



NINE WAYS TO HOLD TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS ACCOUNTABLE FOR EQUITY



Equity, in the teacher-education world, took a back seat from 1998 to 2018. Instead, that period was teacher preparation’s “era of accountability.”

So write NEPC Fellow [Marilyn Cochran-Smith](#) (Boston College) and [Emilie Mitescu Reagan](#) (Claremont Graduate University) in an article published earlier this year in *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, a peer-reviewed journal. In the article, Cochran-Smith and Reagan review 19 major reports about evaluating teacher preparation programs that were published during that period.

Missing or sidelined from most?

Equity.

When equity did receive some attention, it was too often “thin equity”—i.e., notions of equity that “failed to account for the multiple, complex in- and out-of-school factors in addition to teacher quality that perpetuate inequity for students, families, and minoritized communities,” Cochran-Smith and Reagan write.

The reviewed reports focused on designating the specific metrics used to evaluate programs, cataloguing and classifying existing approaches to evaluating teacher preparation, and tailoring evaluation systems to the uses and needs of various stakeholders. While important and compatible with equity-related goals, these factors are not, unto themselves, sufficient to comprise a fair and thorough evaluation system for teacher prep, the authors suggest.

Cochran-Smith and Reagan did identify four publications that foregrounded equity, one of

which was actually a book published by Teachers College Press. The other three were reports published or co-published by NEPC: *Review of Proposed 2015 Federal Teacher Preparation Regulations*; *Seven Trends to Reform U.S. Teacher Education, and the Need to Address Systemic Injustices*; and *Holding Teacher Preparation Accountable: A Review of Claims and Evidence*.

A great deal of attention during these years was paid to how the merits or worth of teacher education programs should be evaluated. Cochran-Smith and Reagan therefore end their article with recommendations for developing teacher preparation evaluations that focus on “strong equity.” These recommendations include:

1. Make equity an explicit goal and desired outcome of the evaluation.
2. Equity should be infused into the entire evaluation process, from the definition of validity to the stakeholders who establish the evaluation’s goals.
3. Evaluation metrics and tools should emphasize ongoing self-evaluation and improvement related to equity-focused goals.
4. Evaluations should take structural systems and barriers into account, including poverty, racism, and social policies.
5. Acknowledge that problems and inequities are due not just to the actions of specific individuals, but that they are also caused by systemic forces.
6. A diversity of types of stakeholders (e.g., teacher educators, professional organizations, and families served by schools) should be involved in every aspect of a program evaluation. These stakeholders should include those impacted most by the root causes of inequities (e.g., minoritized communities).
7. Acknowledge and address power imbalances that occur during the evaluation process.
8. Evaluation processes should support teacher preparation programs’ capacity for ongoing self-study and improvement rather than simply imposing accountability from outside or above.
9. As appropriate, adopt methods of evaluation designed with equity in mind (e.g., participatory evaluation and empowerment evaluation).

The authors acknowledge that such recommended “strong equity”-focused evaluations of teacher preparation programs do not currently exist in the United States. As such, they conclude their article with the following: “We believe that equity issues are so important in teacher preparation at this time, that it is essential to make strong equity the center of models and systems for evaluating and improving teacher preparation.”

NEPC Resources on Teacher Education,
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