CHAPTER 6

Getting Better Teachers—and Treating Them Right

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American teachers do not get the respect, the freedom, the compensation, or the rewards that many of them deserve. At the same time, U.S. schools are not producing satisfactory results, a problem that is not likely to be solved until our classrooms are filled with excellent teachers. The key to well-educated children and strong schools is a top-notch teaching staff. Every child needs—and deserves—a knowledgeable, dedicated, and effective instructor, well grounded in academic content, expert at imparting knowledge and skills to children, and passionate about this calling. Unfortunately, while U.S. schools have many fine teachers today, they don't have enough. Complicating matters further, as many as two million of today's teachers will quit or retire over the next decade, creating a large need for qualified people to replace them—and for even more to accommodate the country's dual trends of enrollment growth and class-size shrinkage.

About this nest of intertwined quality and quantity problems there seems to be a national consensus. How to get from here to a suitable set of solutions, however, is the subject of far less agreement. My purpose in this chapter is to suggest a promising path that is very different from the one most policymakers and education reformers are presently following.

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Background

In round numbers, U.S. public and private schools employ three million teachers. Many other Americans—estimates run in the neighborhood of four million—were trained to become teachers but for various reasons are not working in classrooms today. In addition, an unknown number of individuals who did not originally plan to teach would now consider doing so if the terms of employment—and entry—were different.

Private schools, for the most part, are free to hire anyone they like, without regard to specialized training or state certification. In some jurisdictions, public charter schools enjoy similar flexibility. With rare exceptions, however, standard public schools are permitted to employ only people who have been "certified" as teachers by the state.

Certification procedures and requirements vary, but typically they oblige the would-be public schoolteacher to attend a state-approved training program, ordinarily in a college of education, where the candidate must study a prescribed curriculum. Many of the required courses involve pedagogy, child development, the "foundations of education," "classroom diversity," "study of self (teacher) as learner," and so on.[1] Practice teaching is ordinarily required (and is the part that teachers generally find most valuable). There may be a test of basic skills. It is also common, at some point along the way, to test teaching candidates for their knowledge of pedagogy and, sometimes, knowledge of the subject in which they will be certified (which may or may not be the subject they end up teaching). States award teaching certificates to those who survive this cluttered, protracted, and irksome proc-

1. The number of required units varies from six semester units in Texas to thirty-six in some states. C. Emily Feistritzer and David T. Chester, *Alternative Teacher Certification: A State-by-State Analysis 1998–99* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information, 1998). Requirements for individual states can be found in the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), *Manual on the Preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel, 1998–1999.*

ess.[2] That does not, however, mean that everyone holding such a certificate is well educated himself, much less that he will prove effective at imparting what he knows to the children in his classroom.

The length and complexity of these procedures depend on the state, as well as on the subject or level of schooling that the would-be teacher seeks to be certified in. For most, however, it becomes the driving force in their undergraduate education and, often, at the postgraduate level, too.

If an individual gets through college without having subjected herself to this regimen, and then seeks to become a public schoolteacher, it's usually necessary to return to college for a year or longer. Some states have developed ''alternative'' certification programs that make it possible to begin teaching without completing the standard preparation sequence in advance, although often it's mandatory to jump through the remaining hoops during evenings, weekends, and summers.

This marriage of ''approved'' teacher-training programs and state certification requirements has been the subject of criticism for many years. Two main objections are commonly voiced. First, that the content of these preparation sequences and certification requirements is banal and pointless stuff beloved of educationists but not very valuable to actual school practitioners; that it's minimally linked to subject matter mastery; and—most research indicates—that it can muster scant evidence of a relationship to classroom effectiveness. The second complaint is that this training-and-certification cycle is so burdensome—and full of ''Mickey Mouse'' courses and requirements—that it discourages able would-be teachers from making their way into the public schools.

These are problems that the nation needs to solve, for teacher quality matters a great deal. We know this from decades of research and the experience of millions of families. Recent studies in

2. In an average state (Missouri), seventy-three different certificates are available. Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky, ''Teacher Training and Licensure: A Layman's Guide,'' in *Better Teachers, Better Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999), p. 34.

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Tennessee, Boston, and Dallas, inter alia, find dramatic differences between the performance of youngsters who are assigned the best teachers and those entrusted to the worst classroom practitioners.[3] No matter how well intentioned, U.S. school reform efforts will surely falter unless essentially all teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to help essentially all their pupils meet high standards.

Children who face high-stakes tests for promotion and graduation will need instructors with more knowledge and skill than ever before. But today's system for recruiting, preparing, licensing, and deploying teachers is not up to the dual challenge of quality and quantity.

No wonder many U.S. teachers do not feel ready for the challenges they encounter in their classrooms. According to a recent survey, only 36 percent of them feel well prepared to implement high district or state standards.[4]

Training and certification aren't the whole story, either. The personnel practices of the teaching field are archaic and bureaucratic. Licensure is often followed by a hiring sequence in which the likeliest openings for a novice are in the worst schools, there to be hurled into a classroom and left pretty much alone with a bunch of demanding kids and little opportunity for colleagueship, professional growth (apart from more Mickey Mouse "staff development" programs), or mentoring by expert teachers.

On top of that, the expert teachers themselves get no tangible rewards; they're paid exactly the same as ordinary (and weak) instructors. Longevity and paper credentials bring more money, but effectiveness does not. Nor does it matter whether one is a high

3. William L. Sanders and Joan C. Rivers, "Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement," 1996; Heather Jordan, Robert Mendro, and Dash Weerasinghe, "Teacher Effects on Longitudinal Student Achievement," 1997; and Boston Public Schools, "High School Restructuring," March 9, 1998. These research studies were all cited in Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matters a Lot," *Thinking K-16*, a publication of the Education Trust, 3, no. 2 (1998).

4. National Center for Education Statistics, *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, January 1999), p. iii.

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school chemistry teacher whose other job opportunities pay $100,000 or a middle school social studies teacher whose non-teaching options are far less lucrative. Their salaries remain identical. The same spurious equality holds for teachers in tough inner-city classroom situations and those in cushier environments. So long as they work in the same school system, they're paid the same. (If the cushier setting is a suburban school system, it likely pays more.)

Dispelling Some Myths

Some of the bizarre practices of the teaching field are ubiquitous, but others are more localized. Consider today's much-ballyhooed teacher shortage. True, some school systems have had difficulty recruiting fully certified teachers in certain fields. Yet others have dozens of applicants for virtually every classroom opening. Where there are shortages, they are at least partly created by the certification bottleneck itself and exacerbated by the silly uniformity of a compensation system that bears no relationship to the labor marketplace. In the aggregate, U.S. colleges of education actually produce more teaching candidates than our schools need; of the 142,000 college graduates prepared to teach in 1992–93, for example, more than half did not even apply for teaching jobs in the year following graduation.[5] Pennsylvania alone confers some 20,000 new teaching certificates each year yet hires only 5,100 teachers annually.[6]

Another surprise is that most "new hires" in American schools are not young people fresh from university preparation programs; roughly one-third of them are former teachers returning to the classroom, and another quarter are people who trained to teach at an earlier time but then changed their minds.[7] Of the 5,100 teach-

5. C. Emily Feistritzer and David T. Chester, *Alternative Teacher Certification: A State-by-State Analysis 2000* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information, 2000), p. 10.

6. Robert P. Strauss, "Who Gets Hired to Teach? The Case of Pennsylvania," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999), 105.

7. Feistritzer and Chester, *Alternative Teacher Certification,* p. 9.

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ers hired in Pennsylvania in each of the past several years, only 1,300 were newly certified. There's a vast "reserve pool" of teachers in America today. This also means that changing preparation programs today will not transform the teacher workforce tomorrow.[8]

There are shortages in certain specialties, to be sure. Math, science, foreign languages, and special ed face shortfalls in many places. High-poverty schools often encounter difficulty hiring enough good teachers. And turnover is rapid. It is estimated that one-third of all new teachers leave the field within five years, a rate that rises to half in high-poverty schools.[9] This would not necessarily be cause for concern if those who stayed were the ablest and most effective, but there's mounting evidence that the teachers who leave are the most promising. A recent study of college graduates found that novice teachers who scored in the top quartile on college entrance exams were almost twice as likely to exit the field as those who scored lower.[10]

Many people assume that paltry pay causes the attrition. And it's true that teacher salaries in the United States lag behind wages in some other careers. The average pay for a twenty-two to twenty-eight-year-old teacher with a bachelor's degree was $21,792 in 1999–2000, while pay for a forty-four to fifty-year-old teacher with a master's degree averaged $43,313.[11] But these averages mask wide variations. In Riverdale, New Jersey, for example, salaries start at $32,140 and peak at $56,415, while in

8. C. Emily Feistritzer, "The Truth Behind the 'Teacher Shortage,' " *Wall Street Journal*, January 28, 1998.

9. National Association of State Boards of Education Study Group on Teacher Development, Supply, and Demand, *The Numbers Game: Ensuring Quantity and Quality in the Teaching Workforce* (Alexandria, Va.: National Association of State Boards of Education, October 1998), p. 23.

10. Ulrich Boser, "A Picture of the Teacher Pipeline: Baccalaureate and Beyond," *Quality Counts 2000—an Education Week/Pew Charitable Trusts Report on Education in the 50 States,* January 13, 2000, p. 17.

11. Lynn Olson, "Sweetening the Pot: Policymakers Offer Enticements but Rarely Target Their Efforts." Ibid., p. 30.

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nearby Mahwah, salaries start at $28,482 and top out at $85,075.[12]

The top pay in many places isn't bad, especially for a 180-day workyear. (Most Americans work about 240 days.) Within a given district, however, salaries are based almost entirely on seniority and academic degrees completed. Former New Jersey governor Thomas Kean has noted that "it's the only profession I know where you don't get a penny more for being good at what you do."[13] We should look forward to the day when great teachers, teachers in scarce fields, and teachers who shoulder difficult challenges are paid six-figure salaries. But this is not apt to happen so long as mediocre practitioners and superb instructors are harnessed to uniform pay scales.

Although it's surely true that meager starting salaries pose a barrier to attracting able people into teaching and holding them there, the training sequence, certification process, and school system personnel practices also bear much of the blame. They levy opportunity costs that deter talented individuals—young, middle-aged, and old—from even trying public school teaching and impose procedures and rules that strike many promising would-be teachers as irrelevant if not ridiculous. They also create wrong incentives for just about everyone up and down the line.

Two Solutions

In crafting solutions to the problems outlined above, policymakers may choose between two basic approaches, briefly sketched in this section and then elaborated below.

One, which can fairly be termed the "conventional wisdom" of the teaching field itself, is most prominently associated with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF),

12. Neil H. Reisner, "Pay Varies Widely Among Districts," in a special quality of life report by the *Record* staff, *Bergen Record*, December 14, 1995 (http://www.bergen.com/ed/95/salaries.htm).

13. David Glovin and John Mooney, "An Advancing Class: Many Teachers Making $70,000." Ibid.

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led by Stanford education professor Linda Darling-Hammond. It is, essentially, a regulatory strategy that seeks to restrict entry into the classroom and that relies heavily on greater inputs, uniform practices, and more peer judgments as sources of quality control.

The other, which I'll term the *commonsense approach,* was set forth in the April 1999 manifesto *The Teachers We Need and How to Get More of Them*, issued by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation on behalf of several dozen governors, state education chiefs, prominent scholars and analysts, and veteran practitioners. It was elaborated in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, a research volume published in July 1999. It is, essentially, a *deregulatory* strategy that opens entry into classrooms and, for quality control, depends primarily on students' learning as evidence of their teachers' effectiveness.

Why do we need such an alternative? Because the regulatory strategy is fatally flawed. In fact, some shortcomings of the present teaching force are themselves caused or worsened by regulatory policies that rely on state bureaucracies and ed school professors for quality control. Hence the need to try something very different: unbar the doors into U.S. classrooms while holding every school accountable for its students' performance. Instead of mandating a list of university courses and degrees, examine future teachers on their subject knowledge and classroom prowess. Allow principals and their school teams to hire the teachers they need (and replace those who don't work out). Focus relentlessly on whether students are learning. Let anyone teach who demonstrates the capacity to produce the desired results and reward them accordingly.

This path to teacher quality is modeled on the approach that almost every successful modern enterprise has adopted to boost its performance and productivity: set high standards for the results to be achieved, identify clear indicators of progress toward those results, and be flexible and decentralized about the means for reaching them. Other organizations have recognized that regulating inputs and processes is counterproductive. There is little reason to believe that it will work better when addressing the teacher quality problem. It certainly hasn't in the past.

The alternative outlined here is also the way that most other professions work. Consider college professors or members of the clergy. They don't rely on government regulation to control entry. They rely on outstanding education, demonstrated performance, and the quality control afforded by the marketplace.

At the end of the day, what I am urging is open-mindedness, experimentation, and empiricism. Nobody today is certain how best to solve the teacher quality-and-quantity problems. It would be a mistake to put all our eggs in any one policy basket. The country, in fact, should try *both* these approaches—and others yet to be devised. It's premature to lock ourselves into any single system for boosting teacher quality. We don't yet know enough.

The Romance of Regulation

As we have seen, the dominant theory of quality control for U.S. teachers relies on state regulation of entry into the profession. This approach has led to a cadre of people half drowned in pedagogy but not necessarily drenched in content. Indeed, the inability of today's licensure system to ensure that teachers can stay afloat in the subjects they teach is one of its gravest failings—and suggests an antiknowledge bias in the field that is scarcely compatible with attracting and retaining the best and brightest. Amazingly, state certification does not always insist on deep college-level study of the subjects to be taught, nor does it employ rigorous exams to verify the adequacy of a teacher's knowledge of his field. Most state-mandated tests of teachers' subject knowledge are so rudimentary that they can be passed by anyone with a decent high school education. "Why should prospective teachers go to college if this is all they need to know?" ask the authors of a recent study of licensing tests published by the Education Trust.[14]

Exacerbating the problem of weak subject mastery is the lamentable fact that teachers often find themselves assigned to courses

14. Ruth Mitchell and Patte Barth, "How Teacher Licensing Tests Fall Short," in *Not Good Enough: A Content Analysis of Teacher Licensing Exams,* spring 1999 issue of *Thinking K-16*, published by the Education Trust.

outside their own fields of expertise as cost-saving measures or administrative convenience or because of instructor shortages in advanced subjects such as math and science. "Foreign education ministers who visit me are just stumped when I try to explain this practice," notes Education secretary Richard Riley. "Their translators simply have no words to describe it."[15]

It appears, for example, that more than half of U.S. history teachers did not major—or even minor—in history itself.[16] More than half of the youngsters studying physics in American schools have teachers with neither majors nor minors in physics.[17] (Is it any wonder that U.S. high school seniors trail the world when it comes to *their* knowledge of physics?) More troubling still, children attending school in poor and urban areas are least likely to find themselves in classrooms with teachers who engaged in deep study of their subjects. Since most teachers merely follow the rules that their states set for certification, these shortcomings in the preparation of our teaching force must be laid at the feet of the regulators, not the teachers.

Yet states are now tightening the regulatory vise, making it even harder to enter their public school classrooms by piling on new requirements for certification. Many are following the lead of California, which requires a five-year preparation sequence.

On the advice of high-profile groups such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, states are hiking their admissions criteria for training programs and insisting that these programs be accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). That organization is currently revising its own standards to make accredited programs

15. Richard W. Riley, U.S. secretary of education, "New Challenges, a New Resolve: Moving American Education into the 21st Century," Sixth Annual State of American Education Speech, Long Beach, Calif., February 16, 1999.

16. Richard M. Ingersoll, "The Problem of Underqualified Teachers in American Secondary Schools," *Educational Researcher*, March 1999, cited in Tyce Palmaffy, "Measuring the Teacher Quality Problem," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999), 25.

17. Ibid.

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longer, more demanding, and more focused on avant-garde education ideas and contemporary social concerns.

Recent news that the Education Testing Service will align its widely used Praxis teacher tests to NCATE's standards is the latest in the effort by teacher organizations to monopolize control over entry into the classroom, restricting it to a single, heavily regulated path through ed schools that are pressed to become ever more similar and to produce ever more uniform products. The profession's chosen solutions to the teacher quality problem will further centralize and standardize the certification process, curbing diversity in the sources and pathways followed by teachers and throwing more barriers in front of able people who would like to try teaching if only it weren't so hard to make one's way through the door.

Shortcomings of the Regulatory Strategy

The regulatory strategy has failed even at its most basic task of screening out ill-prepared candidates. Although some states have exit exams (from their university-based training programs) that appraise the skills, knowledge, and competence of fledgling teachers, in many others "quality control" occurs only on initial entry into the training program, where requirements are notoriously low. In a state with no exit exam, completing the prescribed courses and earning the requisite degree are all that's needed to get a teaching license.

State regulation also values the wrong things. Researchers have struggled to identify the key traits that distinguish good teachers from bad. Insofar as there are links between teacher characteristics and classroom effectiveness, the strongest of these involve verbal ability (and, in some fields, subject matter knowledge). This has been known since the famed Coleman Report of 1966, when teacher scores on a verbal test were the only school "input" found to have a positive relationship to student achievement.[18] Recent

18. Christopher S. Jencks, "The Coleman Report and the Conventional Wisdom," in Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *On Equality of Educational Opportunity* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 101.

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studies in Texas and Alabama have confirmed the tie between teacher verbal facility and pupil achievement.[19] Such evidence suggests that recruiting smarter and better-educated people into teaching will do more to improve school results than requiring more or different preservice training.

Yet outstanding candidates are often deterred by the hurdles that the regulatory strategy erects. Burdensome certification requirements deflect eager individuals who might make fine teachers but are put off by the cost of completing a conventional preparation program. One college senior writes, "What discourages us most are the restrictive paths to the classroom and the poor reputation of schools of education—and as a result, of teaching itself. . . . It is the certification process, then, and not a lack of interest, that steers us away from teaching."[20] The best and brightest of today's young Americans have bountiful career options; if the costs of becoming a teacher are too high, they will do something else.

The most insidious hurdles involve lengthy training in pedagogy. Although some policymakers and parents view "certified" teachers as synonymous with qualified teachers, being certified generally means little more than having endured state-approved training at a school of education. Yet there's little evidence that this leads to effective teaching.

Telling evidence can be found in studies comparing teachers who were trained and licensed through traditional programs with teachers who bypassed these programs. Alternative certification streamlines the classroom entry of a growing number of prospective teachers in some states. Such programs normally require a bachelor's degree, passage of a competency test, and an intensive

19. Ronald F. Ferguson, "Can Schools Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap?" in Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, eds., *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1998). Ronald F. Ferguson and Helen F. Ladd, "How and Why Money Matters: An Analysis of Alabama Schools," in *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance Based Reform in Education* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1996).

20. Elizabeth Greenspan, "No Thanks," *Teacher Magazine*, April 1999.

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(but compressed) regimen of specialized preparation, often undertaken while on the job. Studies of alternative certification find that students of such teachers perform at least as well as pupils of conventionally licensed teachers.[21]

The conventional wisdom within the field holds that traditional training programs would be more effective if only they were lengthened or required to become accredited. Yet research does not support this claim, either. Studies comparing graduates of accredited and nonaccredited programs find little difference between them.[22] Nor has research found graduates of five-year teacher training programs to be any more effective in the classroom than the alumni/ae of four-year programs.[23]

We also see much evidence that traditional training programs are not a prerequisite for good teaching, hence ought not enjoy monopoly control over classroom entry. Where personnel decisions have been deregulated, schools rush to hire well-educated persons whether or not they possess standard certification. In New Jersey, the first state to implement alternative certification, roughly 20 percent of all teachers now enter the field via that route.[24]

Private schools, which are free to hire anyone they like and which have a strong market-driven incentive to engage the best instructors they can, hire a large proportion of unlicensed teachers;

21. Stephen D. Goebel, Karl Ronacher, and Kathryn S. Sanchez, *An Evaluation of HISD's Alternative Certification Program of the Academic Year: 1988–1989* (Houston: Houston Independent School District Department of Research and Evaluation, 1989), ERIC Document No. 322103. Susan Barnes, James Salmon, and William Wale, "Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March 1989, ERIC Document No. 307316. Michael Kwiatkowski, "Debating Alternative Teacher Certification: A Trial by Achievement," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, p. 228.

22. Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky, "Teacher Training and Licensure: A Layman's Guide," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, p. 46.

23. Ballou and Podgursky, "Teacher Training and Licensure," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, p. 49.

24. Leo Klagholz, *Growing Better Teachers in the Garden State: New Jersey's "Alternate Route" to Teacher Certification* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000), p. 17.

65 percent of teachers at secular private secondary schools are unlicensed.[25] Such teachers are more likely to have graduated from selective colleges and universities than the certified teachers hired by public schools.

Teaching versus Medicine

Those who assert that a licensure system based on preservice professional training in a college of education is key to producing good teachers often make a medical analogy: You wouldn't trust an unlicensed brain surgeon to open your skull, so why trust an unlicensed teacher to teach your kid? That formulation is seductive but wrong. It postulates that teaching, like doctoring, rests on a solid foundation of specialized professional knowledge that is scientifically buttressed by reliable, replicable research. In medical school, doctors acquire—and are tested on—this body of scientifically robust knowledge and methods. Unfortunately, this is not the case in education.

As the late Albert Shanker, longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers, wrote in 1996, "Many of the attributes that characterize a profession are not hallmarks of today's teaching profession." He continued, "To be considered a true profession, an occupation must have a distinct body of knowledge—acknowledged by practitioner and consumer alike—that undergirds the profession and forms the basis of delivering high-quality services to clients."[26] But the knowledge base that colleges of education seek to impart is uneven, incomplete, highly disputed, and vulnerable to ideological and interest-group manipulation. This lack of grounding of teaching methods in solid research fosters the faddism that lurks in most colleges of education. We should not be surprised that there is no reliable link between their coursework and their graduates' eventual prowess in the classroom.

25. Ballou and Podgursky, "Teacher Training and Licensure," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, p. 50.

26. Albert Shanker, "Quality Assurance: What Must Be Done to Strengthen the Teaching Profession," *Phi Delta Kappan,* November 1996.

Without a solid body of basic knowledge, the regulatory approach has no foundation on which to rest. So it turns instead to fashionable opinions of the day within the field. For example, NCATE, the major accrediting body for ed schools, embraces the subject matter standards of the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Yet these organizations support highly disputed classroom practices of dubious value for children, such as "whole language" reading in the primary grades, early use of calculators in math class, and the downplaying of basic computational skills. If these are the academic foundations on which accreditation rests, attempts to raise the quality of ed schools by obliging all of them to become accredited could have the perverse effect of forcing all teacher training to adopt the same misguided approaches.

The problem with the regulatory strategy goes beyond its enchantment with pedagogy. As in any field, the regulations inevitably focus on inputs rather than results: on courses taken, requirements met, time spent, tests passed, credentials acquired, and activities engaged in, rather than actual evidence of classroom effectiveness, particularly as gauged by student learning. Yet such input measures are sorely inexact approximations of how good a teacher one will be. Indeed, decades of research into the connection between teachers' input qualities and their eventual effectiveness in actual classrooms (as gauged by pupil learning gains) yield few linkages. Even the aforementioned connection between verbal ability and subject knowledge, on the one hand, and effective teaching, on the other, is not robust. Taken as a whole, today's regulations concentrate on inputs that have scant bearing on classroom success. Hence "reforms" that would change the type and amount of inputs needed for certification will only limit access to teaching for no good reason.

Other Approaches

Would a different kind of regulation work better, one that relies, say, on expert judgments rather than paper credentials? Peer review of teacher performance has become popular in recent years.

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Instead of input measures, it assumes that good teaching is best detected via observation by other practitioners. Thus the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has designed an elaborate method for appraising teacher performance and certifying outstanding instructors. This process is costly and time-intensive. It can lead to sizable rewards, such as the $30,000 bonus that California governor Gray Davis has recommended for NBPTS-certified teachers. Yet today we have no idea whether teachers vetted by NBPTS are in fact the best teachers as judged by how much and how well their pupils learn. Here as elsewhere, peer review consists mainly of judging quality by observing processes, that is, appraising a teacher's skill in using conventional (and popular) classroom practices.

Another approach favored by prominent education groups as a way of linking licensure requirements more closely to performance is to develop "teacher standards" that spell out what good teachers should know and be able to do. This sounds promising, yet most such "standards" turn out to be empty slogans. "Teachers organize and manage a social structure in the classroom that enables students to be active participants in literate communities," reads one standard proffered by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). It is hard to imagine that a "standard" so woolly could ever be of use as a licensing tool, much less a predictor of classroom prowess. How could a state bureaucrat tell which candidates for certification had met it and which had not?

NCATE's accreditation standards are not very different. "Candidates . . . use the comprehensive nature of students' physical, mental, and social well-being to create opportunities for student development and practice of skills that contribute to good health," reads one. Such standards often specify that good teachers understand some important concept, such as "how children grow and develop." Absent a solid research base for most of what is "known" by teacher educators, however, it is not clear what the correct answer is. The weakness of these standards is self-evident, yet there has been no real effort to demonstrate that they are valid gauges of teacher effectiveness.

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We would be better off to acknowledge that nobody can systematically measure the elusive qualities that good teachers have. Teaching is a complicated art and there are many ways to be good at it. (As a profession, in fact, it's more like university teaching or ministering to a congregation than it is like law or medicine.) Teachers with very different teaching styles and approaches can be equally effective.

Despite the inability of the regulatory approach to assure good teaching, a redoubling of regulatory zeal remains the field's preferred solution to the quality problem. The idea that more—and more homogeneous—training is the key has innate appeal for states seeking to do something. Peer review sounds terrific, the unions love it, and it has the added virtue of shifting the burden of difficult personnel decisions from state policymakers to the profession itself. That shift is even more profound in states that cede all power over licensure and certification to "independent professional standards boards," another favorite union device for gaining control over entry into teaching and one that is now spreading from state to state.

Regulation is contagious. Thus a number of governors and legislators have clambered onto this bandwagon. But it isn't likely to work. We certainly cannot be sure that it will work. It's premature and imprudent to clamp this approach onto all fifty states, hence the need to experiment with other strategies.

A Commonsense Alternative

Instead of using degrees earned, standards met, or the opinions of other teachers as indexes of quality, we should evaluate teachers based on the only measure that really matters: whether their pupils are learning. Although good teachers do many other worthwhile things besides add to student learning—they help other teachers, for example, serve as moral role models, work with parents, and so on—nothing they do is as important as academic achievement. The more of it they produce, the greater will be society's admiration for them and the more open-handed will be the attitude of policymakers and taxpayers regarding their compensation.

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Gauging the student learning that individual teachers produce is no pipe dream. Careful statistical analysis can identify the gains that students make during a school year and then estimate the effects of individual teachers on their progress. This ''value-added'' technique is precise and its results are statistically robust. Used today in several states and many school districts, it allows principals, policymakers, taxpayers, and parents to see for themselves how much individual teachers are helping students to learn.[27]

Judging teachers by the results they produce is the core of the commonsense strategy. The rest is straightforward: states should allow individual public schools to employ teachers as they see fit and then hold those schools to account for their results.

Since good teachers can be found in many places, prepared in many ways, and channeled into schools via many pathways, states should scrap nearly all the hoops and hurdles that discourage good candidates from entering the classroom. Deregulating teaching in this way will not only expand the pool but also raise its quality. The role of the state should be to ensure that teachers do no harm. All other key personnel decisions should be devolved to the school itself. In return for this autonomy, schools should be held accountable for producing results. (Monitoring those results is another state responsibility.)

Such an approach recognizes that there is no ''one best system'' for preparing and licensing good teachers. This argues against mandating any single path into the profession. Education schools certainly ought not to control the only route, especially considering how many teachers report that the best place to learn their craft is on the job in the company of other good teachers.

Rather than buttressing an orthodoxy that does not work, the

27. Organizing an education system on the basis of student achievement requires better measures of student achievement than most states have today (in particular, annual assessments of students in every grade), though a number of jurisdictions are moving in that direction. Implementing this ''commonsense alternative'' will mean more such movement. We also recognize, of course, that student test scores can never be a full or perfect measure of teacher effectiveness; teachers add many valuable things to students that cannot be captured by any test.

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commonsense approach embraces pluralism. In a deregulated environment, good teacher education programs will thrive and prosper. Those that do a poor job will not, once they lose the protection that the regulatory cartel confers. Principals and their school teams will decide whether to hire teachers who have been trained in certain pedagogical methods and theories. They will do so if they see proof that those methods are effective and those theories lead to student achievement.

The popularity of such programs as Teach for America, which places liberal arts graduates without formal education coursework in public school classrooms in poor rural communities and inner cities, indicates that the prospect of teaching without first being obliged to spend years in pedagogical study appeals to some of our brightest college graduates. More than three thousand people annually apply for five hundred Teach for America slots. Since 1994, several thousand veterans of the armed forces have also transited from the military to K–12 classrooms through the Troops to Teachers program.

Several dozen states today have alternative certification programs designed to recruit and train liberal arts graduates and people who have been following other career paths. In most jurisdictions, however, these yield small numbers of teachers. In Ohio, the Internship Certificate Program has produced a grand total of one certified teacher since its 1990 inception–and even that miniscule rip in the regulatory fabric will be sewn tight if Ohio goes ahead and creates an "independent" teacher standards board.[28] In other states, however, alternative paths have begun to draw significant numbers of talented and enthusiastic individuals toward the classroom. Teachers who possess alternative certification are more likely to have bachelor's degrees in math and science, both fields with chronic shortages. They are more apt to be members of minority groups.[29] As an added bonus, alternative cer-

28. C. Emily Feistritzer and David T. Chester, *Alternative Teacher Certification: A State-by-State Analysis 2000* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information, 2000), p. 303.

29. Jianping Shen, "Has the Alternative Certification Policy Materialized Its Promise? A Comparison Between Traditionally and Alternatively Certified Teach-

tification teachers also have lower attrition.[30] Yet the regulatory strategy would shut down such programs or force them to mimic conventional education programs.

Not All Regulations Are Evil

Trading accountability for autonomy does not mean sloughing off every single regulation. Every child should be able to count on having a teacher with a solid general education, one who possesses deep subject area knowledge and has no record of misbehavior. The state has an obligation to ensure that all its teachers meet this minimal standard. Thus states should perform background checks. To boost the likelihood that those who teach our children are themselves well educated, states could reasonably insist that teaching candidates have at least a bachelor's degree in some academic subject.

States should also ensure subject matter competence. Although knowing one's subject isn't the only important quality for effective teaching, it is surely a prerequisite. There are two ways to do this: requiring teachers either to major in the subjects that they teach or to pass challenging tests in those subjects. Neither is faultless as a means of assuring that teachers possess the requisite knowledge and will be good at delivering it. But either strategy beats today's widespread disregard of subject matter mastery.

Power to the Principals

For principals and school teams to shape their own membership in such a way as to shoulder accountability for school results, they must not only be free to select from a wide range of candidates but must also have the flexibility to compensate staff members

ers in Public Schools," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 19, no. 3 (1997): 276–83. Klagholz, *Growing Better Teachers in the Garden State*.

30. Michael Kwiatkowski, "Debating Alternative Teacher Certification: A Trial by Achievement," in *Better Teachers, Better Schools*, p. 228. Ellen Schech, director, Alternate Route Program, New Jersey Board of Education, in "No Thanks," *Teacher Magazine*, April 1999. Klagholz, *Growing Better Teachers in the Garden State*.

according to marketplace conditions (and individual performance), and they must be able to remove those who do not produce satisfactory results. Everyone who has studied effective schools attests to the importance of a cohesive team that shares a common vision, and almost everyone who has studied current teacher personnel systems has witnessed the danger of tying the school team's hands when it comes to deciding who will join (or remain in) it.[31] The only way to help effective teams to form is to allow them to choose their own members.

That means flexible pay, too. Common sense argues that teachers of subjects in short supply should be paid more than those in overstocked fields, that teachers working in hard-to-staff schools should earn more than those in schools with hundreds of applicants, and that outstanding teachers should be paid more than mediocre ones. Yet today the typical public school salary schedule (and teachers' union contract) allows for none of these commonsensical practices. In only twelve states can teacher pay vary at all based on performance or marketplace conditions.[32]

As for the occasional incompetent teacher, the more freedom a school has in initial hiring, the more flexibility it needs with respect to retention. That's common sense, too. Some people will be hired who don't work out, at least not as part of a particular school's team, and the school should not be burdened with them. Yet today most public school teachers are awarded permanent job tenure

31. The importance of the power to remove teachers is emphasized by the most mainstream research in the field. Gordon Cawelti, former executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, concludes in a recent study of what makes schools effective: "A school seeking a turnaround in student performance must seek out teachers who want to work in such an environment. A school must also be able to remove teachers who are unwilling to commit the energy and dedication needed to make sure that a productive and challenging education is provided to all children who attend. This policy issue must not be overlooked. Without committed teachers, you are unlikely to raise student achievement significantly." Gordon Cawelti, *Portraits of Six Benchmark Schools: Diverse Approaches to Improving Student Achievement* (Arlington, Va.: Educational Research Service, 1999), pp. 64–65.

32. Chester E. Finn Jr., Marci Kanstoroom, and Michael J. Petrilli, *The Quest for Better Teachers: Grading the States* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, November 1999), p. 45.

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after just a few years of service; thereafter, they are almost never dismissed (or involuntarily relocated) for ineffectiveness. Although teachers should of course be safeguarded from abusive and capricious treatment at the hands of administrators, they cannot be protected from losing their jobs for cause. Union contracts often have "seniority" provisions that allow veteran teachers to transfer into a school regardless of their instructional prowess, the school's actual needs, or their impact on the school team. Such policies will also need to be changed so that principals can be empowered and made accountable.

School-level executives and veteran teachers are in the best position to know who teaches well and who teaches badly in their school. They have access to far more significant information than state licensing boards and government agencies. They should be authorized (and, if need be, trained) to appraise each teacher's singular package of strengths and weaknesses rather than having distant bureaucracies decide who will be on their team. Once hired, teachers should be evaluated based on the only measure that ultimately matters: whether their pupils are learning.

Conclusion

For too long, policymakers have tackled the teacher quality problem by tightening regulation and expanding pedagogical requirements, even though this approach shrinks the pool of candidates while having scant effect on their quality. Forty years of experience suggest that this strategy has not worked. It probably cannot work. It's reminiscent of the heavy drinker who proposes to cure his hangover by imbibing more of the strong spirits that gave him the headache in the first place. As with the alcoholic, a "hair of the dog that bit you" approach to teacher quality reform can be counted on to make the problem worse. Indeed, it has already compounded today's dual crisis of quality and quantity and weakened the impulse to turn teaching into a true profession. True professions, after all, don't hide behind government regulations, tenure laws, and uniform pay scales.

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States that want to persist with this approach will naturally do so. Based on today's evidence, one would have to say that most states will continue in this mode. But I suggest that others try something different. I predict that states that reduce barriers to entry will find not only that their applicant pool is larger but also that it includes many more talented candidates. The key is to shun excessive and ill-conceived regulations and focus instead on student outcomes.

Flexibility in return for results is the approach that many states are now employing for schools themselves. After a series of none-too-successful attempts in the 1980s to boost academic achievement by clamping additional regulations on the public schools—three years of high school science instead of two, so many minutes a day of homework, new reading curricula, and so on—America is now experimenting with freedom, pluralism, and competition for its schools, all joined to accountability for their results.

In this spirit, many jurisdictions have scrapped the ''one best system'' view of education reform; instead, they encourage schools to be different, encourage individual schools to make their own decisions about schedule, instructional style, and curricular focus, and empower families to select the schools that best suit their children, all the while monitoring academic performance and making that information public. The country's two thousand (and counting) charter schools are perhaps the most vivid example of our willingness to solve the school-quality problem via deregulation. This approach trusts principals to run schools worth attending and parents to be astute consumers in the education marketplace, although it also uses statewide academic standards and tests to audit and report on actual achievement and to keep the consumers well informed.

A similar approach should be tried for teacher quality. Yet today the conventional wisdom pushes the other way: pressing for greater uniformity and micromanagement of inputs and processes instead of concentrating on results.

Still, there are welcome signs of receptivity to change. In his February 1999 State of American Education speech, for example,

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Secretary Riley proclaimed, ‘‘We must make sweeping efforts to make teaching a first-class profession. And, then, we must hold schools accountable for results.’’[33] He later added, ‘‘What else can we do? We can create rigorous alternative paths to give many more Americans the opportunity to become a teacher.’’[34] I agree.

33. Richard W. Riley, ‘‘New Challenges, A New Resolve.’’
34. Ibid.

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