

Critical Education

Volume 8 Number 6

April 15, 2017

ISSN 1920-4125

Rage Against the Machine Teacher Educators Try to Throw a Wrench in the (edTPA) Works

Leigh M. O'Brien
State University of New York, College at Geneseo

Sue Novinger Robb
The College at Brockport, State University of New York

Citation: O'Brien, L. M., & Robb, S. N. (2017). Rage against the machine: Teacher educators try to throw a wrench in the (edTPA) works. *Critical Education*, 8(7), 1-23. Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186172>

Abstract

Our concerns regarding the assumptions behind, politics of, and implications of using edTPA, an assessment tool purported to assess whether U.S. student teachers are “ready for the job” of teaching, are our primary focus here. We write from our perspectives as teacher educators in New York, one of the states for which the edTPA is required for teacher licensure, drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives as we lay out our arguments against the problematic impacts of this so-called educational reform. We will strive to connect the dots as we see the multiple, and at times radical, changes to the field as all of a piece, making education just one more corporate project at the intersection of money, politics, and power. Last, we will offer some examples of, as well as suggestions for, resistance to this project, highlighting pedagogies of informed.



Readers are free to copy, display, and distribute this article, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and *Critical Education*, it is distributed for non-commercial purposes only, and no alteration or transformation is made in the work. More details of this Creative Commons license are available from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>. All other uses must be approved by the author(s) or *Critical Education*. *Critical Education* is published by the Institute for Critical Educational Studies and housed at the University of British Columbia. Articles are indexed by EBSCO Education Research Complete and Directory of Open Access Journals.

New York State and the edTPA

In this piece, we use ‘evocative language,’ which positions the reader as a participant in a dialogue (Pace, 2012), to address the ongoing conversations about and concerns regarding the effects of the edTPA¹ ‘on the ground.’ Our analysis is shaped, in large part, by our lived experiences as U.S.-based teacher educators who strive to work from a teacher-researcher stance that is “personal, passionate, and participatory” (He & Phillion, 2008, p. 2). We draw on the theoretical perspectives of Foucault (1995), Freire (1972), and Dewey (1966), among others, as we lay out our arguments against the problematic impacts of this insidious educational change. In our critique we have adopted what Cochran-Smith, Piazza, and Power call a ‘politics of policy’ framework (2013) as we examine how policy levers have been used by the New York State Department of Education to “enforce stringent external accountability measures on teacher education programs” (Reagan, Schram, McCurdy, Chang, & Evans, 2016, p. 14) in the name of reform, and we will address the policy and practical implications of the edTPA in New York State (NYS). Building on our critique, we will strive to ‘connect the dots’ as we see the multiple, and at times radical, changes to the field as all of a piece, making education just one more corporate project.² And, finally, we will offer some suggestions for resistance to the machine.

As we live and work in the state of New York, where the edTPA (education Teacher Performance Assessment) has an especially strong presence,³ we will first provide a brief introduction to edTPA and its impact on education in New York. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and Pearson provide the following definition and description of edTPA. Although this may not look too troubling to the layperson or uninformed politician, we will question many of the imbedded assumptions.

edTPA is a pre-service assessment process designed by educators to answer the essential question: "Is a new teacher ready for the job?" edTPA includes a review of a teacher candidate's authentic teaching materials as the culmination of a teaching and learning process that documents and demonstrates each candidate's ability to effectively teach his/her subject matter to all students. (<http://scoreedtpa.pearson.com/become-an-edtpa-scorer/edtpa-training-overview.htm>)

edTPA is intended to be used as a summative assessment given at the end of a [sic] educator preparation program for teacher licensure or certification and to support state and national program accreditation. ... It is comparable to the licensing exams that demand applications of skills in other professions, such [sic] medical licensing exams, the architecture exam, or the bar exam in law. It is designed to evaluate how teacher candidates plan and teach lessons in ways that make the content clear and help diverse students learn, assess the effectiveness of

¹ <http://edtpa.aacte.org/about-edtpa>

² This situation is not unique to the U.S. For instance, the World Bank and the IMF have led education “reform” efforts around the world with the same result: Struggling schools are hiring teachers with less experience, lower pay and benefits, and harsher working conditions. Teachers in these situations have a reduced capacity to organize for better salaries and working conditions (Kumashiro, 2012), ensuring the maintenance of the economic status quo.

³ New York is one of only two states (Washington is the other) currently using the edTPA as a teacher certification exam, and NYS has a higher cut score.

their teaching, and adjust teaching as necessary. (<http://edtpa.aacte.org/about-edtpa>)

As of 2012, half of the U.S. states were members of the Teaching Performance Assessment Consortium (TPAC;⁴ Pecheone, 2012), including New York, for which edTPA is a required licensure “exam.”⁵ These states have literally bought into the edTPA for it must be sent to Pearson, “the world’s leading learning company” (<https://www.pearson.com/about-us/education---the-story-so-far.html>) to evaluate. Things start to get a little dicey here as the many gears of the machine start grinding away. TPAC, like edTPA, is another project of the Stanford [University] Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE⁶). As a consortium and part of a “multiple measures assessment system” (Pecheone, 2012, p. 8), TPAC is aligned with the Common Core (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/ as used in NYS), InTASC,⁷ and the NYS Teaching Standards, and is endorsed by the now-merged national accrediting bodies for teacher education programs NCATE and CAEP (www.ncate.org/ and <http://caepnet.org/>) and their component Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs).

As recent research has found, New York provides a troubling example of what happens when policy makers attempt to quickly roll-out then enforce the use of a largely untested assessment tool with minimal input from those most affected. Two sources provide an especially comprehensive (and helpful) review. First, Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2016), in a sweeping review of current U.S. teacher preparation, argue that systems purporting to evaluate teacher preparation “must produce results that programs can use to change and improve curricula, practice-based experiences, and assessments – not results that simply grade programs without information about why or how particular results occurred or what might improve them” (pp. 4-5). Of most relevance to our focus is the recommendation that there should be a shift away from teacher education accountability that is primarily bureaucratic or market-based, and toward responsibility that is primarily professional and that acknowledges the shared responsibility of teacher education programs, schools, and policy makers to prepare and support teachers.

The report concludes by recommending: multi-pronged internal assessments of teacher performance and student learning; that we consider the performance of teacher educators and teacher candidates, as well as students’ learning; and, consistent with a “strong equity” perspective, that we recognize that teacher preparation programs have multiple, complex goals and purposes, including preparing teachers, as social change agents, to challenge inequitable schools and classroom practices (Cochran-Smith, Stern, Sanchez, Miller, Keefe, Fernandez, Chang, Carney, Burton, & Baker, 2016). These recommendations prove problematic vis-à-vis the implementation of edTPA in NYS.

An assessment of the implementation, impact, and evolution of the edTPA (Reagan et al., 2016), built on a synthesis of the literature and a critical analysis of state policies, helps to fill in some of the specifics hinted at in the research cited above. The analysis draws on the policy

⁴ TPAC: <http://www.aacte.org/index.php?/Programs/Teacher-Performance-Assessment-Consortium-TPAC/teacher-performance-assessment-consortium.html>;
http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Interstate_Teacher_Assessment_Consortium_%28InTASC%29.html

⁵ As of June, 2015, 620 ‘educator preparation programs’ in 35 states and the District of Columbia are “participating” in edTPA although not all use edTPA as a state-approved performance assessment: <http://edtpa.aacte.org/state-policy>.

⁶ SCALE: <https://scale.stanford.edu/>

⁷ developed by the Council for Chief State School Officers

4 Critical Education

framework laid out by Cochran-Smith, Piazza, and Power in 2013. This framework has four interrelated components: (1) broader political, economic, and social conditions that shape teacher education policy; (2) how ‘the problem of teacher education’ is constructed; (3) policy in practice – how policy is written and interpreted; and (4) a focus on impact and implementation linked to outcomes of policy. According to Cochran-Smith et al., these components highlight the “intersections of state control, professional influence, public advocacy, and local agency” (p. 9) both within and across teacher education policy. The key point here for us is that the various (now normalized) discourses and influences are used to frame the conversation and debate around policy in teacher education.

Within the politics of policy framework, we will take a closer look at NYS. In our state, the edTPA has been used as an external measure with the purpose of assessing teacher preparation program quality based on the overall pass rates of a program’s teacher candidates. The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) has recommended that if fewer than 80% of a program’s candidates pass the edTPA, the teacher preparation program must submit a ‘professional development plan’ to the state. In addition, NYSED has recommended the use of each program’s edTPA scores in comparative institutional profiles to be made available to the public. The analysis done by Reagan et al. (2016) shows that state policy makers perceived a problem with teacher education programs and felt the need to add additional oversight to ‘ensure the preparation of high-quality teachers’ as measured by edTPA pass rates. In short, the state’s putative solution to this purported problem was to enforce stringent external accountability measures on teacher preparation programs as a lever for reform (Reagan et al.).

As noted above, Cochran-Smith et al. (2013) suggest that the construction of the problem of teacher education includes the political strategies used to put the policy into place. According to Reagan et al. (2016), across the states one of these rationales centered on the fact that edTPA came out of Stanford, a prestigious university with a reputation for high-quality teacher preparation; in NYS, Linda Darling-Hammond was specifically mentioned to invoke the credibility of the tool. The actors and audiences involved in policy development also align with the purported problem across states. These include a wide range of people and organizations; looking at the data, it’s notable that NYS was the *only* state that adopted an exclusive policy of using the edTPA as a requirement for teacher certification without substantive input from teacher education programs or faculty. Note also that prior to the adoption of the edTPA, NYS had contracted with Pearson to develop a NY-specific assessment, which was discarded after the edTPA was adopted.⁸ Ultimately, and ironically, in their construction of the problem of teacher education, NYSED chose an assessment that was developed by and for educators – and then implemented it with minimal input from teacher educators. Importantly to our argument, the NYSED policy cycle and policy web involved broader contexts (e.g., Race to the Top) and for-profit entities (Pearson) that already had existing relationships with the state (Reagan et al., 2016).

Finally, Reagan et al. (2016) found that five of the six states in their analysis field-tested the edTPA for at least four years before it became fully operational. In stark contrast, New York field-tested the edTPA for only one academic year, perhaps in part because of the state’s commitment to their Race to the Top application. Their analysis suggests, not surprisingly, that rapid implementation of the edTPA in New York may have resulted in pushback and adjustments

⁸ The policy was developed in response to a 2010 directive from the NYS Board of Regents linked with NYS’s application for federal Race to the Top funding (see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>).

to full-scale implementation. For example, in 2014 New York instituted a ‘safety net’ policy which allowed teacher candidates who did not pass the edTPA by May of 2014 to instead demonstrate their readiness by passing an older certification exam; that safety net has been extended year after year and is now set to expire in 2017. As Cochran-Smith and her colleagues have argued, “in the context of discussions about the TPA as an accountability mechanism, the role of the profession itself is critical” (2013, p. 16). In NYS, the tight timeline for implementation limited any meaningful dialogue among the multiple actors involved in edTPA implementation; policy contexts thus created barriers to active participation in the process.

If you’re not concerned yet, consider that AACTE, Stanford University, and the Council for Chief State School Officers also provide so-called national leadership for this project. While these are professional groups, the inclusion of an external partner (Pearson) in the assessment process creates opportunities for multiple agendas, strategies, and maneuvering outside the profession (Reagan et al., 2016). Consider further that there’s an “education reform powerhouse” out there, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (www.crpe.org), which operates in a manner strikingly similar to the American Legislative Exchange Council (www.alec.org), is connected to many of the biggest names in the current reform movement (e.g., Gates, Broad, and Walton), and which has carved out an influential – and scary – role for itself ‘behind the scenes’ (Lahm, 2015). We will return to our concerns about these ‘incestuous’ relationships later; for now, know that many groups and individuals, a few of which we identify below, have contested the use of edTPA as a high-stakes assessment.

For example, the United University Professions (UUP) union called on the NYS Education Department to: eliminate the edTPA as a teacher certification requirement; address questions about the reliability and validity of edTPA vis-à-vis teaching excellence; extend the timeframe for the mandated use of edTPA (which, as noted above, has occurred); and address infringement on college curriculum by private corporations. And a number of State University of New York (SUNY) College Senates took public action, such as the resolutions at SUNY Geneseo and The College at Brockport, SUNY, calling for a delay in implementation of the edTPA.⁹

In a similar vein, in the spring of 2014 one of our colleagues, a SUNY Faculty Senate member, gave testimony to the NYS Assembly on Higher Education Committee based on his experiences with edTPA. The testimony laid out his concerns, as a teacher educator, that: teacher preparation programs were not given sufficient time to evaluate whether programmatic changes should be made to prepare students for the edTPA or to evaluate such changes; there was no true collaboration with colleges, schools, and other stakeholders; the SCALE information sessions for teacher preparation institutions were woefully inadequate; requiring that the edTPA be a part of a course is an infringement on academic freedom regarding curriculum; and the rushed implementation of the edTPA by NYS disrespects and devalues teaching.

Even the National Council on Teacher Quality (www.nctq.org), usually a vociferous supporter of the status quo, posted a critique entitled *Slow this Train Down* in 2012. And, in a strongly worded piece, the NYS United Teachers argued that the State Education Department’s rapid implementation of edTPA was unfair to future teachers and to faculty (McGrath, 2014). Nonetheless, NYSED pressed on. We see at least four ways that these changes impact teachers, students, and teacher education in New York.

⁹ <http://www.geneseo.edu/senate/actions>

Impacts Stemming from edTPA Implementation

Teacher Education

The edTPA directly affects higher education, specifically teacher education, the field in which we both work, in “some not-so-healthy ways,” as Au (2013, p. 25) puts it. To begin, this unfunded mandate from the state has led both our departments to significantly revise their foci. The edTPA is driving virtually all coursework and assessment¹⁰ throughout our programs now, most especially during student teaching when Pearson scorers, never having laid eyes on our teacher candidates, the children they are working with, or the schools and communities in which they are student teaching,¹¹ get to decide if our candidates are prepared to teach. Our professional judgment appears irrelevant here. As noted above, teacher education is seen as in need of fixing, thus justifying governmental/corporate control, intrusion, and surveillance (e.g., Freire, 1993; Novinger & O’Brien, 2003).

Further, as this mandate is not state-funded, Schools of Education must allocate money that we either don’t have or need to spend on other initiatives. For instance, Sue’s department spent \$50,000 for video cameras so that students could record their lessons to send to Pearson. That department has also expended considerable resources developing and implementing edTPA trainings for both student teachers and their college supervisors caught in the speedy and problematic NYS roll-out. Leigh reports an early-semester experience in the fall of 2014 where her department ran out of paper for printing course syllabi because it had all been used to print out more than 100 new, “updated” edTPA handbooks. (And speaking of surveillance, student teacher supervisors and education faculty members are not supposed to have access to these handbooks unless and until we sign a non-disclosure form and submit our contact information to Pearson.)

Both of our departments have had to change student teaching timelines, assessments, and the focus of seminars and training to align with edTPA as well. For example, the student teaching office at SUNY Geneseo has begun to schedule edTPA-focused time prior to, during, and after student teaching, and the School of Education has shortened the length of time teacher candidates are in classrooms so they can write and submit their edTPA to Pearson by end of their first student teaching placement in case they need to re-take it.¹² In addition, mentor teacher and supervisor evaluations are now linked to the requirements of edTPA as well as those of accrediting bodies, which makes for onerous and not very useful assessment tools, and many student teaching seminars are being outsourced to corporations, *Edivation* in the case of Geneseo.

There is a significant cost in faculty and administrator time outside the context of our teaching, as well. Administering the edTPA process, developing and implementing policies and procedures (such as how to support students who have failed and must retake the edTPA but have otherwise completed their teacher preparation program), and aligning the edTPA with

¹⁰ Although the term curriculum is many things to many people (Aoki, 2005), we refer here to the explicit teacher education curriculum: the subjects that will be taught, the identified “mission” of the School or department, and the knowledge and skills that we expect successful students to acquire.

¹¹ edTPA submissions are given to scorers who do not live or work in the state in which the teacher candidate is doing his/her student teaching.

¹² In NYS, the “safety net” has (once again) been extended to June, 2017, after much push-back from UUP and others.

certification and accreditation requirements eats up significant amounts of time that teacher education faculties could use in more meaningful pursuits. For instance, at The College at Brockport, members of Sue’s department spent a week at the end of the Spring 2015 semester mapping the high-stakes NYSED certification exams to the teacher education curriculum. As we have argued before, this kind of work keeps faculty busy and preoccupied with chasing compliance – at the expense of engaging in more critical work (Novinger & O’Brien, 2003). However, should we require ‘professional development and support [for our] edTPA implementation efforts,’ the new edTPA National Academy, a partnership between AACTE and SCALE, offers ‘free and fee-for-service consultants’ to help us out.¹³

Perhaps most troubling, the college supervisor’s role and value have overtly and also subtly changed now that (1) they are no longer responsible for assessing student teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and (2) they are now responsible for ensuring “their” student teachers do well on their edTPA submission (see, e.g., Margolis & Doring, 2013). At both of our colleges, and most likely at many others, the focus of the student teaching seminar has largely shifted to success on the edTPA. For instance, during the first half of the semester, Leigh’s supervisor seminars have been devoted almost exclusively to helping students meet edTPA demands – and not to discussions about children, families, and schools, or teacher candidates’ thoughts and questions about teaching and learning, curriculum, or who they are becoming as educators. While of course Leigh wants the student teachers with whom she works to be judged as successful on this assessment (into which she has no input), she also feels she is going along with a deeply flawed and inherently problematic idea. The best she has come up with is to consistently articulate this conflict with student teachers and hope they will later join the resistance. As Reagan et al. note, excluding key players in edTPA implementation “risks silencing and marginalizing [the] voices of those who are integral to the field” (2016, p. 18).

Student Teachers

What student teachers might learn about what counts as “good teaching” and their role as professionals is also greatly impacted by this high-stakes assessment. The edTPA positions future teachers to be compliant in terms of APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review), the use of standardized Common Core modules, de-professionalization, and so forth, as they learn that others have the power to tell them what to teach and how to teach – and often, even when to teach. For instance, student teachers don’t have to do their own thinking or make their own decisions, as SCALE provides a “support guide” for edTPA candidates titled *Making Good Choices*.¹⁴ Heaven forbid teacher candidates – in concert with their mentors and peers – actually assess their situations and make their own good choices.

In addition, the edTPA affects the student teaching experience itself. Burns, Henry, and Lindauer (2015) note that 71% of teacher candidates in their study felt that the edTPA interfered with their student teaching responsibilities. Much of their student teaching and the accompanying seminars are given over to prepping, implementing lessons, and writing up commentaries for the edTPA, instead of focusing on the children in their classrooms, meaningful learning, etc. – presumably why most teacher candidates chose the profession in the first place. Graduate

¹³ <http://www.aacte.org/news-room/press-releases-statements/494-edtpa-consultants-supporting-implementation-nationwide>

¹⁴ <https://scale.stanford.edu/pact/supporting-documents/making-good-choices>

students at Hofstra University sum up student teacher concerns well, with one writing, "My experience with edTPA is not one I'd like to repeat. It distracted me from trying to create lessons that would really connect with my students and the writing portion was a waste of time." Another wrote, "This experience only taught me how to ace the test, not how to become a more effective teacher" (Singer, 2014a, paras. 21 & 22). Ledwell and Oyler (2016) find it especially worrisome that teacher educators from almost every program they reviewed noted that the edTPA seemed to privilege – and help students develop – an ability to follow directions or ‘jump through hoops.’ As Reagan et al. ask, “with no room for modifications and varied stakes attached to the assessment, does the edTPA by necessity drive out space for other conceptions of teaching?” (2016, p. 18). We think it often does.

Again and again we have witnessed the tensions student teachers experience as they seek to navigate between pedagogical practices that are responsive to their own students and to the demands of edTPA.¹⁵ Drawing on mixed-methods research conducted with teacher candidates in New York and Washington states, Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) found that teacher candidates experience three main tensions: (1) support tensions, ambiguities about what modes of assistance are appropriate and allowable in light of the assessment’s characterization as both formative and summative; (2) representation tensions, uncertainties about how best to demonstrate complex, contextualized, continuous teaching practice via the edTPA’s performance tasks; and (3) agency tensions, difficulties in negotiating external factors that influenced candidates’ teaching circumstances and practices (p. 3). Based on our experiences, we agree with their contention that because becoming a teacher in New York and Washington is contingent upon successful completion of the edTPA, the process demands successful negotiation of the tensions generated by the exam’s high-stakes status, many of which do not clearly link to effective teaching practice (see also, Garland, 2016; Reagan et al., 2016).

We fear that these tensions are primarily teaching candidates to play the game and even to lie. Said one of Meuwissen and Choppin’s study participants, “even though I learned a lot from this process, it felt more like a game, like me saying, ‘Hey, I’m just going to put this language in there . . . so you can find it and move on instead of looking and really trying hard’” (2015, p. 16). Another way to play the game? Hire someone to help you complete the edTPA! Companies such as Preparing Teachers in America (<http://www.preparingteachersinamerica.com>) are springing up to capitalize on teacher candidates’ need to pass this high-stakes exam. Preparing Teachers for America assures students that they are guaranteed to pass, and that “The service maintains 100% confidentiality with the student and deletes all documents two weeks after services are completely rendered” (<http://www.preparingteachersinamerica.com/pricing.html>).

We believe the lesson here is it doesn’t matter how you play the (high-stakes) game as long as you win . . . and have the wherewithal to buy these services. The money part is one more, often quite pressing, concern for teacher candidates. We already noted that implementing edTPA is expensive for teacher preparation programs; it’s expensive for teacher candidates, as well. They must pay Pearson \$300 to score their submissions, and pay again if they don’t pass the first time and must retake the test. Added to the cost of the other NYS certification exams and fees for other certification costs, a new teacher must now spend close to \$1,000 to become initially certified in New York. Due to the high costs, and in some cases the fear that they won’t pass one

¹⁵ We are by no means alone in this. See, for example, Greenblatt (2016).

or more of the exams, a number of teacher candidates are delaying submitting their edTPA work to Pearson. At one of our colleges, for instance, fewer than half of the teacher candidates who completed student teaching in the Spring 2015 semester had submitted their edTPA work to Pearson by the end of August 2015. We understand their concerns because how well/accurately they follow the dictates of edTPA will determine their future careers.

Mentor Teachers

Moreover, the edTPA impacts the work of mentor (or cooperating) teachers.¹⁶ These men and women are already being bent over backward by the demands of APPR which include, in NYS, being evaluated on student growth on state assessments or a comparable measure of student growth using a Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) process for teachers in non-tested subjects increased to 25 points for teachers with an approved a value-added growth model (http://www.nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/resources/2015/june/factsheet_1513_appr.pdf?la=en). In addition, it seems teachers are constantly implementing new curricula (e.g., in one of the schools where Leigh supervised a student teacher, the teachers had to learn and use eight new programs in the 2013-14 school year), and may think they are putting their own evaluations at risk when they agree to mentor a student teacher. At the district level, a local ‘high-needs’ [read: poor] urban school district, in which we place many of our teacher candidates, is threatening not to take any student teachers unless it can be proved that they are improving student ‘outcomes.’ That’s a tall order for our teacher candidates – and has the potential to radically alter not only their experiences in classrooms, but the kinds of mentoring they might expect from their mentor teachers.

Burns et al. (2015) also found that a cooperating teacher’s knowledge of edTPA makes a difference. In a survey of cooperating teachers and teacher candidates at one NYS college, 74% of the cooperating teachers believed they should be active supporters of a student teacher’s edTPA work, but only 57% indicated they had received enough information to be able to do so. We worry about how the focus on meeting the demands of edTPA is changing the mentoring process and the relationships among teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and college faculty supervisors. What falls away in discussions of learning and teaching as student teachers and their mentors focus more on what is assessed by the edTPA and less on those aspects of teaching and learning that are not?

School Children

Last, but certainly not least, the edTPA affects children in P-12 public school classrooms.¹⁷ Many are being taught via scripted Common Core modules and other externally created curricula such as *Fundations* (<http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/fundations/>), which have to somehow be adapted by student teachers to fit into the edTPA framework. This means the opportunities for individualization based on children’s needs and interests, the demographics and cultures of the school, and so forth, are often very limited.¹⁸ And student teachers, of course, do not want to be “held back” by students who are struggling to comprehend

¹⁶ At Sue’s college, school-based teacher educators or ‘SBTEs.’

¹⁷ In our area, one of the independent private schools is now advertising that students who attend their school do not have to take the NYS standardized tests.

¹⁸ For instance, *Fundations* does not allow differentiation during lessons; it can only occur afterwards.

(or show their comprehension of) the given material and so find it challenging and often onerous to effectively include all children. Sadly, children are already being positioned this way – that is, being seen as “winners” and “losers” – by teacher evaluation systems based on how they perform on standardized tests tied to the Common Core (see, e.g., Reagan et al., 2016).

Our Questions and Some Possible Answers

Although there are many questions that could be asked about the adoption of the edTPA (see, e.g., Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015), for the purposes of this paper we ask these two questions: What is all this in the service of? Who benefits from these changes?

From our perspective it's not teacher education, student teachers, or P-12 teachers and students that these reforms benefit. Instead, as suggested above and outlined below, it's SCALE, Pearson and other corporations, and politicians beholden to corporate funding. Peter Taubman, a professor at Brooklyn College¹⁹ who gave a talk at an edTPA conference at Barnard College in 2014, helps us connect the dots. In the last decade, he noted, with the help of allies in government, the press, think tanks, the educational establishment, and particularly foundation support, corporate investment in education has skyrocketed. According to the Education Industry Association,²⁰ U.S. education is now a \$1 trillion enterprise, funded in large part by public money, with billions in services and products being outsourced, and with political lobbying groups funding education looking to increase outsourcing (Kumashiro, 2012). Here, Pearson is of primary concern to us because of its role in the creation, dissemination, and assessment of edTPA (see, e.g., Ledwell & Oyler, 2016), but as Taubman (2014) addresses below, edTPA is just one cog in the machine. We believe this part of his talk is so important it should be read in its entirety.

Pearson is a London-based mega-corporation that can count among its many holdings the *Financial Times* and Penguin Books. It also dominates the business of American education, selling everything from textbooks to data management systems, from professional development programs to a variety of assessments. The company recently purchased the GED (General Educational Development test) and as a result the cost of that test has doubled making it difficult for states to pick up the expense when students can't pay. In Texas, Pearson has a five-year contract worth nearly \$500 million to create and administer exams. If students fail those tests, Pearson offers remedial-learning programs to help them pass. Kids use textbooks published by Pearson-owned houses like Prentice Hall and Pearson Longman. And students who want to take virtual classes will probably wind up in a course subcontracted to Pearson. In fact, Pearson has already partnered with the University of Phoenix.²¹

¹⁹ And author of *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of standards and accountability in education* (2009).

²⁰ <http://www.educationindustry.org/>

²¹ The University of Phoenix (UOPX) is a U.S. for-profit institution of higher learning, headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona. The university has an open-enrollment admission policy, requiring a high-school diploma, GED, or its equivalent for admissions. There are also other “alternative” routes to teacher certification such as Passport to Teaching, where, if you live in one of the 11 states that have approved this route, you can, online, “Know how to become a **teacher** through our **teacher** certification program and start **teaching** in less than a year.” (<http://abcte.org/teach/>)

In 1998, Pearson hired a new CEO from Texas, Marjorie Scardino, who was friends with Sandy Kress, one of the main architects of NCLB [No Child Left Behind] and who has been a frequent lobbyist for Pearson. Soon after Scardino's arrival, Pearson bought Simon & Schuster's education businesses and opened a new, overarching company – Pearson Education. Two years later, Pearson acquired the Minnesota-based testing company National Computer Systems for \$2.5 billion and began expanding into assessments. By 2004, Scardino ranked 59th on *Forbes*' list of the "100 Most Powerful Women in the World." By 2009, she was 19th.

Of course, we are particularly familiar with Pearson because they won the bid to run Stanford's edTPA, but Pearson is also heavily involved in the Common Core. They offer professional development, and, along with Achieve, ETS, and Student Achievement Partners, they design the questions for PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers²²), one of two consortiums in charge of designing the assessments for the Common Core. They also are developing the open-source tool for evaluating school technology and infrastructure readiness. Finally, among many other things, they are collaborating with NCATE to establish alignment between Teacher Performance Assessments and SPA standards, and behind MyCounselingLab, an online resource to help counseling students.

Who is the current CEO of the education wing of Pearson? Sir Michael Barber. Barber, you may remember, spearheaded educational reforms under Tony Blair, famous for his "third way" or neoliberal policies. Barber helped drive audit culture in the UK and he is famous for his work on "deliverology" and instituting a tightly monitored step-by-step chain of delivery from inputs to outputs, not unlike Wal-Mart. Between his work for Blair and his new position as CEO of education at Pearson, he was a very highly paid consultant for McKinsey, a huge global consulting firm where his colleague also worked – David Coleman, the current Head of the College Board and primary architect of the Common Core, and, as a side note, according to Diane Ravitch's research, the treasurer for Michelle Rhee's 'Students First.' (Taubman, 2014, p. 4)

If it's not already obvious, Taubman (2014) is arguing, and we agree, that it's all about the money. It's probably no surprise, then, that the biggest force behind the reform movement is the Gates Foundation.²³ In the early 2000s Gates Foundation money started pouring into education (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do>). In total, *Forbes* magazine estimates that Bill and Melinda Gates have given more than several billion dollars to education. According to Diane Ravitch (2015), the Gates Foundation helped pay to develop the Common Core standards, paid to evaluate those standards, and is now underwriting Pearson's program to create online courses and resources for the standards, which will be sold by Pearson, for a profit, to schools across the nation. Gates also gave \$186 million to PARCC and \$175 million to the

²² PARCC: <http://parcc.pearson.com/>

²³ The Broad Foundation is also a key player (Kumashiro, 2012): <http://www.broadfoundation.org/>

12 *Critical Education*

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium,²⁴ and has been a big supporter of the U.S. charter schools movement as well.

What's important to understand, Taubman (2014) avers, is that Bill Gates' view of education and the language he uses to articulate that vision have been adopted by the Obama administration, thereby giving this ideology the imprimatur of truth. Here's where the connection between the U.S. government and corporations can most clearly be seen. For example, in 2008, Gates introduced the term "college and career readiness" to a conference he convened in Seattle; this phrase became a lynchpin of the discourse of Race to the Top²⁵ and has found its way into CAEP accreditation language as well.²⁶ Even the description of education reform as the civil rights issue of our day comes from early literature put out by the Gates Foundation. And Gates has been central in keeping the focus on teacher performance, closing failing schools, and opening charters, as well as the need for standards, targets, and technology.

Arne Duncan, until recently the U.S. Secretary of Education for the Obama administration (see below), has been intimately involved with the Gates Foundation. Duncan's Chief of Staff at the Department of Education (DOE) was Margot Rogers who, from 2004 to 2009, before she joined Duncan, managed the Gates Foundation educational strategy. Jim Shelton, Assistant Deputy Secretary for innovation and improvement in the DOE, is another Gates Foundation alum; he managed teacher quality, school choice, and learning programs at the Foundation.

What we, along with Taubman (2014), Ravitch (2015), Singer (2012), Warner (2014), and many others find deeply troubling is that the people whose money drives so many of these reforms are changing the way we talk, and therefore think, about education: that language is the language of the board room and the market place. Basically, much of U.S. education is being outsourced to corporations, with all that that means. And the rest of us are subject to the rule of the education 'elites,' as they are at the intersection of money, politics, and power. With each curriculum review and each policy reform, educators experience seemingly endless and escalating demands for accountability, heightened professionalism, and improved quality. The political imperatives are thinly veiled and there is a continuing devaluing of education as a profession, meaning educators face increasing pressure to implement policies and curricula that are often at odds with their pedagogical and political beliefs (Osgood, 2015). But of course education is just one more example of the global neoliberal turn (Robertson, 2014).

Neoliberalism is an intensification of the private and its dominance over the public; it is an ideological and political force which attempts to infuse the rule of the market throughout society thereby subjecting every domain and aspect of life to the rule of market exchange and capitalist production. Neoliberalism can be seen as the capitalist class's response to the 'threat' of social democratic power, and the public institutions that were products of this power, such as education, are viewed as ripe for expropriation through privatization and deregulation. And because neoliberal principles prescribe that market forces should determine the success or failure of an entity or organization, they promote choice, competition, and accountability (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016; Ford, Porfilio, & Goldstein, 2015).

²⁴ <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>

²⁵ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

²⁶ The standards are designed to "leverage change in teacher preparation and [help] ensure that our students are prepared to compete in today's economy" (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016, p. 78).

Furthermore, the neoliberal order relies on state intervention to achieve and maintain its position as the defining economic logic of late capitalism; the state also plays a crucial role in instituting and maintaining markets where they did not formally exist, or existed in a limited role (Ford, Porfilio, & Goldstein, 2015; Giroux, 2002; see also Finn, 2016). Our concern here is that neoliberal policy-making with its privatization, corporatization, and standardization is dictating current education policy (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016). With Tuck and Gorlewski (2016), we believe that it is important to study and critique the problems of using market-based logics to guide what should be pedagogical decisions, and to explore the consequences of educational policies stemming from neo-liberal conceptions of education.

Keeping the above in mind, we provide one example of what happens when market-based logic is brought to bear on student teaching. Above we addressed what counts as a ‘successful’ student teaching experience in New York; now we ask, who gets to decide? The short answer is Pearson (and its scorers), not faculty from candidates’ programs, as New York’s original application for funding had suggested would be the case (Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). According to the Pearson Education website, in 2011, Pearson was “recruiting 1,200 educators to score the new Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), a nationally available, performance-based assessment instrument for measuring the effectiveness of teacher candidates seeking initial licenses” (<http://www.pearsonassessments.com/news/2011/pearson-recruits-1200-educators-to-score-teacher-performance-assessment.html>). Following the concerns laid out by Alan Singer²⁷ in his highly regarded *Huffington Post* blogs (published in book form in 2014), we have questions about the qualifications of the evaluators who have, at times, been recruited on Craigslist, according to *The Washington Post* (Strauss, 2013).

We have much anecdotal evidence to draw on here, as in this post, a response to a well-circulated defense of edTPA by Beverly Falk, a professor at City College of New York: “I received an invitation to serve as an edTPA scorer for secondary math education. I am not certified in mathematics and have never been a secondary math teacher” (Singer, 2014a, para. 13). Of course hiring this person as a scorer could have been a mistake, but given the pressure Pearson is under to review submissions in a timely (and not too pricey – scorers are paid \$75.00 per review²⁸) manner, we have our doubts. Singer adds this concern: “As far as I can tell from the website,²⁹ applicants [to be Pearson scorers] do not have to provide evidence that they actually were good teachers, worked in inclusive and multicultural classrooms, or are familiar with, support, and use state learning standards of the states where student teachers are working” (para. 14).

Singer sums up his critique of the student teaching scoring situation: “I had strong candidates who passed edTPA with relatively low scores and some weak candidates who were judged to have reached mastery level. Because the evaluation process is outsourced to Pearson, there are no legal requirements for transparency or an open evaluation process” (2014a, para. 19). We have had experiences similar to Singer’s and so endorse his critique.

Given the foregoing concerns about who benefits from these changes to education, we have come to the conclusion that the world that is being shaped by edTPA is neither beautiful nor just (Huebner, 1975): Learning – not to mention, thinking – opportunities for student

²⁷ Singer is a professor at Hofstra University in New York.

²⁸ See <https://sites.google.com/a/pearson.com/score-edtpa/>

²⁹ <http://scoreedtpa.pearson.com/become-an-edtpa-scorer/edtpa-scorer-qualifications.html>

teachers and school children are being constrained, as are opportunities for meaningful professional mentoring by mentor teachers and college supervisors. In addition, we've suggested that the way edTPA is being used by NYS is limiting, sometimes negating, our professional judgment and restricting curricular innovation, individualization, and democratic practice within the profession.

As Dover and Schultz (2016) summarize, teacher performance assessments, with edTPA the mostly widely used example, narrow and standardize the definition of 'good teaching,' equate task fidelity with competency, and artificially decontextualize teaching and teacher education. Rather than being liberating and reflective of democracy, education in this worldview is anti-democratic and domesticating (Freire, 1972). As an example of the latter, at a fall 2013 NYS conference on edTPA, New York's (then) Commissioner of Education, John King, responded this way to receiving questions about what he called education reform: "When I'm in a restaurant, and the waiter opens a bottle of wine for me to taste, I never say no and send it back, even if it's horrible. The same with my meal; if I don't like it, I'll eat it anyway." Betsy Bloom, a professor of Education at SUNY Oneonta and blogger, summarized his point (2013, para. 10): We should quietly accept what we are given, even if it's horrible. (Note: After an often acrimonious tenure as Commission of Education in NYS, King left New York and, in March 2016, took over for Arne Duncan as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Some question the wisdom of this move.³⁰)

But education is not a restaurant and we don't have to swallow bad ideas. What can we do to resist, to push back? How can we reclaim some autonomy? edTPA is a mandate and if our students are to get certified, we essentially have no choice about whether we implement it³¹ (for now), but what can we do in our daily work to counter its effects? How can we restructure our programs to support our student teachers and help them realize edTPA is not the only thing that matters, or even the most important thing? What, that is, are the 'impossible possibilities' for us?

Throwing a Monkey Wrench in the Works: Pushing back Against the Misuse of edTPA

We will provide a few examples of resistance that focus on hope and courage because they allow us to persevere, to innovate, and to be responsive to learners and learning contexts. When we want to give up, hope allows us to keep going in the face of what feels like a power grab by NYSED, Pearson, and other corporate interests. When we feel the need to push back, we must draw on our courage. We have even tried to find joy in collaborative and creative resistance. Perhaps this is the ethical engagement with what Adrienne Rich (2001) called the arts of the impossible.

So what, specifically, can those in teacher education do? Starting from Freirean and Foucauldian (1972; 1995) perspectives on power and resistance, we can begin by engaging teacher candidates in a critique of the edTPA, even while we work to support them in completing

³⁰ See, for example, <http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2016/04/lamar-alexander-takes-john-king-to.html>

³¹ Of course we could say no, but that would harm our students. On the other hand, those who do not work with students in the field, for instance, some Social Foundations professors, get to take an ethical stance against edTPA. But it doesn't matter, because the machine has made them largely irrelevant – we don't really "need" curriculum theory or Social Foundations coursework as these areas are not assessed on NYS teacher certification exams.

it successfully. As suggested above, we believe the edTPA reproduces and perpetuates a limited and limiting view of teaching and learning. As a mandated, high-stakes assessment, it can powerfully shape how those who are subjected to it come to think about all aspects of their work as educators. We can work with teacher candidates to examine and question what is included and what is not included in the assessment, and to think deeply about what that might mean for what and how they teach, and what, in turn, that might mean for their own students' learning. In one example from Sue's program, faculty members and teacher candidates were looking closely at how the edTPA defines "appropriate academic language" in the various disciplines. As they perused and discussed the lists of examples, teacher candidates were surprised to note that neither questioning nor analyzing were included as language functions in the secondary science edTPA. In the discussion that followed, professors and students unpacked the ways that assessments embody their makers' perspectives and have the power to shape what happens in their classrooms in powerful ways.

We must also critically examine the advice we give to teacher candidates as they complete the edTPA. What seems like pragmatic guidance for successfully completing this assessment also has the very real potential to shape and constrain possibilities for teacher candidates to immerse themselves in the complexities of teaching and for PreK-12 students to experience rich learning opportunities. What might be the long-term impacts, for instance, of advising teacher candidates that the lessons they plan for edTPA analysis should have objectives that focus on just one thing (as opposed to the complexity of an inquiry-based lesson) so that the analysis and reflections will be more straightforward and easier to write? And as we talk with teacher candidates about how to successfully complete the edTPA, how can we also support them in thinking about what they choose to do the rest of the time – that is, how to "teach in the cracks" (hooks, 1994)?

The decisions student teachers make can be fraught with risk. A couple of years ago Leigh saw this question from a teacher education colleague at another SUNY school which highlights the intricacies and dangers of the decision-making process: "Are you counseling multi-cert students to take EC [Early Childhood], Childhood [Elementary Education], or SPED [Special Education] versions of the edTPA? A colleague just said that for multi-cert folks, several colleges are advising their students to take EC, SPED, and Childhood in that order because Childhood is too difficult"³² (personal communication, May 7, 2014). While we can advise our students, they have the ultimate decision regarding which edTPA to take, and they pay the price (literally and figuratively) if they choose 'unwisely.'

In addition to giving what we hope is helpful (albeit often limited) advice, we can also challenge ourselves and our colleagues to both engage in work that supports our students in being successful on this (we hope, temporary) assessment paradigm, while at the same time not losing the richness and complexity of our programs. We need to remind ourselves of the core principles upon which our programs – and profession – are built and not lose sight of those principles in a rush to align our programs with edTPA. Rather than asking how we can reframe our programs to fit edTPA, we can ask how edTPA might fit into our programs. To do so is to resist the homogenization of teacher education into what are effectively edTPA-preparation programs. Similarly, we could draw on Meuwissen and Choppin's (2015) study to think about

³² The Elementary Education edTPA (linked to Childhood certification in NYS) requires that students complete and write up 15 tasks versus the 12 required for most other assessments.

how we might work with student teachers to reduce or at least cogently address the tensions they may be experiencing.

In our opinion, the edTPA subverts the student teaching assessment process in a way that renders it not only unhelpful, but, in fact, dangerous. As it standardizes the analysis and reflection process, the edTPA turns student teachers' analyses and reflections into an exercise in showing what they know and can do to judges far away from the classrooms in which they work instead of being a meaningful (and contextualized) experience. And, as we addressed above, it radically changes the very concept of what it means to be a professional educator. However, at the heart of the edTPA is a good idea that's been around a very long time: student teachers thoughtfully and critically analyzing their students' learning and their own teaching practices. We can reclaim this good idea by making sure that in our work with student teachers we keep our focus first and foremost on their own practice with the particular children (and families) with whom they work in their particular contexts. Engaging in this kind of work alongside mentor teachers who know the student teacher, the children, and the context of the particular classroom, school, and community allows student teachers to be immersed in thinking deeply about the rich complexities of the craft of teaching.

Leigh recalls one of her student teachers during the first semester edTPA was in place in New York attending to and recording in her journal the amazing, funny, and often touching things kids do and say every day. This was a very strong student teacher, who, in the midst of preparing for her edTPA submission while working with Common Core modules and other curricula that were new to her and to her mentor teacher, was still able to foreground the joy, the humor, the hope, and the people in education. Leigh does her best to keep this example in mind while working with student teachers, especially on those days when she feels like it's all a rigged game and we are merely interchangeable cogs in the machine.

Colleagues at both of our campuses have noted that the edTPA used in post-secondary education is very similar to the APPR required for P-12 teacher evaluations in New York State. We discussed this alignment earlier as an example of the reform agenda. However, it would serve our students well for us to use their experiences with and critiques of edTPA to explore how to succeed in a system while at the same time working to resist and change the system – both now and when they are teachers and will, presumably, be assessed via APPR. For a wonderful example of managing this balancing act, see *Anger in the Heartland over Unfair Teacher Tests* regarding push-back from SUNY Cortland and Oneonta students (Singer, 2013).

Moreover, we can continue to protest and push back against edTPA and the larger movements behind it. Leigh, for example, wrote several letters to our local NYS Assemblyman and the NYS Education Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, and then solicited signatures from Geneseo School of Education faculty members. We can also gather to collaboratively question and resist, as faculty members did at the 2014 edTPA conference in New York city mentioned earlier.³³ We can organize meetings of concerned stakeholders, such as Sue and her colleagues at the College at Brockport did, to educate ourselves and to organize our actions across our regions and our states. Furthermore, we can work with various media to share our concerns with a wider audience. And we can involve our campuses: For instance, as previously noted the College Senates at both our colleges passed resolutions in the spring of 2014 against using the edTPA for NYS teacher certification. And, as in another example above,

³³ <http://education.barnard.edu/events/edtpa-conference>

we can provide testimony on edTPA to governmental bodies. Our unions and professional groups can be places for such activism. The United University Professions Teacher Education Task Force, for example, has organized forums where teacher educators, teacher candidates, and P-12 teachers and administrators talk with NYS Regents about the damaging consequences of high-stakes assessments such as the edTPA. That could be one of the reasons the recently reconvened state edTPA Task Force is being asked to assess all possible options, from maintaining the status quo to removing the edTPA as a high-stakes certification requirement and allowing programs to choose which performance assessment to use.

Bordelon (2014) says faculty members need to add their voices to the long history of resistance to domination by the powerful. Along those lines, we can join, and share with our students, groups that have been created to resist, even defy, the standardization and corporate takeover of U.S. education. For instance, Leigh joined the Badass Teachers (BATs) group on Facebook³⁴ on the recommendation of a colleague and has recommended it to her students. This group encourages collective resistance and often posts powerful calls to action such as the following in which Ernest Anemone offered this (excerpted) insight into why the current situation exists:

We often talk about the attack on public education as a money-making scheme (which it is, of course), but we must remember it is primarily a psychological problem being exploited for profit. If I am a person with great wealth and status, what happens if I discover that my privilege is not the result of my own hard work? Well, I'm likely to have an existential crisis, which I'd rather avoid. I might ask silly questions like: Do I truly deserve what I have? Do other people deserve to not have the things that I have? This is why, as a rich man, I must continually prove to myself (and the world) that the poor are poor because they refuse to make an enterprise of themselves – like I did. As we know, there are all sorts of interesting ways I can demonstrate the failures of the poor through the 'neutrality' of data. The good news is that we are slowly beginning to wake up to what's happening. As a nation, we are slowly beginning to see the cracks in this highly polished veneer... BATs, you are on the forefront of exposing this dangerous lie, and when you do it will not be to upset the rich or redeem the poor, but rather to restore the humanity of both. (Anemone, 2014)

Henry David Thoreau, in his famous 1849 treatise *Civil Disobedience*, is even more direct: “Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine” (para. 5).

And So...

Horace Mann, Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, and others had a simple – and perhaps naïve–view of U.S. public education: it would be a great equalizer. It would create a common American culture and an educated citizenry that would make beneficial decisions for the whole, think for itself, and create a country that would give equal opportunity to all. However, starting with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education), public education, rather than fulfilling these noble ideals, has been constructed and hence viewed by many as nothing but a failure. This purported failure has led to a purported solution: a standardized national curriculum which can be implemented – and assessed – by the

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BadAssTeachers/>

private sector. This ‘solution’ flies in the face of evidence, but no matter. It seems clear to us that there is a corporate-political agenda at work that is undemocratic but very lucrative to those who are at the table, and edTPA is just one more slice of this pie.

As the 1976 movie *All the President’s Men* reminded us, we need to ‘follow the money’: Current reforms are allowing certain wealthy and/or connected individuals with neither scholarly nor practical expertise in education to exert significant influence over educational policy (see, e.g., Herbert, 2014). Scapegoating public schools, teachers’ unions, and teacher preparation programs covers up real, systemic problems (e.g., vast disparities in wealth) and the professed solution, market-based reforms, is creating huge obstacles to ensuring an equitable education for all children (Kumashiro, 2012).

According to Westheimer (2008), democracy is at risk in American schools and colleges, and we believe this is no accident. Schools whose primary focus is preparing workers, those who are deemed ‘college and career ready,’ cannot at the same time prepare literate, active, and morally sensitive citizens who can and will carry out their civic duties (Chomsky, 1992; Karier, 1973). As Giroux (n.d.) argues, Dewey’s claim that “democracy needs to be reborn in each generation, and education is its midwife” (1916, p. 22) has been either willfully ignored, forgotten, or has become an object of scorn.

Westheimer (2008) further contends that the ultimate outcome of this anti-democratic turn will be ‘no child left thinking,’ and we are afraid that’s the goal for teachers, as well. For instance, more and more often, U.S. teachers and students are seeing their schools, districts, and/or states limiting their ability to explore multiple perspectives on controversial issues. “In many states, virtually every subject area is under scrutiny for any deviation from one single narrative, based on knowable, testable, and purportedly uncontested facts” (Westheimer, p. 4). As he and a colleague heard from one English teacher who took part in their study, even novel reading is now prescribed: meanings predetermined, vocabulary words preselected, and essay topics predigested. We have seen much the same in the schools where our student teachers are placed. Teaching and learning have been narrowed in ways that we fear will lead to students who are unable or unwilling to take the principled stands long associated with American democracy.

We can’t help but think of the similarities to edTPA here. Building on the many concerns identified above, and borrowing directly from Barbara Bowen of the New York Professional Staff Congress, “we cannot in good conscience support assessment systems like edTPA that diminish the quality of [students’] education, narrowly define the preparation of teacher candidates, and turn authority over to for-profit corporations” (McGrath, 2014, p. 15). We agree with Dover and Schultz (2016) that, as teacher educators, we must draw upon our collective conscience to reject the fallacious rhetoric of edTPA and advocate on behalf of our profession, our teacher candidates, and our commitment to their future students.

References

- About edTPA. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://edtpa.aacte.org/about-edtpa>
- American Legislative Exchange Council. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.alec.org
- Anemone, E. (2014, September 2). Re: We often talk about the attack on public education.
Retrieved from

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BadAssTeachers/search/?query=Well%2C%20I%27m%20likely%20to%20have%20an%20existential%20crisis%2C%20which%20I%27d%20rather%20avoid.%20I%20might%20ask%20silly%20questions>)
- Aoki, T. (2005). Layered voices of teaching: The uncannily correct and the elusively true. In R. Irwin & W. Pinar (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 17-27). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Au, W. (2013). What's a nice test like you doing in a place like this? The edTPA and corporate education 'reform.' *Rethinking Schools*, 24(4), 22-27.
- Bloom, B. (2013, October 22). Mission creep: Teacher educators join the ranks of the walking wounded. Retrieved from <http://oa4pe.wordpress.com/2013/10/22/mission-creep-teacher-educators-join-the-ranks-of-the-walking-wounded/>
- Bordelon, D. (2014, Fall). How do we stop it? Strategies for pushing back Corporate U. *Thought & Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal*, 91-104.
- Burns, B.A., Henry, J.J., & Lindauer, J.R. (2015). Working together to foster candidate success on the edTPA. *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education*, 6(2), 18-37.
- Center on Reinventing Public Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from: www.crpe.org
- Chomsky, N. (1992). *Deterring democracy*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Piazza, P., & Power, C. (2013). The politics of accountability: Assessing teacher education in the United States. *The Educational Forum*, 77(1), 6-27.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Stern, R., Sanchez, J.G., Miller, A., Keefe, E.S., Fernandez, M.B., Chang, W-C., Carney, M.C., Burton, S., & Baker, M. (2016). Holding teacher preparation accountable: A review of claims and evidence. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/pb_cochran-smith_teacher_prep_0.pdf
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.caepnet.org/>
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (n.d.). The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Interstate_Teacher_Assessment_Consortium%28InTASC%29.html
- Croft, S.J., Roberts, M.A., & Stenhouse, V.L. (2016). The perfect storm of education reform: High-stakes testing and teacher evaluation. *Social Justice*, 42(1), 70-92.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Dover, A.G., & Schultz, B.D. (2016). Troubling the edTPA: Illusions of objectivity and rigor. *The Educational Forum*, 80(1), 95-106.
- edTPA scorer training and scoring. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://scoreedtpa.pearson.com/become-an-edtpa-scorer/edtpa-training-overview.html>

20 Critical Education

- Finn, E. (2016, May 11). What we need to know about neoliberalism (before it's too late). *Behind the numbers*. Retrieved from <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2016/05/11/what-we-need-to-know-about-neoliberalism-before-its-too-late/>
- Ford, D.K., Porfilio, B., & Goldstein, R.A. (2015). The news media, education, and the subversion of the neoliberal social imaginary. *Critical Education*, 6(7), 1-23.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London, England: Penguin Books.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Garland, S. (2016, May 27). Why don't more teachers like the edTPA? *The Hechinger Report: Teacher Preparation*. Retrieved from <http://hechingerreport.org/dont-teachers-like-edtpa/>
- Gates Foundation. (n.d.). *What we do*. Retrieved from <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do>
- Giroux, H.A. (2002). Neoliberalism, corporate culture, and the promise of higher education: The university as a democratic public sphere. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 425-463.
- Giroux, H.A. (n.d.). Education incorporated? Retrieved from http://www.henryagiroux.com/online_articles/education_incorporated.htm
- Greenblatt, D. (2016). The consequences of edTPA. *Educational Leadership*, 73(8), 51-54.
- He, M.F., & Phillion, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Personal, passionate, participatory inquiry into social justice in education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Herbert, B. (2014, October 6). The plot against public education: How millionaires and billionaires are ruining our schools. *Politico Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/the-plot-against-public-education-111630>
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Huebner, D. (1975). Curriculum as concern for men's temporality. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing: The reconceptualists* (pp. 217-236). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Karier, C. (1973). Business values and the educational state. In C.J. Karier, J. Spring, & P. Violas (Eds.), *Roots of crisis: American education in the 20th century* (pp. 6-29). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Co.
- Kumashiro, K. (2012). *Bad teacher: How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Lahm, S. (2015, May 27). The secret group that wants to take over your school. Retrieved from <http://www.progressive.org/news/2015/05/188152/secret-group-wants-take-over-your-school>
- Ledwell, K., & Oyler, C. (2016). Unstandardized responses to "standardized" tests: The edTPA as gatekeeper and curriculum change agent. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2), 120-134.

- McGrath, D. (2014, February). SED's rapid implementation of edTPA is grossly unfair to future teachers, faculty. *NYSUT United*, 14-15.
- Meuwissen, K. W., & Choppin, J. M. (2015). Preservice teachers' adaptations to tensions associated with the edTPA during its early implementation in New York and Washington states. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(103). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.2078>
- Margolis, J., & Doring, A. (2013). National assessments for student teachers: Documenting teaching readiness to the tipping point. *Action in Teacher Education*, 35(4), 272-285.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://ncate.org/>
- National Council on Teacher Quality (2012, August 27). EdTPA: Slow this train down. Retrieved from <http://www.nctq.org/commentary/viewStory.do?id=32495>
- New York State Department of Education. (n.d.). NYS P-12 Common Core learning standards. Retrieved from http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/
- New York State United Teachers. (2016, January). Fact sheet: Annual professional performance review. Retrieved from http://www.nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/resources/2015/june/factsheet_1513_appr.pdf?a=en
- Novinger, S., & O'Brien, L.M. (2003). Beyond "boring, meaningless shit" in higher education: Early childhood teacher educators under the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 4(1), 3-31.
- Osgood, J. (2015). Reconfiguring quality: Beyond discourses and subjectivities to matter, bodies, and becomings in early childhood education. In G.S. Cannella, M. Salazar Perez, & I. Lee (Eds.), *Critical examinations of quality in childhood education and care: Regulation, disqualification, and erasure*. New York: Peter Lang. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274300966_Reconfiguring_Quality_beyond_discourses_and_subjectivities_to_matter_bodies_and_becomings_in_early_childhood_education
- Pace, S. (2012). Writing the self into research: Using grounded theory analytic strategies in auto-ethnography. *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, 13, 1-15.
- Pearson. (n.d.). The story so far. Retrieved from <https://www.pearson.com/about-us/education---the-story-so-far.html>
- Pearson Assessments. (2011, November 10). Pearson recruits 1200 educators to score teacher performance assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/news/2011/pearson-recruits-1200-educators-to-score-teacher-performance-assessment.html>
- Pecheone, R. (2012). The Teaching Performance Assessment Consortium. Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). Retrieved from <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/pdf/tpac072012.pdf>

22 Critical Education

- Preparing Teachers in America. (n.d.). Pricing information. Retrieved from:
<http://www.preparingteachersinamerica.com/pricing.html>.
- Ravitch, D. (2015, November 19). Newsletter: 15 years of Bill Gates' experimentation.
Retrieved from www.networkforpubliceducation.org
- Reagan, E.M., Schram, T., McCurdy, K., Chang, T.H., & Evans, C.M. (2016). Politics of policy: Assessing the implementation, impact, and evolution of the PACT and edTPA. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(9). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2176>
- Rich, A. (2001). *Fox: Poems 1998-2000*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Robertson, S. (2014, October). GERM – neoliberal policy infecting the world's classrooms.
Retrieved from <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/germ-infecting-the-worlds-classrooms/>
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Singer, A. (2012, February 28). Cuomo, Common Core, & Pearson-for-profit. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/cuomo-common-core-and-pearson_b_1293465.html
- Singer, A. (2013, October 7). Anger in the heartland over unfair teacher tests. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/anger-in-the-heartland-ov_b_4044596.html
- Singer, A. (2014a, June 18). SCALE and edTPA fire back: Methinks they doth protest too much.
Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/scale-and-edtpa-fire-back_b_5506351.html
- Singer, A. (2014b). *Education flashpoints: Fighting for America's schools*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Strauss, V. (2013, 16 January 16). Pearson criticized for finding test essay scorers on Craigslist.
The Washington Post. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/16/pearson-criticized-for-finding-test-essay-scorers-on-craigslist/>
- Taubman, P. (2014). Connecting the dots. Retrieved from <http://education.barnard.edu/events/edtpa-conference>
- Thoreau, H. D. (1849) Civil disobedience – Part 2. Retrieved from <http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil2.html>
- Tuck, E., & Gorlewski, J. (2016). Racist ordering, settler colonialism, and edTPA: A participatory policy analysis. *Educational Policy*, 30(1), 197-217.
- Warner, J. (2014, August 26). Excellent sheep run the world: Part II – Michelle Rhee. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/excellent-sheep-run-world-part-ii-michelle-rhee>
- Westheimer, J. (2008). No child left thinking: Democracy at risk in American schools. *Democratic Dialogue Series, No. 17: Inquiry into democracy, education, and society*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa.
- Wilson Language Training. (n.d.). *Foundations*. Retrieved from <http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/foundations/>

Authors

Leigh M. O'Brien is Professor in the Ella Cline Shear School of Education at the State University of New York, College at Geneseo

Sue Novinger Robb is Assistant Professor in the Department of Education and Human Development at The College at Brockport, State University of New York.

Critical Education

criticaleducation.org

ISSN 1920-4175

Editors

Stephen Petrina, *University of British Columbia*
Sandra Mathison, *University of British Columbia*
E. Wayne Ross, *University of British Columbia*

Associate Editors

Abraham P. DeLeon, *University of Texas at San Antonio*
Adam Renner, 1970-2010

Editorial Collective

Faith Ann Agostinone, *Aurora University*
Wayne Au, *University of Washington, Bothell*
Jeff Bale, *University of Toronto*
Theodorea Regina Berry, *U of Texas, San Antonio*
Amy Brown, *University of Pennsylvania*
Kristen Buras, *Georgia State University*
Paul R. Carr, *Université du Québec en Outaouais*
Lisa Cary, *Murdoch University*
Anthony J. Castro, *University of Missouri, Columbia*
Alexander Cuenca, *Saint Louis University*
Noah De Lissovoy, *The University of Texas, Austin*
Kent den Heyer, *University of Alberta*
Gustavo Fischman, *Arizona State University*
Stephen C. Fleury, *Le Moyne College*
Derek R. Ford, *Syracuse University*
Four Arrows, *Fielding Graduate University*
Melissa Freeman, *University of Georgia*
David Gabbard, *Boise State University*
Rich Gibson, *San Diego State University*
Rebecca Goldstein, *Montclair State University*
Julie Gorlewski, *SUNY at New Paltz*
Panayota Gounari, *UMass, Boston*
Sandy Grande, *Connecticut College*
Todd S. Hawley, *Kent State University*
Matt Hern, *Vancouver, Canada*
Dave Hill, *Anglia Ruskin University*
Nathalia E. Jaramillo, *University of Auckland*
Richard Kahn, *Antioch University Los Angeles*
Kathleen Kesson, *Long Island University*
Philip E. Kovacs, *University of Alabama, Huntsville*
Ravi Kumar, *South Asia University*
Saville Kushner, *University of Auckland*
Zeus Leonardo, *University of California, Berkeley*
John Lupinacci, *Washington State University*
Darren E. Lund, *University of Calgary*
Curry Stephenson Malott, *West Chester University*
Gregory Martin, *University of Technology, Sydney*
Rebecca Martusewicz, *Eastern Michigan University*
Cris Mayo, *University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*
Peter Mayo, *University of Malta*
Peter McLaren, *University of California, Los Angeles*
João Paraskeva, *UMass, Dartmouth*
Jill A. Pinkney Pastrana, *U of Minnesota, Duluth*
Brad J. Porfilio, *California State University, East Bay*
Kenneth J. Saltman, *UMass, Dartmouth*
Doug Selwyn, *SUNY at Plattsburgh*
Özlem Sensoy, *Simon Fraser University*
Patrick Shannon, *Penn State University*
John Smyth, *University of Huddersfield*
Mark Stern, *Colgate University*
Beth Sondel, *North Carolina State University*
Hannah Spector, *Penn State University, Harrisburg*
Linda Ware, *SUNY at Geneseo*