WHY GOOD TEACHING IS BOTH UNNATURAL AND CRUCIAL, AND WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO SUPPLY IT AT SCALE

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Forum for the Future of Higher Education's Aspen Symposium

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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WHICH ARE MYTHS? WHICH ARE TRUE?

Mark M (myth) or T (true).

1. We need to remove barriers to entry to teaching so that our best and brightest can teach our nation's young people.
2. Teachers' effectiveness would be improved if teachers' salaries depended on their results.
3. Teaching well is something that people can be taught to do.
4. Teaching could be improved dramatically if teachers were allowed to experiment and innovate without intervention and interference.
5. University faculty are experts in their disciplines and therefore can teach well without professional training for teaching.

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TEACHING QUALITY AS THE #1 POLICY IMPERATIVE OF OUR TIME

- 74,000,000 children in U.S.
- Schooling: Our society's commitment to individuals' lives and to the future of our society
- Mounting body of social science evidence on teaching "effects"
- A problem of scale (3.75 million teachers) and no reliable system for professional preparation

→ **This is a public policy problem of vital moral, practical, and political urgency.**

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CULTURAL VIEWS ABOUT TEACHING

- K-12 teachers broadly disdained, and “great” teachers described as “born”
- Teaching is not seen as complex because everyone has watched teaching, and most think they do it
- Learning teaching seen as a matter of “on the job” learning, not something that can be taught
- Does skillful teaching depend on strong relationships with students or content knowledge?

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KNOWING MATHEMATICS YOURSELF

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

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KNOWING MATHEMATICS WELL ENOUGH TO TEACH IT: ANALYZING STUDENTS' ERRORS

What mathematical steps produced each of these answers?

Why might someone do the problem in this way?

(a)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 405 \\ 108 \\ \hline 1485 \end{array}$$

(b)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 225 \\ 100 \\ \hline 325 \end{array}$$

(c)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 1250 \\ 25 \\ \hline 1275 \end{array}$$

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ENTRY-LEVEL TEACHING AS A CRITICAL FOCUS

1. More U.S. schoolchildren have a teacher with fewer than six years of experience than a teacher with any other number of years of experience.
2. Most beginning teachers say they are underprepared for teaching, and on average they are less effective.
3. Distribution of beginning teaching is concentrated disproportionately in low-income and high-minority schools.

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THE CONCEPT OF "AVERAGE"

- What is an "average" of a set of data?
- How would you explain the key idea to a group of 10-year olds?

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DISCUSS: A GLIMPSE OF BEGINNING TEACHING

1. What does the video clip show about the challenges of teaching?
2. What is skillful about the teaching on the video? What is less skillful?

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WHY THE MOST POPULAR POLICY LEVERS CAN'T GET US SKILLFUL TEACHING AT SCALE

- Teacher evaluation
- Selectivity for entry to teacher education
- Evaluate teacher preparation programs based on the student growth of graduates' learners

What do these have in common, and what are their flaws?

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NO PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION OR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

- More than 3,000 independent providers of initial teacher training
- No common specific curriculum for preparation for initial teaching
- A reliance on conventional academic credentials as the standard content knowledge
- No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people

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WHY IS THIS THE CASE? TWO BIG THREADS FROM OUR NATION'S HISTORY

1. Pragmatics and the occupation of teaching

   → Built to staff classrooms; "eased entry" and "wide decision range" (Lortie)

   → Lack of investment in professional training

2. Democracy and the development of localism

   → Resistance to "common" schools; irony of varied and inequitable opportunities and outcomes

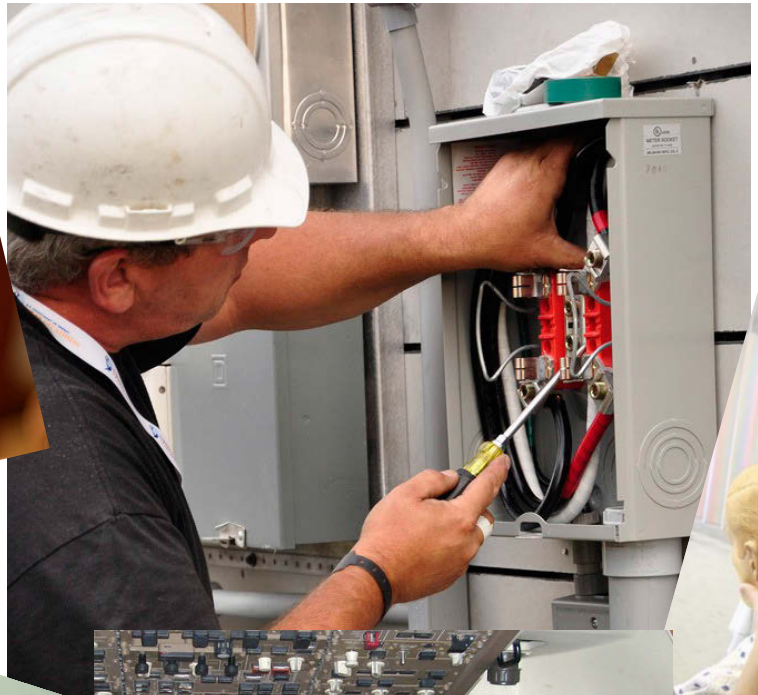
   → Local lay governance of schooling

   → No common standards for the profession

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WHAT SHOULD INITIAL TRAINING AND LICENSURE DO?

1. Take as the central imperative the **rights of children**
2. Focus on preparing entry-level teachers who are ready to care for the **academic, social, emotional, and physical safety** of children, and to conform to standards of **ethical practice**
3. Provide assurance to parents and to the public that the beginning professional has met the standards necessary to be given **initial responsibility for students' learning**

In other words, ensure that the beginning teacher meets the standard of "safe to practice"

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WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO CREATE A PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM OF TEACHER PREPARATION?

1. Build a common curriculum focused on agreed-upon **entry level knowledge and skills**:
    1. A small set of high-leverage practices of teaching
    2. High-leverage content knowledge
    3. Professional foundations (theory, ethics)

2. Develop **detailed approaches to staged, supervised clinical training**

3. Develop **performance assessments of specific practices and content** and require these for entry

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EXAMPLES OF HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES

- Leading a whole-class discussion
- Eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking
- Explaining and modeling core content
- Formulating and posing questions
- Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work that are central to the content
- Recognizing particular common patterns of student thinking and development in a subject-matter domain
- Setting up and managing small group work
- Selecting and using specific methods to check understanding and monitor student learning during and across lessons
- Composing, selecting, adapting quizzes, tests, and other methods of assessing student learning of a chunk of instruction
- Conducting a meeting about a student with a parent or guardian

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TEACHINGWORKS MISSION

- The development of a system of professional training for teaching
- Creating a threshold for entry based on demonstrated readiness for responsible independent practice

Our goal: To create a system that will make skillful beginning teaching commonplace for all students.

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CORE ACTIVTIES

- Transforming Educator Licensure project (with ETS): 4–6 assessments; tryouts, field test (elementary 2015; secondary 2016)
- Program networks: clusters of teacher training programs in field test states (MA, CT, MD, KY, MI (?), KS, IL, SD, CA)
- Curriculum packages, video exemplars, in-program formative assessments, and other tools and resources for programs
- Fundraising: $20M in the next 3 years

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