KDP Public Policy Brief

This KDP Public Policy Brief provides current information for educators and interested stakeholders on the educational issue of the future of teaching.

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The future of Teaching as a Profession

Current Events

Global technological, economic, and political forces are having an impact on the education profession in the United States. For the first time, teachers now face a generation of students who have been tethered to their technology since birth. Prensky (2012) explained, "Today's students, kindergarten through college, represent the first generation to grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all other toys and tools of the digital age" (p. 68).

Additionally, teachers realize that the physical and economic world is a much smaller place. Commenting on the challenges of globalization, Stewart (2007) noted that graduates from high school and college now work in a world that is fundamentally different from the one in which their parents grew up, saying "We're increasingly living in a globalized society that has a whole new set of challenges" (p. 10). Schools no longer prepare students to work in local factories. Instead, they prepare knowledge workers who collaborate with others around the world in joint ventures and compete on a global scale for employment and markets (Center for International Understanding, 2005).

Finally, educators are responding to the new laws and regulations passed by political bodies. In recent years, the federal government implemented the No Child Left Behind legislation, the Race to the Top initiative, and the Common Core State Standards. Likewise, state governments have changed the steps for teacher certification and altered incentives for improving teacher performance. In North Carolina, for example, the General Assembly passed a law eliminating additional pay for teachers who receive a master's degree (Kiley, 2013). Along with the financial consideration, some educators worry that devaluing advanced degrees may discourage teachers from further developing skill sets, learning new strategies, conducting action research, or engaging in new field experiences which often accompany advanced degrees. As Darling-Hammond (2006) recommended, "Governments need to ensure that all teachers can get access to high-quality training by insisting on quality preparation, underwriting the costs of training for candidates, and ensuring an adequate supply of teachers for all communities by providing adequate salaries and working conditions" (p. 16).

The purpose of this brief is to examine the ways that educators are responding to the technological, economic, and political forces affecting the profession. What does the future hold for the teaching profession? Why is it important for teachers to be lifelong learners and expect to have the opportunity and support that allows them to provide the learning environments that will comprise the educational enterprise of the future?

Key Background Information

Principals, parents, and policymakers are asking today's teachers to do more for children and schools for salaries that are not keeping pace with those of other professions. To meet these higher expectations, teachers are drawing upon their rich reservoir of knowledge about content, pedagogy, and children. For these dedicated educators, teaching remains both an art and a science, although it seems the profession is increasingly being viewed by non-educators more as a science or a set of technical skills. Some would argue that stakeholders outside of the profession are pushing teachers to act more like technicians who follow predetermined scripts. Concerned educators worry that they will no longer be able to add their personal styles to teaching.

To counter this fear, Pring (2001) advised teachers in the twenty-first century to re-envision their work as a moral practice, not just a technical task. Echoing this advice, Null (2010) placed the issue in a historical context by noting how Thorndike and Kilpatrick, two famous educators of the early twentieth century, tried to reduce teaching to an objective science and advocated for a purely technical foundation for teaching, saying, "Their obsession with a purely technical foundation for teaching (and a narrow conception of technique at that) has done irreparable damage to the teaching profession" (p. 31).

In recent times, however, political bodies have passed laws that portray teachers as technicians who are expected to teach a curriculum that may have been created by someone without classroom experience. Indeed, these curricular documents appear to be "teacher proof." In other words, anyone, regardless of level of pedagogical knowledge, should be able to teach by following a preset script. When educators adhere to this approach, they deliver the curriculum like technicians working with inanimate objects instead of real children in a learner-centered environment. Null (2010) recommended that the profession shift its focus from the technical to more creative aspects of pedagogy.

The Future of the Teaching Profession

Technology

Bass (2012) stated, "We have reached the end of the era of assuming that the formal curriculum composed of *bounded, self-contained courses* is the *primary* place where the most significant learning takes place" (p. 24). The teaching profession is faced with the challenge of teaching students who are seamlessly intertwined with technology. So, one might ask, how are teachers responding? In the classroom, are educators producing a generation of independent thinkers or students who want to "Ask" or "Google"? If students can use their tablets or phones to ask questions and immediately receive answers, what, if anything, is lost with regard to the notion of investigation? The current generation easily and quickly turns to technology when faced with questions. This automated response has created new literacy skills that require less in-depth reading and more stylized and engaging forms of learning materials. Students scan an Internet article or use social media to find out about current events. Their teachers may wonder whether technology enables children to problem solve and think extemporaneously when facing new situations.

In response to the challenges of technology, visionary experts are developing comprehensive models and building-block innovations that provide opportunities to see what the next generation learning can look like in practice (Calkins & Vogt, 2013). These models have shaped a framework to support the design and implementation of next-generation learning. Where does this kind of insight and hope for the future leave professional educators?

Using these new models, teachers can seek to engage today's students in learning designs that promise higher achievement, critical thinking skills, and modern approaches to instruction. In addition to changes in instructional practice, the infrastructure of brick-and-mortar buildings that

can provide cutting-edge technology and high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers will have to be redesigned. Different approaches to learning and newly defined success will require new metrics that show both the process and the product of learning and attainment (Calkins & Vogt, 2013). An example of this new way to approach learning and teaching are tools such as Kahn Academy and use of MOOQs or massive open online courses. Khan Academy establishes a global community of learning with a goal, as its website notes, "of changing education for the better by providing a free world-class education for anyone anywhere" (Khan Academy, 2013) with access to more than 2,400 videos covering principles of math, science, and economics for students to learn by watching and interacting.

Intended for interaction between learner and presenter, MOOQs offer an interactive forum that builds a community for the students, professors, and teaching assistants in distance education. The goal is to create a global community of learners where everyone can learn from everyone connected to the course. The MOOQ courses, along with the Kahn Academy courses, place institutions of higher education in the position of offering content based in modes of interactive venues *and* with current infrastructure to provide the content adequately. Further research is needed to determine the effects of this new approach to learning.

Globalization

As a collective mind-set of globalization continues to evolve within the profession, educators in the United States are studying high-performing countries, such as Finland or Singapore, to learn ways to remain relevant on an international level and to improve American schools (Shields, 2012; Steiner, 2010). Because these countries use different systems to measure educational success, researchers are considering proxy values to examine teacher intelligence and preparation (McEachin & Brewer, 2012). Proxy values allow the comparison of the abilities or performance of teachers in the United States against those in an international sample, including markers such as "college ratings, test scores, degrees and coursework, and certification status" (Wayne & Youngs, 2003, p. 89), which researchers frequently use when comparing different teaching corps. Educators also are considering policies to improve teacher motivation. For example, Woessmann (2011) noted a positive correlation between countries' use of performance pay for teachers and student performance on PISA 2003 measures. Likewise, Miller and Warren (2011) found similar positive results after reviewing student performance within the G-8 countries, including measures such as overall education spending and initial teacher pay.

These ideas are not confined to policy wonks and academics; a similar thread of international comparisons is apparent in public discourse. In her book *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way*, Ripley (2013) used the stories of three American high school students studying abroad to comment on problems in American education and teacher preparation in an international context. In September 2013, CBS aired *Teach*, a documentary following four public school teachers throughout an academic year. The third film about public education from director Davis Guggenheim (2013), and narrated by Queen Latifah, *Teach* appeals to a popular audience interested in seeing teachers in action and presents an argument for revising education at the classroom level. Ripley and Guggenheim considered the gamut of education in the United States, from broad policy to specific teachers. The message from these contemporary works is clear: low teacher ability and challenging contexts conspire to maintain poor student outcomes. Further research is warranted, however, to consider teacher effectiveness and student learning. Murnane and Steele (2007) noted that this dialogue should be used "to recruit and retain teachers who have a strong positive impact on students' learning" (p. 17).

However, as the profession moves forward, it is paramount to challenge the notion that teachers in the United States are viewed as not as smart, dedicated, or capable as those in other

countries. As Giroux (1985) argued nearly three decades ago, teachers are not problems to be fixed, but professionals to be valued and cultivated. The problem becomes clear when teaching is considered solely as a "job" rather than a "career."

The Importance of Teacher Leadership

Educational reform policy in the United States is transforming the roles and expectations of teachers, and the profession continues to grapple with issues such as teacher quality, preparation, compensation, and tenure laws. These reform initiatives provide a window of opportunity for educators to take more responsibility for and ownership of the profession through leadership roles. Developed in 2011, the Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLMS) serve as a guide to preparing future leaders at the preservice and inservice levels (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Teacher leadership is one way to promote and retain a talented and effective work force. Keeping the most effective teachers in the classroom is a priority.

Current teacher retention research highlights the educational system's inability to retain beginning and experienced teachers (New Teacher Project, 2012). Many highly effective teachers are leaving the classroom because they are frustrated by a lack of leadership opportunities (New Teacher Project, 2012) and career growth opportunities (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010). Unlike other professions, teaching provides neither established career continuums nor opportunities for professionals to assume increasing levels of responsibility and advancement. Danielson (2013) called teaching the flat profession that lacks career ladders or lattices. A classroom teacher who begins teaching today can look forward to being in the same position in 20 years. For many, especially those new to profession, this is no longer sufficient. To retain the best teachers and increase professionalism by bringing a "teacher voice" to all aspects of running a school, it is important to create opportunities for teachers to remain in the classroom and at the same time assume newly defined leadership roles.

The TLMS serve as a guide to promote dialogue and drive education, policy, and practices for states, districts, and the profession. They guide professional discussions of the knowledge, skills, and competencies of teacher leaders and the many dimensions of teacher leadership. The TLMS provide a working definition of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), examples of teacher leadership in practice, and guidance on how educators can develop frameworks to cultivate and support teacher leadership practices.

Since their release two years ago, the TLMS have prompted discussion and revisions at state and local levels. Some states and organizations have adopted a teacher leadership endorsement or certification program, a number of institutes of higher education have expanded course work to include teacher leadership in teacher preparation and initiated master's level programs in the area, and some state education agencies have allocated resources to support teacher leadership. Despite these advances, there are still too few examples of schools and districts embracing the TLMS. Closing the gap between program and practice and establishing school- and district-level teacher leadership opportunities and structures that encourage teacher leaders to remain in the classroom and the profession are needed.

Preparing future teachers is a multifaceted process that involves imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that are needed to be a high-quality educator. Traditionally teachers were prepared through colleges and universities that offered a variety of undergraduate and graduate pathways to teacher certification including alternative certification for career changers and those who entered the profession later in life. Today there is an increase in fast-track teacher preparation programs that are not affiliated with an institution of higher education and typically require less training and education than traditional programs. As these programs grow and attract more students, traditional teacher education programs are confronted with many

challenges. Research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs has produced mixed results with one study indicating that student success is not affected by the type of preparation the teacher has compared to another study that found evidence that students from certified teachers outperformed those students of teachers from fast-track preparation programs (Milner, 2013). Although the research may be inconclusive, traditional teacher education programs are tasked with a mission to prepare high-quality competent educators that can help all children learn and succeed in school. In an effort to remain relevant in an ever-changing society, traditional teacher preparation programs must work to ensure that teaching continues to develop as a profession that is built upon specialized knowledge and training.

As the number of fast-track teacher preparation programs increases, it is important to examine what they do differently to prepare teachers than traditional teacher education programs. Most colleges and universities require students who major in education to take 20–40 courses specific to their field along with general education requirements. Students also must spend at least one semester as a student teacher working alongside a cooperating teacher full-time before they are awarded their degree. The time spent in the field and the knowledge gained from the course work is used to justify that the student is highly qualified. Fast-track programs such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project require their students to spend less time taking courses and engaging in field experience than students from traditional programs. With as little as five weeks of training, these programs put students into the role of teacher at a much faster rate than a traditional program. These programs typically offer additional professional development to their first-year teachers so that they can improve their skills while serving as teachers; but professional development is required of all teachers to keep their licenses valid. Fast-track teacher preparation programs send a different message about what types of specialized knowledge and training are needed to be a teacher compared with traditional teacher education programs. Milner (2013) made this interesting observation about the message these programs send:

> The very existence of alternative teacher-certification programs that usher people into teaching without any real intensive training in pedagogical methods—that is, training in how to teach the subject matter—reinforces a perception that teaching is a field that just anyone can do. At the heart of alternative, fast-track teacher certification programs is the assumption that teaching is not difficult work and that anyone who has learned a particular subject such as mathematics, science, or social studies has somehow acquired the ability to teach that subject to students in P–12 schools because he or she will "learn on the job." From this perspective, teacher education programs play a small role, if any, in teacher development and effectiveness. (p. 11)

Embracing this message could mean, to some, that traditional teacher education programs will decline and the knowledge once regarded as vital for preservice teachers to learn will be treated as unimportant or suitable to learn on the job. Traditional teacher education programs and the faculty who work for them must decide whether they want to accept this message or challenge the proposition that becoming a teacher does not require specialized education and training.

Our society needs high-quality teachers and, in some parts of the country, finding a certified teacher is difficult. As we look to nonprofits and the private sector to help recruit teachers, we must consider how this can be accomplished without losing our status as professionals who are highly educated and trained in the art and science of teaching.

KDP's Views on the Future of the Profession

The history of Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education (KDP), provides insights into the organization's past and current position on the issues of professionalism. In 1911, Dr. William Chandler Bagley wanted to "recruit high achieving, academically minded students into the teaching profession (Null, 2012, p. 24). At that time, other professions, such as engineering, medicine, and law, were establishing professional associations to promote their fields. Bagley wanted the teacher organization not to be just an honorary organization, but also professional one. KDP would "serve as a means through which objective scholarship on effective teaching practices could be disseminated" (Null, 2012, p. 24). Kappa Delta Pi's goals are to meet educators' needs as they face the current issues in the field. In an age of uncertainty and change in the profession, it is important to learn from one other as professionals in order to grow as an educator and positively impact learning for the next generation of students.

References and Further Reading

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