

Book Review

*A Good Teacher in Every Classroom:  
Preparing the Highly Qualified Teachers Our Children Deserve*  
Edited by Linda Darling-Hammond & Joan Baratz-Snowden  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005

**Reviewed by Vicki Kubler LaBoskey**  
*Mills College*

The book, *A Good Teacher in Every Classroom: Preparing the Highly Qualified Teachers Our Children Deserve*, is one of several texts derived from the work of the Committee on Teacher Education, sponsored by The National Academy of Education. It is edited by Linda Darling-Hammond, one of the chairs, and Joan Baratz-Snowden, one of the members of the committee, which included teacher educators, other scholars and researchers, and practicing teachers. The group conducted reviews of research in children's learning, assessment, teaching, and other relevant areas. Drawing on those results and the expertise of the members and representatives of some cooperating universities, they compiled a set of recommendations for teacher preparation and support most likely to result in "a good teacher in every classroom."

The focus and aim of this particular volume is to outline "the core concepts and strategies that should inform initial teacher education," wherever it is delivered, and "policies needed to assure that all teachers gain access to this knowledge" (p. x). This combination, I believe, is a real strength of the piece. By putting together these two aspects of the teacher education process too seldom coupled—program and policy—they make clear the necessary interconnection and the importance of considering and addressing both together.

In essence, the intent of the text is to compile the knowledge

---

*Vicki Kubler LaBoskey is a Professor in the School of Education at Mills College, Oakland, California.*

resulting from previous educational research and practice in a user-friendly way, which can then serve as the basis for real transformation and development in the field. The committee wished to identify and summarize “what teachers need to know and do to ensure that all their students learn” (p. *x*). In one sense, then, the content of the book is not new; they are not reporting on the outcomes of recent, self-conducted, empirical research. Nonetheless, they are making a novel contribution to the field—one they feel will help to more firmly establish education as a true profession, something they believe is long overdue.

On several occasions they make reference to the Flexner report (Flexner & Pritchett, 1910) “that critiqued the uneven quality of medical education” (p. *ix*) and resulted in the identification of the key elements in the preparation of doctors and a common medical school curriculum. The authors point out that in subsequent years other professions followed suit, with the exception of education. They argue that the field has been moving in that direction over the last twenty years with research into various aspects of the knowledge base for teachers. They aim, in this and other documents produced by the committee, to move the process forward by taking the critical next step of identifying and codifying the core concepts and central pedagogies that should form the basis of every teacher education program. In addition, they suggest what policies are needed to ensure universal access to this necessary professional preparation.

As such, the book has a broad potential audience. It should, in fact, be of interest to most any reader with care for or influence on the goal of having a well prepared and supported teacher in every classroom, which, hopefully, is just about everyone. The folks I would most like to see reading this book are policymakers, administrators, and community members. One strength of the piece with regard to this group is that it consolidates in one place and in very accessible language the theoretical and empirical grounds for the committee’s recommendations. A big part of our challenge in education has been to convey in simple enough terms for non-educators to understand what is and must be a very complex process. Not only do the authors in this volume do this, they also include clear and direct bullet point summaries. These latter, being exactly what many legislators most prefer and request, are especially likely to be consulted and utilized in substantive ways. Although, to fully understand the meaning of the recommendations, one still needs to read the accompanying material, and more, I believe the “quick summaries” could have beneficial influence as stand-alone pieces.

There is always danger, of course, in such simplifications—enhanced possibilities for misrepresentation and misapplication. Again, in this book, this potential pitfall is minimized, in most cases, by the inclusion

of background information. But I am particularly concerned about one area in this regard; it has to do with their recommendation for tracking the retention records for various teacher education programs. They argue that better programs will have more graduates who enter and remain in the profession and for longer periods. Though I certainly agree with the premise, I do not believe they give enough emphasis to the need to clearly identify *why* teachers leave. Since it is very possible that policymakers will only attend to the bullet points and take them quite literally, and since we know that educational systems prefer simple and easily comparable assessment data, it is quite likely that head counts alone will be used. The real danger here is that in the current educational climate, such a form of measurement could actually work against the other proposals the committee is making. In such times, when high-stakes standardized tests and scripted curricula are predominating in many settings, teachers prepared to teach in the ways they are advocating might actually be more likely to leave the field than those without this sophisticated foundation. This should be recognized, stressed, and accommodated for by the authors. Indeed, without that, I would hesitate to recommend the piece to those most in need of it, policymakers.

The other important audience for this text is, of course, teacher educators. In one sense, it can serve as a form of validation for work already in progress. In my case, for instance, finding a high degree of consistency between the program of which I am a part and everything the committee proposes and supports, I can see using the document (especially given the strengths I previously highlighted) to explain our work to others outside of the program, to garner support for what we are doing, and to inform our next steps. In contexts where this is not the case, it could serve those folks well as guide, incentive, and leverage for appropriate transformation and evaluation. At a time when teacher education is often under fire, the essential nature of this book is just what those of us in the field need to both inform and justify our work. Too often, when concern about educational performance at any level escalates, the response is to narrow the range of decision-making through more specific prescription. This work makes clear that the preparation of highly qualified teachers demands instead the professionalization of teacher education.