Chapter 2
Responsibility at the Core of Public Education: Students, Teachers, and the Curriculum

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Education is the story that society tells about itself. What we teach our children is who we are, or who we want to be.

(Murray 2008, p. 39)

Education in the United States is at yet another crossroad in its history as an institution of American democracy (Fuhrman and Lazerson 2006; also see, e.g., Gándara and Contreras 2009; Mitchell et al. 2011; Timar and Maxwell-Jolly 2012; Valencia 2002). As "a nation accountable" (U.S. Department of Education 2008), we must confront unmet demands for the equalization of opportunity (U.S. Department of Education 2013) and make good on an "education debt" (Ladson-Billings 2006) owed to generations of underserved families. Educational quality, made available equitably, is an unfulfilled promise of the mass compulsory education advocated by Horace Mann in the early nineteenth century (Vallance 1973–1974). Throughout the nation and especially in the education system, this generation faces large gaps between who we are and who we want to be.

So, it is not surprising that our nation's political and economic elites contend that, "We remain a nation at risk" (U.S. Department of Education 2008, p. 1), or that our government follows a long history of making educational prescriptions to cure our social ills and fend off external threats to our political or economic security (Tyack 1991). As most recently articulated by the Co-Chairs of The Equity and Excellence Commission:

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> Our leaders decry but tolerate disparities in student outcomes that are not only unfair, but socially and economically dangerous…. The data the commission reviewed make clear that officials, administrators and constituents at all levels of government must attack our education failings as a moral and economic imperative. (U.S. Department of Education 2013, p. 9)

With each generation, practically since the nation was founded, schools have been the target of reform (e.g., Kaestle 1983; Tyack and Cuban 1995; U.S. Department of Education 2013). Rather than emphasize reform, however, we want to inform—redirecting attention to the problems of education on principles of duty and responsibility at education's core, where teaching and learning engage the curriculum. We agree that disparities have existed and continue to characterize the condition of education. Indeed, there are failings with serious social, political, and economic consequences. But we wish to focus on the practice of education rather than its management and governance arrangements. Practice is the living construction of educational reality, and this occurs where teachers and students enact their roles in the curriculum.

Root of Responsibility

Public education bears a substantial responsibility for America's children and youth. This societal institution makes the single greatest claim on children's time and attention during waking hours, sometimes more than their families (Christensen et al. 2011). And families reinforce school effects through their role in early literacy development, homework support, and other educational interactions and activities outside of school hours. Public education is the largest segment of state and local government expenditure and employment (Raffel 2007). This vast system has sprung from state constitutional mandates and is exemplified by such constitutional clauses as: "promotion of intellectual, scientific, moral, and agricultural improvement" (Constitution of the State of California, Article IX, Section 1) and

> to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality in their dealings; sincerity, good humor, and all social affections, and generous sentiments among the people. (Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter V, Section II)

Also, we are to recognize that "religion, morality, and knowledge [are] necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind" (North Carolina State Constitution, Article IX, Section 1), requiring "suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools" (Constitution of the State of Texas, Article VII, Section 1).

Since public schools have their origins in the service of both society and the state, they are ready target institutions called upon to respond to new and emerging societal needs and concerns (Graham 2005). School reforms are popular solutions to societal problems: "Americans have thought [and continue to think] it easier to instruct the young than to coerce the adult" (Tyack and Cuban 1995, p. 2). A course

for the future is set with new prescriptions for the schools hoping to awaken a new national character by providing the needed training for our nation's youth (see Mitchell and Mitchell 2003). However, schools are both shaped by, and give form to, local communities on a daily basis, intending to contribute to future adult political, economic, and social participation and well-being. This makes successful education a nested challenge. The nation's young people are to emerge from schools designed to be insulated and nurturing so that a new social, political, and economic order can be created (e.g., Walzer 1983). At the same time, children and youth are surrounded by and must grow and develop in a world of active people outside of the school (sometimes involving their own families) who are coping with dissatisfaction, stress, threat, or other trouble (e.g., Grubb and Lazerson 1988). The practice of education is situated in a place that is part sanctuary from the day-to-day world and part crucible for tempering new community ideals and relationships. This is where competent and responsible practitioners strive to establish and maintain relationships of mutual trust and enthusiasm in schools and classrooms, on the one hand, and sustainable engagement with the strains of new and changing learning demands for and aspirations of the children and youth who come to them each day, on the other.

Education's Core

Behind the churn of policy talk, and central to the constitutional mandates creating mass compulsory schooling, lies the fundamental core of education: teachers, students, and the curriculum (see Turner 1997, p. 234). To understand educators' professional responsibilities we must focus on these three core elements and their interrelationships. Figure 2.1 depicts four aspects of these core elements: (a) it illustrates the conceptual elements of this fundamental core (the three labeled circles), (b) it indicates that they are interrelated and mutually constructed through practice, activity, and agency (the double-headed arrows between each pair of circles), and (c) depicts their placement in the institution of formal schooling (the labeled funnel containing the circles and double-headed arrows), and (d) it notes that schooling is a significant but limited period in the life of the students (single-headed arrow pointing to the "End of Student Passage") (Turner 1997; also see Ball and Forzani 2011; Laden 2013; Walzer 1983). It is this more or less societally insulated funnel through which our children and youth are compelled to pass as they grow and develop into adult members of their communities. And, this is where the personal and collective responsibility for and of public education is taken up, where practice is enacted.

The enactment of educational practice creates routines of action forming the sensible organization of schooling. Established practice, though not easily changed, is always subject to reconsideration. At every crossroad intersecting the demands (or impending demise) of the family, the political community, or the economy, there is an impulse to continue our "tinkering toward utopia" (Tyack and Cuban 1995), a willingness to penetrate the insulation between schools and the rest of society, a

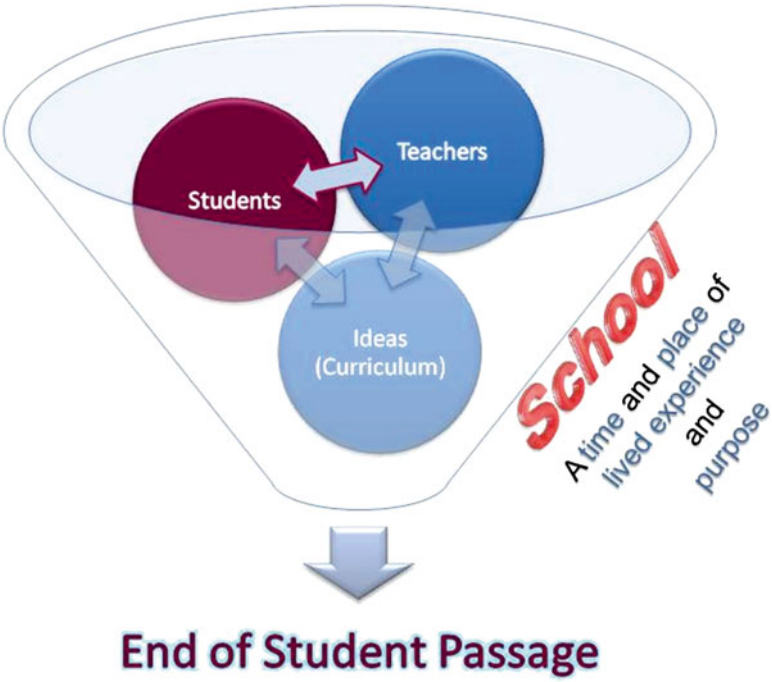

Fig. 2.1 Conceptual diagram of the elements and construction of educational practice through formal schooling

desire to intervene in the relationships among teachers, students, and the curriculum for the betterment of society. Time and again, we must ask: Do we have the right people doing the right things with the right curriculum, so our children are trained and nurtured in the right ways to keep themselves and our nation on the right or best course?

This last compound question needs to be looked at carefully, however, before its answers can be provided because its contents are contested, unstable, and abstract. It goes without saying that "the right or best course" is a point of contention that, if ever truly agreed upon, may nonetheless shift from time to time and appear differently from one place to the next. Moreover, whether viewed at a national distance or at the locally enacted level, schools are never exactly the same place, doing the same thing in the same way with the same people, as they were the last time we looked to them for assistance. The funnel metaphor reminds us that schools attempt to direct a fluid and dynamic social system. They are responsible for and must be responsive to generational, personnel, and ideological changes when and where they occur. Beyond the school, populations, economies, technologies, and other circumstances change—changes to which schools are called upon to respond.

Even when done by "the right people" in "the right ways," those who are responsible for the work of schooling are not able to uniformly produce ideal national

citizens able to fit into any part of the engine of society anywhere in the country.[1] In the remainder of this chapter, we seek not to arrive at answers to questions of educational reform and improvement, but to continue looking carefully at the component parts of the schools' institutional core. We do so by reviewing the character of various problems plaguing the core and the ongoing challenges demanding the schools' considered attention. We employ the conceptual framing provided in Fig. 2.1, an architecture that reflects the nested nature of working toward success with the complicated mission assignments to the public schools.

Mission and Responsibilities of Mass Compulsory Education

Before addressing the details pertaining to responsibility for and of students, teachers, and curriculum, and the interactions among them, let us review what brings all of America's young people to school—the purposes for which public education was established and which animate its practice. The United States developed a system of mass compulsory education for the purpose of training up future generations of responsible citizens who are equally capable of meaningful participation in the democratic and civic life of their communities, able to contribute to society, and enabled to pursue economic self-sufficiency and meaningful work in the current economy (e.g., Hochschild and Scovronick 2003). This is to be done by attending to both training in and development of specific skills, habits, and knowledge systems, as well as an awakening or inculcating elements of character and value systems consistent with the political, economic, and social life of the communities, states, and nation in which we live (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka 1954; Tyack and Cuban 1995). Moreover, this compulsory education should help children adjust to their environment in anticipation of assuming their full responsibilities as loyal citizens (also see Grubb and Lazerson 1988; Kaestle 1983; Mitchell 2000; Plyler v. Doe 1982).

Following the *Brown* (1954) decision, federal involvement in shaping public school policy has steadily and dramatically increased, which has resulted in a revision of the constitutional purposes of mass compulsory education (e.g., see Mitchell 2011). National security threats, typically expressed as matters of defense or commerce, have animated both the substance and rhetoric of federal legislation intended to affect the content and conduct of public education (also see Cross 2004). At present, and with an unprecedented reach and focus, the national government demands that America's schools provide an education that would have its students lead in the

[1] If we were to stay with this mechanical production metaphor, we would also question whether reform demands come faster than the timescale on which educational production takes place. That is, if reforms come more frequently than every 12 years, especially if they are to affect the entire system, then reform will create damaging rather rectifying disruption and make for incoherency and instability instead of laying a foundation for the students, teachers, and curriculum. Reform will be at odds with rather than a spur for responsible educational practice.

global competition for the highest test scores (e.g., Meyer and Benavot 2013; Schmidt 2012; U.S. Department of Education 2013) and, more urgently, greater economic vitality in a global marketplace (e.g., Shipps 2000; U.S. Department of Education 2013).

Regardless of the specific emphases among the purposes of schooling, the central design of public education has not shifted. The state has assumed the responsibility for the training, development, and character of the next generation of citizens. It does so by compelling families to send their children to school and engage a curriculum with a certificated teacher to carry out this responsibility. And here is where we explore the successes, failures, and continuing challenges of practice in mass compulsory public education.

The Field of Education

As with any assessment of performance and possibility, the sense of success and failure, as well as the challenges ahead, is best gotten by understanding the contexts faced. The educational enterprise in America is an enormous system of social, political, and economic institutions. There are more than "ten thousand democracies" embodied in governing K-12 education in the United States (see Berkman and Plutzer 2005). There are thousands more governing agencies in private, religious, and charter schools. All of the country's multiple millions of school-age children and youth are compelled to attend and their families are directly affected by this compulsion. The care and training of these young people is concentrated in the hands of millions of schoolteachers, support staff, and administrators employed by 16,990 school districts among the fifty-plus states and territories (Gray et al. 2013). Nearly all of the certificated employees (i.e., the state credentialed or licensed teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, librarians, etc.) received some or all of their certification training in state and regionally accredited professional schools among the nation's colleges and universities.

In addition to all of the people involved in the day-to-day activity of education, facilities and materiel are required and provided. Though invisible to many and taken for granted by most Americans, except when something goes wrong, these are interests and influences on education beyond its core, and we cannot neglect to identify them. Each school and classroom is built, maintained, and provided for by a host of businesses that contract with states and their school districts.[2] These businesses include building contractors, computer manufacturers, food and dining supply vendors, office and school supply distributors, sports and playground equipment manu-

[2] We note here, but do not cover in detail, that too often, especially in urban school districts, facilities are often run down and lacking vital materials, textbooks, and technology (e.g., see Oakes 2003). Moreover, new schools built to serve low-income families, which tend be overrepresented by students of color, may be sited in comparatively (or absolutely) unhealthful locations (e.g., see Cohen 2010).

facturers, standardized test and textbook publishers, and uniform suppliers, and other vendors too numerous to list. Moreover, many of the involved and interested parties are represented by unions, professional associations, trade associations, or other organizations that promote the welfare of their membership (individual or corporate) and advocate for their interests and benefit in dealings with both public and private entities (e.g., governments, insurers, service providers, etc.).[3] All of this complexity remains, however, an elaboration on the primary structure and responsibility of the educational enterprise. The core of educational practice remains a matter of bringing students together with teachers in order to take on a curriculum.

The Actors and Activities of Schooling

We start with the students circle within the funnel. We then work our way around to teachers and the curriculum, stopping to address the dyadic interactions along the way. Finally, we address the fully interdependent triad. Learning is mutually constructed through teacher practice, enacted curriculum, and student agency. This is where the aims of education are realized.

Students

The students for whom this enterprise is responsible are a diverse and numerous lot. As of 2010–2011, nearly 50 million students attend public elementary and secondary schools in the United States (see Snyder and Dillow 2013, Tables 44–47, 51, 53, pp. 85–88, 92, 94): just over half (52.4 %) were White, and about a quarter were Hispanic/Latino (23.1 %). About one in every six students was African American (16.0 %) and one in 20 were Asian/Pacific Islander, with just over 1 in a hundred (1.1 %) American Indian/Native Alaskan. About one of every eight students (13.0 %) had an identified disability and Individualized Education Program (IEP).[4]

[3] We must note that some states are not unionized, many paraprofessionals are not represented (i.e., they neither have their own unions nor are part of larger classified employees unions), and many small vendors are not organized.

[4] Though the additional number of students is comparatively small, this percentage excludes students with disabilities who have specific accommodations that do not require IEPs but, instead, are provided for through "Section 504 Plans" (in reference to provisions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, P.L. 93–112) or "ADA Plans" (in reference to provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, P.L. 101–336). Of course, there are some students for whom no accommodation plans of any sort exist, the reasons for this are quite variable and the number is unknown. Further, we note that, currently, the following disability categories are employed to characterize the one or more conditions or impairments that have lead to students having IEPs: Autism, Deaf-blindness, Deafness, Developmental delay, Emotional disturbance, Hearing impairment, Intellectual disability, Multiple disabilities, Orthopedic impairment, Other health impairment, Specific learning disability, Speech or language impairment, Traumatic brain injury, Visual impairment, including blindness.

Just over one in twelve students (6.7 %) were identified for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE).[5] Nearly half the student population (48.1 %) were from poor households and identified as eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP, the program that provides free or reduced price school meals to children from low-income households).[6] Nearly one in every ten students (9.8 %) was an English learner (the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves). These national figures mask very large regional variations. For example, in the most populous state, California, the majority are Hispanic/Latino (51.4 %), only about a quarter are White (26.6 %), followed by Asians/Pacific Islander (11.7 %), African American (6.7 %), and 0.7 % American Indian/Native Alaskan. This state has fewer students with disabilities (10.7 %) and more identified for GATE (8.3 %). California's NSLP participation is a bit higher than the national average, but their population of English learners is nearly three times the national average (28.9 %).[7]

Among local districts, diversity profiles are often even more dramatically different. Students in some districts are virtually all of one ethnic group while in others they may have a mix of students closely matching the national profile. At individual school sites students tend to come from households that are living close to the school, and these neighborhoods tend to be far more homogeneous than the larger geographic regions in which they are located. Hence, in the day-to-day practice of education students are geographically "funneled" together in widely varying mixes of economic, ethnoracial, linguistic, legal, and capability distinctions.

Capability Differences and Achievement Gaps

Student capability or disability is a professionally important attribute of students. Public school educators are responsible for providing a free and appropriate education for students across their entire range of social, emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor functioning.[8] As noted earlier, students identified for an IEP have impairments that interact with the school environment in a way that handicaps

[5] The GATE statistics are for the year 2006–2007, not 2010–2011. And, as is true with all of the other statistics, there is substantial state-to-state variation in the proportion of students identified for GATE.

[6] To be eligible, students must come from households that are at 185 % of the poverty level or lower. Free lunch qualification is at 130 % of the poverty level or lower.

[7] For further comparison (drawing from the same data sources), the state with the lowest enrollment, Wyoming, is predominantly White (81.0 %), followed by Hispanic/Latino (12.3 %), American Indian/Native Alaskan (3.3 %), African American (1.1 %), and Asian/Pacific Islander (0.9 %)—remaining 1.4 % "two or more races"; 17.1 % were students with disabilities; 2.2 % were identified for GATE; 37.1 % were NSLP participants; and 2.9 % were English learners.

[8] As mentioned in note 4, an enforceable responsibility to accommodate students with disabilities was first codified in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but the statutory right guaranteeing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) followed in 1975 with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94–142), which is now better known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 108–446; 20 USC §1400 et seq., 2004).

(unnecessarily disadvantages) them without specific forms of individualized attention or responsive adjustment to the school and classroom environments.[9] The variation in students' cognitive functioning gets most of special education attention and resources. In addition to students with IEPs, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students qualify for special services. These programmatic categories capture a small part, the extremes, of the substantial variation in capabilities among students (e.g., Potter et al. 2013; Waldfogel 2012).[10] Even after the extremes are removed, however, children enter school with important achievement-relevant differences in functioning that do not qualify as impairments or developmental delays and thus need substantial variation in access to teachers and curricula. Sadly, as is well documented, all too frequently and quickly these differences manifest themselves in the well-known "achievement gaps" between children from families of different socioeconomic classes (advantage to the wealthy), ethnoracial groups (advantage to Asian and White children), countries of origin (advantage to those from English-speaking countries), and so on (e.g., Farkas 2003; Reardon et al. 2012; Timar and Maxwell-Jolly 2012).[11] Some students are better fit to the school before instruction begins; their advantages are large; and these advantages rarely diminish throughout their schooling. Much of recent policy and program reform efforts have been aimed at overcoming inequalities in achievement—too often, however, by emphasizing accountability for test score attainment without adequate differentiation in student instruction.

Nearly Universal Access to Schooling

The students enrolled in today's schools are a population of unprecedented diversity and inclusion. This is due as much to the long, slow march of educational reform as it is to shifting demographics. Beginning with federal Reconstruction following the Civil War, which was supposed to tear down the barriers of race and class to create a newfound equality of persons as citizens nearly 150 years ago, glacially slow progress toward full access to public schooling was made up to and through World War II (Reese 2000; Tyack and Cuban 1995; Snyder 1993). Dramatic change began with the *Brown* (1954) decision. During the three decades of federal lawsuits following and building upon its declaration of the end of state-sanctioned school

[9] To be clear, it is the responsibility of the school to adjust its environment and practices in light of the child, not the responsibility of the child to adjust to an insensitively constructed environment or rigid educational practice.

[10] Under IDEA, districts have an affirmative "child find" duty to identify and provide services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who have an educationally relevant disability. So, on the first day of school, some students already have been identified for special educational programming.

[11] Merry (2013) documented between-country differences in child capabilities at school entry for the United States and Canada, and these contrasting country-to-country intake characteristics were able to account for all of the much ballyhooed differences in international test performance between the two countries' 15-year-olds as measured by PISA.

segregation, new classes of plaintiffs successfully demanded an end to nearly all bases for exclusion,[12] though subsequent federal legislation and executive enforcement were required to codify and secure these legal victories (e.g., see Mitchell and Mitchell 2011, 2012). America's schools now provide effectively universal access to K-12 public education to all children regardless of race, sex, creed, color, language, national origin, alienage, or disability, free of charge. For specific student groups, by policy but certainly not always or uniformly in practice, this access should be accompanied by an appropriate (for English language learners and students with disabilities) or compensatory (for economically disadvantaged students) education.

Access Does Not Mean Success

With access successfully granted, there is currently very little disparity in K-12 enrollment for children and youth 5–17 years of age (see Snyder and Dillow 2013, Table 6, p. 24; also, Snyder 1993, Table 2, p. 14); in 1960, 82.6 % of all 16–17-year-olds were enrolled in school; by 2010 this number had risen to 96.1 % (see National Center for Education Statistics n.d.a). However, dropping out of high school continues and is sharply different among ethnoracial groups (e.g., Ream et al. 2012; but see Oropesa and Landale 2009). Differences in education among adults remain appreciable despite graduation rate improvements since *Brown*. In 1960, 43.2 % of white Americans, age 25 or older, had graduated from high school; by 2010, this percentage more than doubled, to 92.1 %. During the same period of time, the percentage of African Americans, aged 25 years or older, who graduated increased fourfold from 21.7 % in 1960 to 84.6 % in 2010. In 1970, 32.1 % of Hispanic Americans, 25 years or older had graduated from high school whereas by 2010 this had grown to 62.9 % (see Snyder and Dillow 2013, Table 8, p. 27; U.S. Census Bureau 2012, Table 229, p.151). Not surprisingly, the groups of students at the bottom of the achievement gaps are also the ones more likely to dropout.

Segregation and Discrimination Persist

Outcomes are a function of opportunity, not just ability, but increased access has not been accompanied by equal opportunity across student groups. Largely due to differences across school district boundary lines, America's schools are more segregated than they have been in close to 50 years (e.g., see Bishoff 2008; Fiel 2013;

[12] We mark the end of this period with the *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) decision requiring that public schools enroll and provide an identically free education to children of undocumented immigrants. That is, there is no reason, not even citizenship status, for denying children residing in the United States a free public education. (Residency is key, however, because children sent to the United States for an education may be charged tuition and, without renewed visa status, denied re-enrollment after 1 year).

Mitchell et al. 2010). And, when compounded by within-school segregation (e.g., Conger 2005; Mitchell and Mitchell 2005), students often find themselves sorted into very different opportunity structures for reasons unrelated to their educational needs or demonstrated competencies (Boger and Orfield 2005). Schools are sufficiently segregated and unequal in their capacity to serve student needs that one nationally prominent educator asks: "If we are unwilling to fully implement *Brown* [desegregate the schools], can we at least have *Plessy* [separate but equal schools]?" (Ladson-Billings 2007, p. 1279). Persistently and in violation of the principles of simple justice, the students for whom schools are responsible are neither provided for nor treated equally, and students are certainly not served equitably (i.e., in proportion to need). Students ready and willing to take responsibility for their own learning continue to be presented with less than adequate opportunities to learn on bases unrelated to their motivations or capabilities.

Teachers

The participants in the educational enterprise who have the greatest responsibility for and with students are teachers. They are with students every day for nearly all of the school day. Teachers are "the key arbiters of instructional content and practice" (Ogawa et al. 2003, p. 173). In addition to the instructor role, teachers serve as classroom managers, disciplinary interventionists, and student socialization agents (Brophy 1996; also see Phillippo and Stone 2013). Consequently, and appropriately, teachers are the most influential people students encounter in school (e.g., Clotfelter et al. 2006; Little and Bartlett 2010).[13]

The teaching workforce in the United States is composed of 3,385,200 public school teachers. In contrast with the students they teach, the vast majority of teachers are White (81.9 %); only 7.8 % are Hispanic/Latino, 6.8 % are African American, and 1.8 % are Asian/Pacific Islander. Even in California, where the student body is nearly three fourths non-White, teachers are overwhelmingly White (70.5 %), with only 17.3 % Hispanic/Latino, 3.2 % African American, and 6.1 % Asian/Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.b; also see Little and Bartlett 2010; Villegas et al. 2012). Largely, this is because the demographic characteristics of the teacher population are not uniform across birth cohorts (just as with student populations younger generations have lower proportions identified as White than older generations) and because education and licensure qualifications for the office of teacher, which are not evenly distributed across ethnoracial groups, serve as barriers to occupational entry.

Due to long established ideas about who should occupy the office of classroom teacher (e.g., see Grubb and Lazerson 1988; Little and Bartlett 2010), as well as the

[13] Peer influences are not to be ignored, of course, but the school legitimately controls which teachers are present to influence student outcomes, while it is quite limited as to how far it can go to control which students are present.

voluntary nature of the occupation, gender selection effects follow. Unlike the students, who have a nearly balanced male-female gender ratio, teachers are far more likely to be women (76.3 %), especially at the elementary level (89.3 %) (Goldring et al. 2013, Table 2, p. 8). There is no systematic data collection on teachers with disabilities and, with the possible exception of deaf and hard of hearing teachers working in Deaf Education, there is good reason to believe that persons with disabilities are dramatically underrepresented in the occupation of teaching (Hauk 2009). There has been research on the family backgrounds of teachers before going to college, which indicates that many teachers grew up in low-income households during their school years—not all teachers were well off as children—and many spoke a language other than English growing up (Zumwalt and Craig 2008). In socioeconomic terms, current teachers are well above the poverty line (their salaries are solidly at the middle-income level) and few can identify with the dilemmas of English learners (both educational requirements and teacher certification examinations screen out adults who have not attained the occupational standard for English fluency).

Occupational selection standards for teaching encourage similarities among teachers on relevant qualifications (Little and Bartlett 2010). Nearly all teachers have at least a bachelor's degree (96.2 %),[14] and almost half have a master's degree as well (47.7 %), but only about one in nine have education beyond the master's degree (8.7 %) (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.c). Just over 3 %, either on their own initiative or encouraged by state or district incentives, have attained National Board Certification (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards n.d.). Following the mandate for a "highly qualified teacher" in every classroom under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), roughly 13 % of public school teachers still did not hold regular certification from the state in which they taught, though less than 4 % had either no certification or certification that required completion of a credential program (see Keigher 2010, Table 2, pp. 7–8).

Upgraded Personnel Qualifications

The present teaching population has been subject to the highest demand on preservice qualification in the nation's history. They are also subjected to more in-service training activities (though many of these are seen by teachers as not very helpful). It is increasingly clear that alternative routes to certification risk subverting some of the monitoring and supervision assurances provided by university-based programs (Little and Bartlett 2010). In large part, contemporary training procedures evolved following the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983), which lamented a "rising tide of mediocrity" and spurred teacher education programs to raise their admissions standards, particularly where they created postbaccalaureate credential programs (Zumwalt and Craig 2008). Selectivity

[14] Today, only career and technical education (CTE) teachers have clear pathways to certificated teaching without a bachelor's degree.

for preservice teacher candidates has become sufficiently tight that earlier disparaging claims about prospective teachers are no longer accurate (Zumwalt and Craig 2008). In fact, by 2005, teachers pursuing single-subject (secondary-level) credentials had higher GPAs than fellow students in the same majors who did not go into teaching (Zumwalt and Craig 2008).

As it has become more widely used, teacher testing for certification provides another screening device that, in principle, is another quality check on teacher qualifications (Little and Bartlett 2010).[15] The first written examinations covered basic skills, content area, and "professional knowledge" (Haertel 1991, p. 3). Subsequent testing has focused on demonstrations of knowledge, skills, and abilities through written reflections referencing artifacts of practice (e.g., Pecheone and Chung 2006). In addition to preservice screening, beginning teachers are frequently given early induction (in-service) training and support through more or less structured mentoring and assessment programs (e.g., Ingersoll and Strong 2011). These programs can help ensure a successful start to new teaching careers.

Though far too many teachers have been in assignments that take them out of their field of training and certification (e.g., Hill 2011; Ingersoll 2013) or are not fully certificated (also see Boyd et al. 2008; LoGerfo et al. 2011), and while the connections between various qualifications and teacher effectiveness continue to be questioned (see Clotfelter et al. 2006), today's selection, screening, and certification standards have attended to various measures of teacher qualifications and raised the quality expected on them.

Connecting Students and Teachers

Learning in the classroom is socially mediated and occurs through complex, didactic interactions between students, their teachers and peers and, as such, is dependent on the social environment and the quality of relationships that exist (Romero in press). As Pianta et al. (2012) argue, "Relationships are a mechanism or medium through which settings engage developmental processes…, perhaps the key mechanism through which classroom experiences add value" (p. 366). As teachers and students interact, interpersonal, not just cognitive, connections are fundamental to the realization of responsible and effective educational practice.

[15] The expansion of teacher testing has a rather ignominious history, however, as one of many devices deployed by Southern states to resist court-mandated desegregation in all its forms. As detailed by Baker (2001), the National Teachers Exam (NTE) was known to have highly differential pass rates for White and Black examinees, and Southern legislators passed laws mandating the NTE in order to keep Black teachers from retaining their employment (i.e., must pass the exam to remain credentialed) and thereby keep from having Black teachers in formerly all-white schools. Angrist and Guryan (2008) document ethnoracial selection effects in more contemporary teacher testing regimes.

Cultural Incongruity and Deficit Thinking

Since classrooms are highly diverse and substantially segregated while teachers are far more homogeneous, opportunities for incongruent culture clashes are manifold. Hence, students and teachers can neither safely assume a common basis for trust nor be certain that they can interpret each other's actions or intentions accurately. Without this common understanding, students are more likely to perceive their teachers as authoritarian, rather than authoritative, when teachers perform their roles as instructors, classroom managers, disciplinary interventionists, and student socialization agents (see Brophy 1996). Similarly, teachers can misinterpret their students' actions and responses as unintelligent, misbehaving, or otherwise without merit and, possibly, deserving of sanction.

Relationship building is more difficult when screening and selection biases result in teachers who have little knowledge about, understanding of, or experience with the circumstances and perspectives of the school community in which they work. In fact, some new teachers find themselves negotiating a seemingly alien culture (Howard 2010). Also, some of these teachers may espouse or unwittingly fall into a mode of "deficit thinking" (Valencia 2010)[16] by which they deflect responsibility from themselves for the outcomes of their inadequate teacher-student relationships and shift blame to the students, their families, their economic and neighborhood circumstances, etc. The challenges of relationship problems and cultural incongruity are most apparent in schools that serve high poverty, high minority communities. In these settings, we find noticeably fewer experienced teachers (Lankford et al. 2002), higher rates of teacher exit and principal turnover (Loeb et al. 2010; Ingersoll 2001), and higher suspension and expulsion rates (Losen and Gillespie 2012). Any serious effort to strengthen professional responsibility in the nation's schools must take these culture clashes seriously.

(Dis)orderly Settings

Teachers take day-to-day responsibility for maintaining order in schools via rules, regulations, and other unwritten norms and behavioral expectations (Jackson 1968). Classroom management, disciplinary intervention, and student socialization together constitute one of the greatest ongoing challenges reported by urban teachers (Milner 2011); instruction is more often on hold, or unduly interrupted, as a consequence. The majority of disciplinary issues start in the classroom (Skiba et al. 2002). These and other struggles to manage the classroom are significant factors in

[16] Kirkland (2010) characterizes the *achievement gap* discourse as functioning in very similar terms: "It seems to blame oppressed groups for their oppression as well as their identities, for suffering and for not being white.… However good- or ill-intentioned the construct of the achievement gap may be, its supposed claims to urgency and its fierce repetition in the national discourse reinforce a particular kind of performance—one tied to promoting Whiteness, one that mischaracterizes the true differential between white and nonwhite students".

teacher success, burnout, and job satisfaction (Emmer et al. 2011). To anticipate a topic discussed below, establishing classroom order through student engagement rather than the manipulation of rewards and incentives is one mark of successful professionalism in the classroom.

Students suffer when classes are disrupted, particularly when this arises out of conflict between a student and teacher, especially when student suspension from the classroom (or school) typically follows.[17] Culture clash disruptions lead to serious inequalities in educational opportunity as shown by the fact that African American students are more likely to be referred to the office for minor and "subjective" offenses such as "disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering" (Skiba et al. 2002, p. 334). Disproportionality is most acute for males, African Americans, and Latinos, who are referred to the office for discipline, and suspended and expelled at much greater rates than their classmates (Skiba et al. 2002; Losen and Gillespie 2012; Wildhagen 2012). This disproportionality, termed the "discipline gap" (Gregory et al. 2010), persists net of such considerations as socioeconomic status, higher rates of misbehavior, disruption, or more serious conduct (Skiba et al. 2002). As a result, some scholars are asking if the discipline gap and achievement gap are "two sides of the same coin" (Gregory et al. 2010).

Curriculum

Every state has some constitutional provision for education (sampled above), but none articulates a comprehensive framework at this level of policy making. A full conception of curriculum articulates the "aims, view of children, perspective on learning, concept of teaching, conception of knowledge, and beliefs about assessment" that organize and direct the educational enterprise (Schiro 2013, p. xv). Though broad aims and a conception of knowledge relevant to public schooling may appear in state constitutions, these rudiments do not form the ideologies subscribed to by educators or their communities. When it comes to curriculum format and content, educational ideologies are multiple and conflicting. The practice of education taking place in schools relies on curriculum legacies that are the fruits of compromises and shifts in curriculum definition that have occurred over decades (e.g., Kliebard 2004; Schiro 2013; Tyack and Cuban 1995).

Similar to our discussion of students and teachers, we discuss the curriculum around which the educational enterprise is organized in terms of the tension between diversity and standardization. The established "grammar of schooling" is an age-graded curriculum (Tyack and Cuban 1995). What students are asked to learn and do, what teachers are to understand and instruct, is sequenced and advances on an annual basis (i.e., for each year the children age, there is a new grade level for their

[17] A relatively small percentage of teachers are responsible for the bulk of referrals. Students often perceive these teachers as being untrustworthy and do not recognize them as having legitimate authority, which may foster the development of student disaffection, disengagement, and alienation (Gregory and Ripski 2008; Gregory et al. 2010; Emmer et al. 2011).

cohort). Typically, the curriculum begins with basic knowledge, skills, dispositions and deportments, habits, routines and rituals to be learned, and reinforced across a limited range of variously defined subjects (Kliebard 2004). Consistently, the required subjects have included the English language arts (i.e., speaking, reading, and writing, often with spelling emphasized separately), mathematics, social studies (history, government, and so on), and science—schools have always taught more than the 3 R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Physical education and activity, computers and technology, foreign (non-English) languages, sex education and family life, art, music, and vocational arts (career and technical education) have a place in the curriculum. Schools also create and organize opportunities to engage in competitive sports, debate, spelling bees, college bowls, music and arts festivals, agricultural fairs, and other extra-curricula, as well as host student-run community service organizations and interest or hobby clubs. The boundaries of the curriculum readily expand, particularly for adolescent students, to include new ideas and activities for the education of our children and youth. And, though school is typically thought of as a singular location (a particular funnel), its boundaries, too, may be expanded to include museums, symphony halls, seascapes, farms, factories, and other sites for engaging the curriculum.

The Tested Versus the Untested Curriculum

Amid all the expansion, there have been only narrow and inconsistent efforts to create standardized assessment instruments for the contemporary school curriculum. Routinely, progress through the reading and mathematics curricula is assessed, but other subjects remain either untested for long periods of time or completely ignored outside of assessments by individual classroom teachers. This creates a disjuncture between individual classroom and collective school (or larger) educational practices and provides justification for the perception that test-based accountability for achieving curricular ends is a source of educational dysfunction (e.g., see Ravitch 2010). Further, large-scale testing programs typically employ instruments that emphasize basic skills. As Hochschild and Scovronick (2003) observed,

> The most thoughtful reformers insist that curricula be not merely systemic but also substantively rich and focused on learning beyond the basics. They want schools to be responsible for ensuring that students achieve at a high level, with depth of understanding, analytic skill, and the capacity to integrate knowledge…. (p. 92)

And, though the new Common Core State Standards and their assessment systems are supposed to address some of these concerns, they remain limited to English language arts and mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and Council of Chief State School Officers 2010a, b).[18]

[18] At the same time, the curriculum implied by these standards is one that appears to be diminishing the notion of democratic citizenship present in many state constitutions; the NGA and CCSSO state, "a particular standard was included in the document only when the best available evidence indicated that its mastery was essential for college and career readiness in a twenty-first-century, globally competitive society" (2010a, p. 3).

Connecting Teachers and Curriculum

There are at least four kinds of differentiation that depend on the relationship between teachers and the curriculum, and which significantly challenge educational practice. First, and most fundamental, is the distinction between curriculum and instruction. Teachers are responsible for instruction, but they are rarely and only partially responsible for curriculum, even though responsible teaching practice is not independent of curriculum. Not only the "What," but the "How," "When," "Why," and "For Whom" of teaching are idealized in the curriculum, making practice subject to reinterpretation and reevaluation with each reform. Teachers may find themselves taking up sides or otherwise caught in contentious "curriculum wars" (see, e.g., Evans 2004; Loveless 2001; Stotsky 2000). The relationship between the office of teacher and the curriculum can be quite turbulent.

Generalists Versus Specialists

Second, there is the routine differentiation between teachers as curriculum generalists—primary school or multiple-subject credential teachers—versus curriculum specialists—single-subject credential, typically, secondary school teachers. Though this division importantly includes consideration of the developmental needs of the students with whom the teacher works, there are assumptions about the relationship between the teacher and the curriculum that are problematic. The scope, sequence, and coordination of the curriculum affects whether teachers have the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge for the subjects they teach. For example, both domestic and international comparative studies indicate that the middle grades mathematics curriculum of today, one for which both multiple- and single-subject teachers have license to teach, demands levels of subject-specific content and pedagogical knowledge beyond the scope of certification training required of the multiple-subject generalist (Blömeke et al. 2011; Hill and Charalambous 2012; Schmidt 2012). Responsible day-to-day practice under these circumstances is quite challenging.

Curriculum Tracking

Third, there is frequently differential programming or tracking in the curriculum (Oakes 2005). The distinguishing features may be sensitive to student needs, at least initially, but tracking inevitably produces status hierarchies. Sometimes, the distinctive status is apparent to all, for example, the "honors" track; other times, the distinctions are submerged by special services labels, for example the GATE class or the self-contained classroom (also see Mitchell and Mitchell 2005; Oakes 2003). Either way, curriculum differentiation not only raises questions of appropriate teaching assignment—fit between practitioner and practice—but attractiveness of the assignment as well. Responsible practice, administrative as well as teaching, is

confronted with challenges arising from threats to teacher status, as well as political or performance rewards, through assignment by curriculum track. And since teacher collaboration and teacher-to-teacher consultation can be powerful means to promote improved practice (e.g., Roehrig et al. 2007), great care must be taken to avoid invidious distinctions or curricular isolation.

Assessment Versus Testing

Fourth, there is the difference between classroom assessment and standardized testing as the bases for informing instructional practice. As previously noted, the full aims and knowledge systems of the curriculum cannot be fulfilled by "teaching to the [standardized] test," but this behavior is displacing responsible classroom assessment practice in the early grades (e.g., Ogawa et al. 2003). Curriculum standards are studied, locally interpreted, and translated into benchmark assessments intended to predict performance on statewide standardized (accountability) tests. But this exercise is not necessarily articulated with instructional planning and rarely integrated with the untested curriculum. Instead, other subjects receive little or no attention despite their relevance to the grade-to-grade progression of the curriculum or the larger purposes of educating informed, capable, self-sufficient, and loyal citizens.

Moreover, it is too easy to aim low, at the basic content defining minimal proficiency or minimally acceptable growth, even though the greatest learning occurs where advanced concepts remain a regular part of the instructional program (e.g., Bodovski and Farkas 2007). That is, when the assessment element of the curriculum is allowed to dominate the other elements, it not only disrupts the balance of teaching practice, it too readily reorients practice in ways that abdicate responsibility for the full curriculum and its highest aims.

Connecting Students and Curriculum

Finally, coming full circle to the students, we look at their relationship to curriculum. Student learning, motivation, and engagement with the curriculum are a function of interest, perceived value, and relevance (Brophy 2013). For example,

> when students believe that the topics they are dealing with in science have personal relevance and meaning for their lives they are more likely to experience enjoyment and interest from engaging with science content.… Personal meaning and relevance is an important factor in students' enjoying science and focusing their attention to expand their knowledge and understanding. (Ainley and Ainley 2011, p. 11)

This does not mean that the curriculum is best tailored to students' current activities and routine encounters in their daily lives. Students express interest and actively engage in projects that authentically represent contemporary practices and that apply what they are learning in their local settings (Tytler et al. 2011).

Activity Versus Recitation

However, students' experiences with the curriculum are too often irrelevant, uninteresting, or have little meaning to their daily lives. These reasons for disengagement frequently follow from the character of knowledge that defines the curriculum experience. Though students take great pleasure in understanding, they strongly prefer that learning comes through doing or activity rather than recitation or memorization (e.g., Swarat et al. 2012). Unfortunately, the wherewithal to present and sustain meaningful curricular activities is not equal across schools and classrooms. Students in high poverty schools and lower status curricular tracks tend to have fewer books, laboratory equipment, and other materials and facilities for authentic and engaging activities (e.g., Oakes 2003, 2005).

Pacing Versus Learning

In the current standards-based accountability era, school curricula are very tightly specified, including the time and timing appropriate to each topic or standard. This creates tension with student learning because the pace at which the curricula are to be covered, as though they were a series of packages to be delivered, can exceed the rate at which students learn what is being covered. Though uniformity of time and timing is helpful for ensuring that the scope, sequence, and coordination of the curricula are preserved, especially for mobile students who may transfer from class to class or from one school to another, the pace must be appropriate if no child is to be left behind. This is especially important since there is a strong tendency for curricula in the United States to superficially cover an extensive range rather than promote the development of deep understanding of complex subjects (e.g., Schmidt 2012). That is, if staying on pace comes at the cost of depth and complexity then little of value is learned.

Rigorous Versus Tested

Another reason that student engagement may suffer comes from the conception of rigor. If rigor means knowing sophisticated and meaningful content well then students are likely to benefit. But if rigor means knowing well only what is tested by the standards-based accountability system then interesting, relevant, and exciting curricular opportunities are sure to be lost (e.g., Roehrig et al. 2007).

Students-Teachers-Curriculum Triumvirate

As alluded to in the last paragraph, the analytical distinction of each dyadic interaction among students, teachers, and curriculum fails to emphasize that the triad is jointly determined. Teaching and learning occur in a highly contextualized and

localized social environment of schools and classrooms within neighborhoods and communities. Students' success is a function of their individual cognitions and agency, the curriculum as interpreted and enacted by the teacher with those students and the available materials and facilities, and social context of the classroom. The idea of success or failure depends on the conjoint interactions of students, teachers, and curriculum.

Let us return to the topic of tracking, for example. Low-track classes foreclose access to high-value curriculum not only in the actual classes, such as calculus or physics, but often within like-named courses. Lower track classes are characterized by less challenging curriculum and, very often, by rote instruction (Oakes 2005). Perhaps not surprisingly, discipline is also often an issue in lower track classes, and tolerable behavior is sometimes exchanged for low expectations and demands from teachers (Oakes 2005). In contrast, students in high-track classes are exposed to a higher value curriculum, engage in critical thinking, and experience more choice, higher quality instruction and more positive, trusting relationships with teachers (Oakes 2005). Unfortunately, the students on these tracks are distinguishable. Latino and African American (and especially male) students, English learners, and students from impoverished homes are significantly overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in GATE and Advanced Placement (AP) classes (also see Gándara and Contreras 2009; Losen and Orfield 2002; Skiba et al. 2006; U.S. Department of Education n.d.). Thus, all three elements converge, or conspire, to create teaching and learning conditions that reinforce the status differentiation and separateness that goes with the less than fully responsible educational practice of tracking.

Now, let us provide an example of the "hidden curriculum" and its conjoint interaction with students and teachers. In the case of many urban, low-income schools, there has been a proliferation of zero-tolerance policies, another term for the social and behavioral or citizenship (nonacademic) curriculum. These policies have created an environment that emphasizes security and order over learning and liberty.[19] The presence of police and security officers is common at these schools, and student behavior that in the past may have been handled privately, between educational practitioners and students' families, has become criminalized. The net result is that "children in urban public schools … routinely encounter surveillance and policing more than a rigorous [academic] curriculum and safety net of caring adults" (Winn and Behizadeh 2011, p. 148). Through severe discipline and criminalization, schools have profoundly reinforced "hidden curriculum" tracking, where the actions and expectations of teachers and students differ in ways that lead to inferior educational experiences for the lower track students. The hallmarks of responsible educational practice are almost entirely absent.

[19] In the mid-1980s during the Reagan-Bush presidencies concerns about drugs, violence, and school safety led to calls for zero tolerance policies. During the Clinton administration, these policies became ubiquitous in schools across the nation following the signing of the 1994 Gun Free School Act. Although zero tolerance policies varied by state and locality, mandatory suspensions and expulsions, even for first offenses, grew to cover guns, knives, other real or even look-like weapons, marijuana, alcohol and other drugs, fights, violence, and threats of violence (Skiba and Knesting 2001). As a result, suspensions and expulsion rates have soared.

Summation

The following passage from Suzi Sluyter's letter of resignation—she was a Cambridge, Massachusetts, 25+ years veteran kindergarten teacher—captures the sense of responsible and competent practice we have articulated. This teacher, her students, and the curriculum come together in a tightly interdependent system to pursue the education of schoolchildren. This excerpt from her letter also highlights some of the problems and challenges afflicting the education's core triumvirate today. We let this practitioner have the last words about what it means to have and enact a vision of responsible practice.

> In this disturbing era of testing and data collection in the public schools, I have seen my career transformed into a job that no longer fits my understanding of how children learn and what a teacher ought to do in the classroom to build a healthy, safe, developmentally appropriate environment for learning for each of our children.… I have watched as my job requirements swung away from a focus on the children, their individual learning styles, emotional needs, and their individual families, interests and strengths to a focus on testing, assessing, and scoring young children, thereby ramping up the academic demands and pressures on them.… I have needed to schedule and attend more and more meetings about increasingly extreme behaviors and emotional needs of children in my classroom; I recognize many of these behaviors as children shouting out to the adults in their world, "I can't do this! Look at me! Know me! Help me! See me!"… Each year I have had less and less time to teach the children I love in the way I know best—and in the way child development experts recommend. I reached the place last year where I began to feel I was part of a broken system that was causing damage to those very children I was there to serve. (see Strauss 2014)

This letter captures in poignant detail the contemporary clash between education reform efforts and the professional responsibility of teachers to create relationships, excite student engagement, and tailor their instructional efforts to the social, cultural, and intellectual needs of their students. As readers of this chapter critically appraise the analyses and recommendations found in the chapters that follow, we hope they will keep in mind the complexity of schooling and the fundamental importance of trusting and adaptive relationships for insuring success.

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