NCTAF Meeting on Quality Teacher Preparation:
Assessment of Teacher Preparation Effectiveness
Alverno College, Co-host
Sessions VI and VII —Concurrent and Plenary Sessions
Saturday, October 1, 2005, 9:15 – 10:15 a.m.
and 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON Teaching and America's Future

The Ohio Teacher Quality Partnership

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Preface
NCTAF invited representatives from the Ohio Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) to share their work with us as an example of a P-16 statewide coalition initiated by higher education institutions in the state for the purpose of assessing teacher preparation effectiveness. These institutions, while subscribing to the importance of accountability for teacher preparation programs, wanted to be in the lead in designing a viable and meaningful accountability system. The paper describes the study to be undertaken by the TQP and the issues it is designed to address.

Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Overview[1]

The focus on teacher quality and teacher education has never been more evident in the rhetoric of policymakers. Everyone now understands that teachers make a difference. The unanswered question is how best to ensure that more high quality teachers enter and stay in American classrooms. Because few evidence-based answers exist that shed light on how best to prepare, retain and utilize effective teachers, ideological battle lines are being drawn between traditionalists (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000) who assert the efficacy of current approaches and neoconservative critics (e.g., Kanstoroom and Finn, 1999) who portray an education monopoly that is resistant to quality and is intent on protecting the education *status quo*.

Advocates for traditional approaches contend that current teacher education practices have been improved and are working. Though many would agree with the critics that weaknesses exist in the extant preparation approaches, few would suggest that "their" programs evidence serious problems. For traditionalists, programs could be improved, but they only require tweaking, not restructuring. Pedagogical understandings related to how to teach content and how to assess students' learning needs are requisite for any highly qualified, highly effective teacher. Traditionalists argue that such skills and understandings are being acquired by prospective teachers, but data supporting these assertions are limited.

[1] This overview incorporates sections from Lasley, Siedentop, and Yinger "A systematic Approach to Enhancing Teacher Quality: The Ohio Model", *Journal of Teacher Education* (in press).

Contextualizing the Ohio Research

Ohio Legislation has mandated that by 2007, the state's achievement tests, aligned with Ohio standards, will be analyzed through value added methodologies (VAM). Nonetheless, for several years, a sufficient number of Ohio districts have had their achievement scores analyzed through VAM assessment to enable TQP to begin its observational studies of teacher quality in the fall of 2005. This approach explicitly assumes what many educational researchers assert, namely, that teaching variables outweigh student socioeconomic status in terms of student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The TQP studies examine closely the validity of this assertion.

Until recently, teacher education research of the type undertaken in Ohio has been conducted based largely on the interests of individual researchers or on efforts to examine teaching practices in relationship to extant data bases such as NAEP (see Wenglinsky, 2002). There is, in essence, no shortage of research on teacher education, but there is a paucity of research explicitly connecting how teacher preparation is contributing to student learning.

With the emergence of William Sanders' valued-added modeling (VAM) in the 1990s and the reasonably clear evidence that particular teachers can and do make a positive difference in student learning (Sanders and Rivers, 1996), the stakes and realities of teacher education began to change. Value-added modeling (a growth model) was quickly viewed as a strong alternative to the achievement status model that dominated education policy for a generation. Policymakers grasped the potential significance of Sanders' work as they witnessed that in some instances schools could be low in achievement but high in student growth or, equally troubling, high in achievement but low in growth. They were also intrigued by a measurement technique that claimed to isolate the effects of schools and teachers.

The emergence of VAM research in the 1990s coincidentally paralleled the time in which teacher education began to be defined as a policy problem. Policymakers had for years relied heavily on anecdotal justification for what worked and for what was to be required of teacher education programs. And, though policy-by-anecdote is still clearly evident in many states, the emergence of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and VAM research engendered a new focus on ensuring that higher education institutional policies and practices and state policies and mandates were more firmly focused on connecting teacher performance with student learning. Within educational policy, student achievement (usually narrowly defined as high student test scores) became <u>the</u> key educational issue.

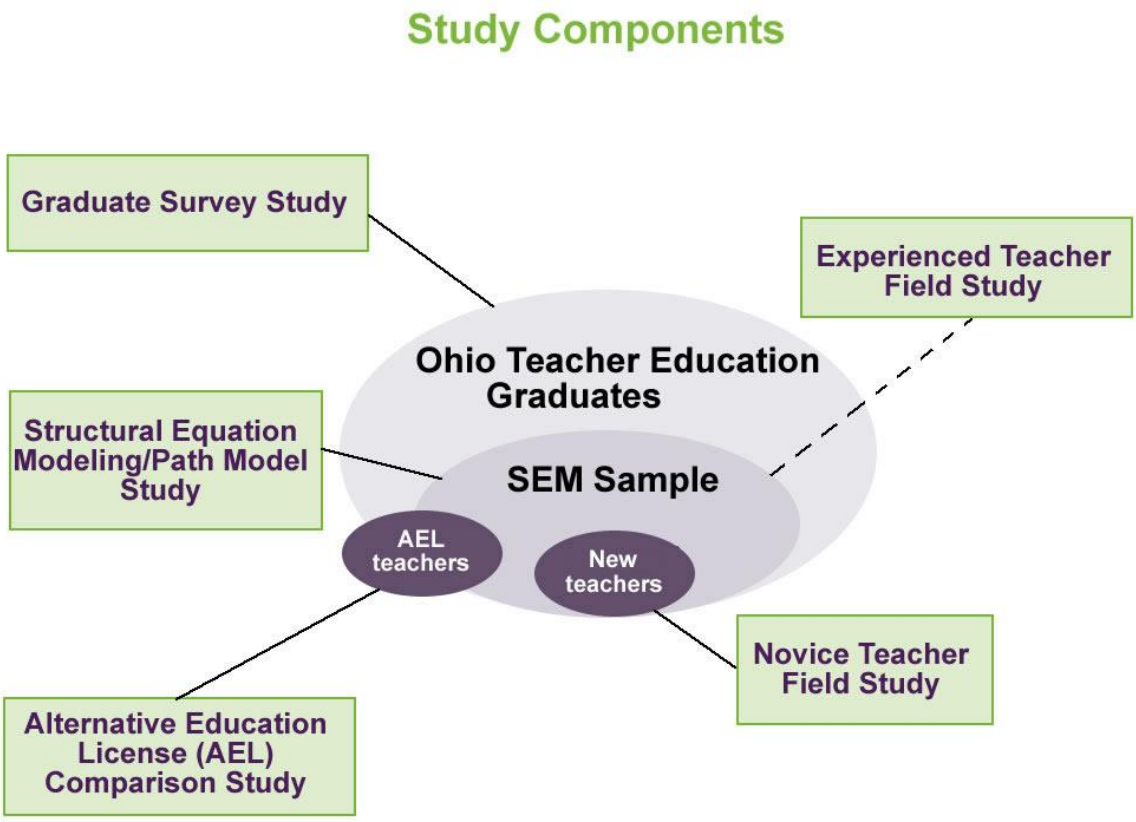
Ohio, like other states, was (in early 2000) in the midst of the policy reform debate stimulated by a perceived statewide "education deficit" problem. Indeed, based on the 2000 census, some projections suggested that Ohio evidenced a 100,000 "degree K-12 deficit" for persons with college degrees (Belcher, 2004). That is, in comparison with other states, Ohio evidenced a shortage of persons with college degrees. Two commissions were convened by Ohio's Governor Taft (the Commission for Student Success and the Commission on Teaching Success), and both focused on how Ohio could create more

educationally enhanced classroom environments. The two commissions came to the same overall conclusion: Teachers make a difference. One of the recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Teaching Success specifically referred to the need to collect better data about the performance of new and practicing teachers in order to inform policy recommendations about teacher preparation.

That recommendation served as a mandate for the Ohio Partnership for Accountability (now referred to as the Ohio Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP)). Fifty of Ohio's colleges and universities joined together with support from the Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio Department of Education and selected private corporations (e.g., Proctor and Gamble) to begin exploring a series of questions around how teacher preparation practices influence student achievement and how experienced teachers add value and foster student achievement and learning within the classroom context.

The Ohio Teacher Quality Partnership

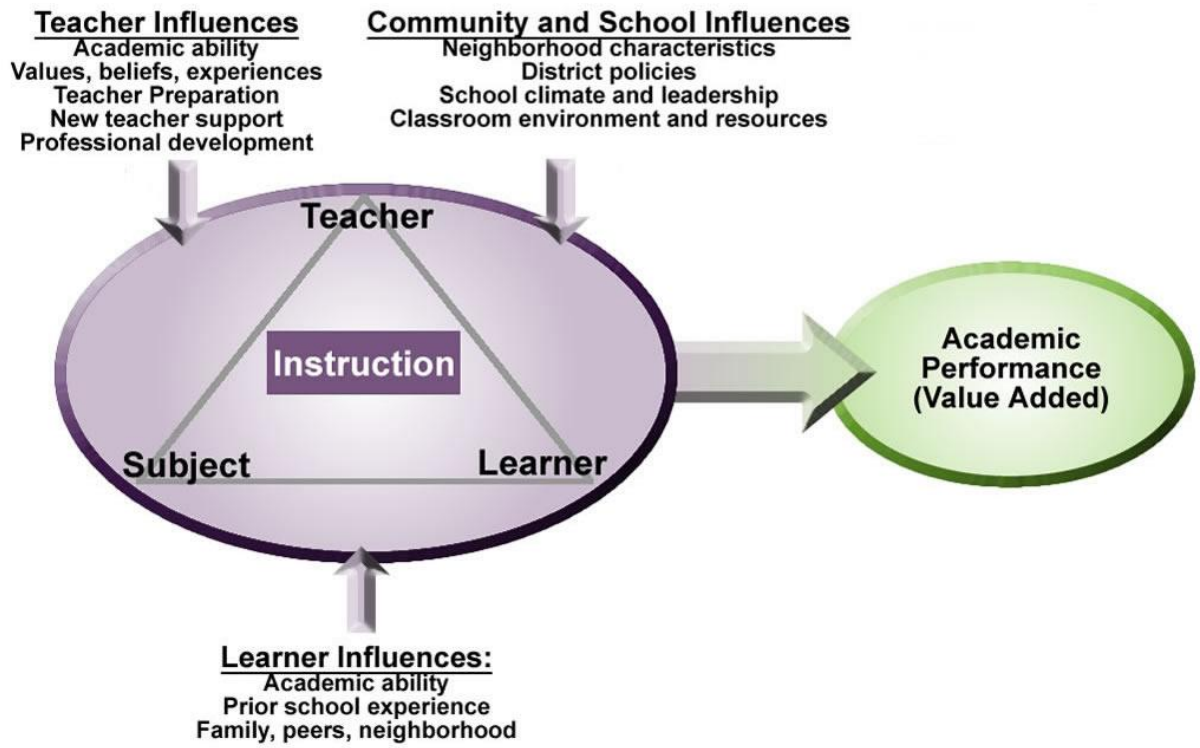
The Ohio Teacher Quality Partnership has embarked upon a series of five inter-related research studies to learn more about the characteristics of effective teachers and their preparation. These studies seek to identify the patterns of teacher performance in both novice and experienced teachers that enhance student achievement at different grade levels, in different subjects, and with different types of students. The following graphic illustrates the relationships among these studies.



The Ohio TQP research has four main aims:

1. To determine and document how variables of teacher attributes, teacher preparation, induction experiences, and professional development relate to P-12 student achievement as measured by value-added modeling (VAM).
2. To identify the salient features of differently configured teacher education programs and to determine how they affect teacher development longitudinally along the continuum of teacher professional learning.
3. To identify how teachers' instructional practice relates to features of teacher preparation programs by assessing novice teacher performance through VAM and to then linking strengths and weaknesses back to the initial preparation programs.
4. To understand the unique elements of effective teaching for experienced teachers who are adding value in terms of student achievement and to compare the value-added effectiveness of teachers licensed through both alternative and traditional pathways.

The conceptual model illustrating the path of the variables influencing instruction and achievement is illustrated below.



Issues Confronting the Researchers

Substantial debate is occurring currently regarding the efficacy of Sanders' Value-Added Modeling. Critics argue, for example, that VAM does not adequately control for student or school characteristics that influence student learning rates. Without such controls it is impossible to accurately isolate the particular contributions of teachers or schools (Olsen, 2004). We agree that VAM has "issues;" and we concur with many of the critics' concerns, including those cited in the recent Rand Corporation analysis ("The Promise and Peril of Using Value-Added Modeling to Measure Teacher Effectiveness," Rand Corporation, 2004) regarding the limits of VAM, especially as it relates to high-stakes decisions about teachers. The goal of TQP is to test the validity of VAM as a tool for better understanding the contexts, practices, and antecedents to effective teaching and learning.

A second issue is whether researchers and policymakers will use the results of the TQP studies as a tool and not a weapon. TQP's goal here is to generate data and information that can be used to enhance Ohio's classroom workforce of professional teachers to positively impact student learning. The *No Child Left Behind* legislation places a demand on states to have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Much of the debate thus far about what highly qualified means revolves around matters related to the credentialing process. Our goal is to shift the focus to producing highly effective instruction. If the TQP research is successful, it will provide clear, in-depth descriptions of both effective teaching in Ohio and of Ohio's teacher education practices. This will enable these findings to be used to improve teacher preparation by linking, where possible, specific program characteristics with subsequent effective classroom teaching and learning.

Much of the current search for truth relative to teacher preparation has been set within the context of political advocacy. Once that occurs, the pursuit of knowledge is compromised, with the ultimate losers being the young people in Ohio's classrooms. The challenge for TQP researchers is to search for the truth without worrying about whether it supports or challenges the *status quo* in schools or in teacher education programs. If the TQP researchers can accomplish that, the true beneficiaries will be the K-12 students in Ohio's classrooms.

References

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