE research agenda more broadly.

Preliminary plans for the studies beginning this year include measurement of pupil learning through: curriculum-embedded assessments (looking at actual tasks teachers assign to pupils and looking at changes over time in pupils' responses); calculation of gain scores on standardized achievement tests; specially developed assessments; existing district assessments; descriptive case studies; and observations. Some institutions also hope to compare pupil gains for their graduates with those of other teachers or make comparisons between teacher preparation paths within their institutions. The scope of these studies varies widely across institutions from intensive studies in a small number of urban schools to looking at pupils in hundreds of schools across several states.

While initial institution-specific plans don't lead directly to the development of a collective research agenda with common forms of measurement across sites, the institutions are actively identifying opportunities for collaboration or cooperative research. They expect to produce a contextual comparison and analysis of their eleven institutions to highlight commonalities and differences, allowing some cross-site comparisons to be made. In addition, sites will share the instruments they are using to measure pupil and teacher candidate learning.

TNE Up and Running at Second-Year Grantee Institutions

Seven institutions were selected to participate in TNE in the second year of the initiative, joining the four original sites. Underway in the fall of 2003, the new sites have made remarkable progress in their first year.

Boston College is now well staffed for TNE work with an executive director, project manager, administrator, research associate, and induction director in place. In addition, there are plans to hire a data manager to work with the institution's evidence team. University-wide Teaching and Learning Seminars have begun, with the first one on induction and mentoring. The next is scheduled for September and will be followed by a "kickoff" reception and welcome by the university president. The Evidence Team began data collection by conducting a comprehensive electronic survey of all 2004 graduates of Boston College's Lynch School of Education as a baseline for following their professional progress. Induction activities are also underway. The Induction Director led six Boston Public Schools master teachers to a workshop at the New Teacher Center in California to prepare them to act as instructors in the Mentoring Training Seminar held on campus in July. The TNE team also organized a three-day new teachers' seminar called Summer Start held on campus in August to prepare beginning teachers for their first teaching positions and introduce them to the TNE induction/mentoring resources at Boston College. For more information, contact Gilda Morelli at morellig@bc.edu.

TNE at Florida A&M University (FAMU) is on the move. Marcia Allen Owens and Serena Roberts have been hired as TNE Project Manager and Curriculum/Assessment Coordinator respectively. The team is making progress in identifying a Management/Computer Information Specialist. TNE had a visible presence at the FAMU 2004-2005 Faculty Seminar held August 11-12, 2004. The theme of this year's seminar was "Focusing on Assessment at FAMU: A Culture of Continuous Improvement." Linda Suskie, Director of Assessment at Towson University, was the featured presenter at the seminar, while Janet Guyden, TNE Project Director, was the featured speaker for the faculty luncheon. Over the summer, design teams for assessment, chemistry, and elementary education met twice a week to work on curriculum development/reform, alignment of curricula with standards, assessment, and other objectives. The induction, general studies, biology, and mathematics design teams will begin work in fall 2004. For more information, contact Marcia Allen Owens at marcia.owens@famu.edu.

The TNE initiative at Stanford University has a new director in place. Clare Kosnik, formerly at the University of Toronto, took up fulltime residence in August. The Stanford University School of Education just established a new undergraduate elementary teacher education program and the TNE team will use this opportunity to gather data on students enrolled in junior and senior year education seminars. Research will track student self-perceptions of learning, course and practicum evaluations, and the relationship between student experiences (majors, coursework, personal background) and the process of learning to teach. Junior year students will be invited to be part of a longitudinal study to provide data on the process of learning to teach and the work of beginning teachers. To improve skills in teaching literacy, students interested in pursuing a degree in education will have the opportunity to participate in a tutoring program working with children in local schools. Tutors will be trained in strategies for effective literacy instruction and will be introduced to various genres of literature. For more information, contact Clare Kosnik at ckosnik@stanford.edu.

The University of Connecticut has begun to establish an organizational structure to support the TNE program of assessment and curriculum and professional development. Staff on board are the project manager (Scott Brown, a UConn professor of Educational Psychology), a program assistant, and eleven graduate students. In addition, the initiative expects to hire an assessment coordinator and a data base manager. New professors in English and modern and classical languages along with a history professor make up the TNE faculty members. Activities underway include: a baseline survey of Neag School of Education teacher candidates' perceptions of their preparation as teachers; focus groups of faculty, students, alumni, cooperating teachers, principals, and superintendents; development of a TNE website; and analysis of pupil data related to global citizenship and science literacy. Further development of the electronic portfolio for all teacher education students and a survey of teachers' induction experiences and needs conducted jointly with the Connecticut Department of Education will begin in the upcoming year. For more information, visit www.tne.uconn.edu or contact Scott Brown at scott.brown@uconn.edu.

TNE at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) had a whirlwind first year. An initial one-day workshop drew over 60 faculty members from three colleges who were interested in participating in TNE. That resulted in the formation of seven work groups, each with a broad cross-section of faculty from each of the colleges. An unexpected outcome from the two-day retreat for the work groups was the formation of an eighth, focusing on the fine and

performing arts. This newest group developed a new course over the summer and revised the teacher preparation sequence used for training pre-service music majors. A TNE roll-out event in May, with Dan Fallon of the Carnegie Corporation as honored guest and keynote speaker, drew educators from the nine school districts in El Paso County as well as El Paso Community College and community leaders. TNE faculty were hired in psychology, with a focus on second language learners, and English. UTEP is advertising for a position in history and a joint position in sociology and teacher education. For more information, contact Pablo Arenez at parenaz@utep.edu.

The University of Washington (UW) TNE effort has focused on building infrastructure and foundational work on the three design principles. An associate director for the effort (Sally Luttrell-Montes) and a P-12 Distinguished Educator (Wanda Williams-Brown), who is the third co-director for the initiative, were hired over the summer. In preparation for collecting evidence, key university faculty and Seattle Public Schools personnel will meet to discuss strategies to amass large-scale, longitudinal data on teachers and students. In addition, the TNE team sent out a Request for Proposals to encourage smaller scale research by UW and P-12 faculty. Mathematics, science, and literacy (especially adolescent literacy) were selected as three areas of high need for engaging arts and sciences, and TNE representatives plan to meet with chairs and faculty in these disciplines this fall. Summer TNE work also included discussion of piloting reflective seminars for pre-service teachers and continuing work in the development of a new Master's in Teacher Leadership and online support systems that foster teachers' professional growth. For more information, contact Sally Luttrell-Montes at sallylm@u.washington.edu.

At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the TNE initiative has launched its efforts to improve teacher quality through its strong partnership with the Milwaukee Partnership Academy—a collaboration involving Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, the local business community, local government leaders, and institutions of higher education. The goal of this collaboration is for every child in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to achieve at or above grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics. Over the last few months, six design teams focused on arts, social sciences, science, humanities, mathematics, and cultures and communities were created to review curriculum and programs related to teacher education. These groups include faculty from the Schools of Education, Letters & Science, and Arts along with MPS teachers. Other groups of faculty and MPS representatives are exploring models of value-added assessment and induction. For more information, contact Stephen Percy at percy@uwm.edu.

CPRE to Analyze Policy Environment for Ten TNE States

The Carnegie Corporation has asked the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) to examine the state and local policy environments in which the 11 TNE grantee institutions operate. The project aims to answer the questions: What kinds of policy changes may be needed to ensure the implementation, continuation, and spread of TNE reforms in teacher education, and what actions might be taken at the local, state, and national levels to bring

about these changes?

As beginning steps to address the first question, CPRE will review the TNE institutions' proposals, search for teacher policies in the 10 states in which they are housed, and convene a design meeting. The next step is to interview key individuals at the TNE institutions, relevant state agencies, and local districts. After drafting a profile for each state, CPRE will convene a roundtable of institutional, district, and state leaders to discuss policy obstacles and actions needed to overcome them before finalizing the profiles and reports. To answer the second question, CPRE will review the alignment of major national organizations' state policy initiatives with TNE principles. Next, CPRE will examine the effectiveness of these organizations in the 10 states, in order to identify successful state-based advocacy organizations.

By September of 2005, CPRE plans to produce: policy profiles and reports on the 10 TNE states; a cross-state report on state policy and the reform of teacher education; a plan to develop profiles for the remaining 40 states and the District of Columbia; and a report which identifies a policy reform strategy for each of the 10 TNE states and a national strategy to support these efforts.

Carnegie Funds Operation: Public Education to Promote Value-Added Assessment

The Carnegie Corporation has provided funding to Operation: Public Education, a project of the Center for Greater Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, with the goal of introducing approaches to comprehensive education reform to key education stakeholders nationwide. In particular, the three reform components that Operation: Public Education promotes are value-added assessment, a new state-level accountability system using value-added assessment, and a Request for Proposals for a new approach to testing to be issued by participating states and large districts. At a basic level, value-added assessment can be defined as measuring pupil knowledge in September and the following June with the difference between the two being the "value" added by a teacher's instruction over the course of that time. Value-added modeling uses complex statistical models to account for other variables that impact pupil learning growth. Value-added assessment is an important approach for the Teachers for a New Era initiative as it provides a powerful tool to isolate the impact of teaching on student learning in a fair and accurate way. It could provide evidence on the quality of teachers and their pedagogy to the institutions which educated them.