Teaching Works

Deborah Loewenberg Ball and Francesca M. Forzani

University of Michigan

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Overview

1. Introduction to TeachingWorks: How and why we got here
2. Our problem as a profession, and a bet on developing strong training for professional practice
3. Challenges we face: Your views?
4. Toward a collective effort to develop teachers' professional training: What would it take? How could we work together more effectively?

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1. Introduction to TeachingWorks: How and why we got here

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How did we get here, and why?

2004 – 2010 Teacher Education Initiative

2010 – 2011 Launch of "new" program

2011 Design and launch of TeachingWorks

- Orient program to focus more on "practice"
- Collective work on "high leverage practices" (2006-2009); the teaching of practice, ethics of teaching, integration of attention to diversity and equity with "subject-matter serious" instruction
- Ongoing development and experimentation within existing programs (2006 – 2009)
- New leadership structures and ongoing design and development groups (2010)
- New arrangements for clinical placements (e.g., rounds, in-school learning units)
- In-program performance assessments
- Using the "real estate" of the program differently (e.g., different-sized and sequenced "courses")

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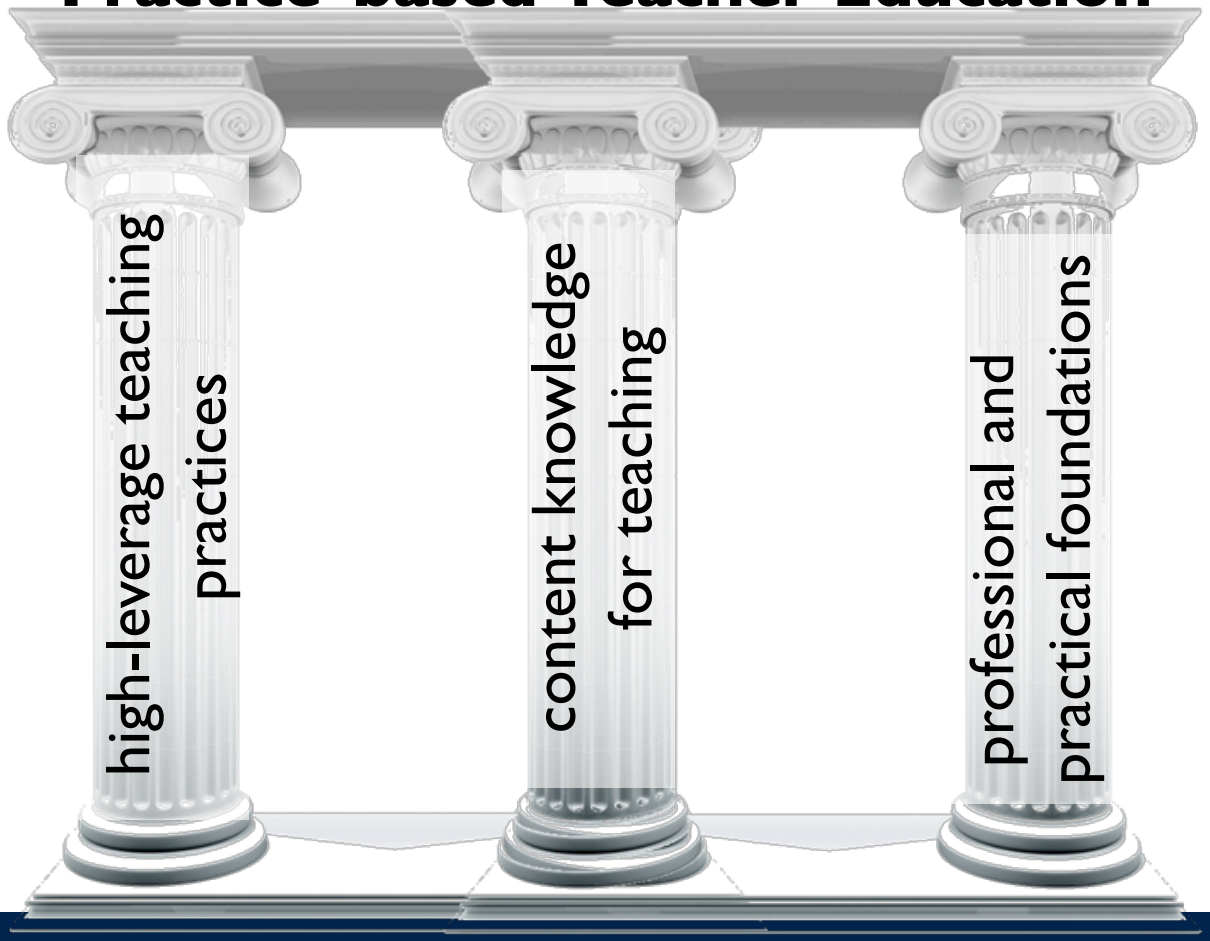
"Pillars" of the U-M TE curriculum

Practice-based Teacher Education



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Davis, Boerst, & Sleep, 2012

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What *is* TeachingWorks?

A new organization housed at the University of Michigan School of Education, based on work done at the U-M in our own programs and also in partnership with other programs and organizations

Focused on improving teachers' professional training and support by building strong infrastructure for the training, development, and assessment of teaching

Engaged in five main arenas of work:

1. Advancing the development of a **common professional core** for teaching
2. Creating and distributing **resources** for a comprehensive practice-based curriculum
3. Building **training** for those who work with teachers
4. Conducting and using **research** on teaching, on professional training and assessment of teaching, and relations to students' learning
5. Advancing **the case** for the importance of teacher training

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2. Our problem as a profession, and a bet on developing strong training for professional practice

Loss of confidence in colleges of education and teacher certification

Outsourcing of teacher education

Basic doubt that teaching can be taught

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Teacher education in the contemporary landscape

1. Evidence of teaching effects → increased interest in importance of *teaching*
2. Broad skepticism about the efficacy of teacher education and professional development
3. → focus on recruitment, outcomes, instead of training → does not augur well for redressing educational inequity and uneven quality
4. But we are often not effective advocates for teacher education, either.

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No professionally grounded system for teachers' training

1. No common curriculum for the professional training of teachers—specific, professionally-agreed upon learning objectives for new or practicing teachers
2. Over 2,200 independent providers of initial teacher training, and an uncountable number of providers of professional development
3. No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people
   - Primacy of personal experience
   - 62% of beginning teachers say they feel unprepared for practice;
   - Teachers report doing most of their learning on the job

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Features of strong training for responsible practice

1. Clear specification of skills, capabilities, and qualities of performance necessary for basic independent practice
2. Detailed developmental clinical training, progressing from observing to simulations to supervised apprenticeship to supervised independent practice
3. Performance assessment of individual competence before allowing independent practice

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A concern for improving teachers' training and development, but . . .

Impoverished vocabulary for describing, teaching, and assessing teaching

Tendency to describe instructional competence in large global terms

Lack of consensus about a set of specific instructional practices that are essential for beginners to be able to carry out

Tendency to emphasize knowledge over practice, leaving the development of actual teaching skill – and children's learning — to chance

Faith in "experience" — need for more precise pedagogies of teaching practice

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"High-leverage practices" as our key strategy

- Core capabilities of the work of teaching
- "Best bets" about the skills vital to helping children learn, and to promoting equitable opportunities and outcomes
- Can be taught and assessed

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Examples of high-leverage practices

- Leading a whole-class discussion
- Eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking
- Explaining core content
- Posing questions about content
- Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work that are central to the content
- Recognizing particular common patterns of student thinking and development in a subject-matter domain
- Setting up and managing small group work
- Selecting and using particular methods to check understanding and monitor student learning during and across lessons
- Composing, selecting, adapting quizzes, tests, and other methods of assessing student learning of a chunk of instruction
- Conducting a meeting about a student with a parent or guardian

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High-leverage practices with specific content

- Being able to explain what a "real number" is in a 9th grade algebra class, to students who are still struggling with fractions
- Launching and conducting a productive discussion of a major theme in *Romeo and Juliet* in a 9th grade English class
- Being able to work on a specific reading skill with a small group in a 1st grade class, while the rest of the class is working independently on appropriate assignments

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3. Challenges in trying to develop strong training for professional practice: Your views?

① Underdeveloped professional language

② Developing the teaching of practice (curriculum materials, pedagogies, settings, preparation of teachers of teachers)

③ Developing assessments

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① Underdeveloped professional language

1. Many different terms in use for the same (or similar) elements of the work:
   - Cooperative learning, small group work
   - Warm up, "do now," sponge
   - Discussion, dialogue, whole group lesson
2. Inadequate discrimination for critical elements of the work: e.g., questions, explaining, review
3. Confounding of evaluative and other labels for teaching overall with straight description of specific aspects of the work: e.g., Student-centered, constructivist, direct, teacher-centered, inquiry-oriented, reform-oriented
4. Other parts of the work lack terms altogether

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Implications for identifying the practice curriculum

Crucial to identify elements of the work of teaching that can be assessed in performance situations

- Leading a discussion
- Managing small-group work
- Holding a conference with a parent
- Identifying common patterns of student thinking

Will not work just to hope important elements of teaching come up in the course of regular practice and can be evaluated then

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② Developing the teaching of practice

- Pedagogies of teaching practice
- Settings for learning practice
- Opportunities to learn to teach practice

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Building an explicit approach to the teaching of practice

Beyond the equivalent of "seat time"

Differentiating the long-held faith in "experience" and "practice" to build a curriculum for learning practice

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③ Developing assessments of practice

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Professionally-insufficient licensing and evaluation systems for teaching

- Most licensure-level assessments focus on written assessments of knowledge rather than performance of practice
- Others are portfolio-based, reflection-oriented, and tend to be under-detailed
- In all cases, unclear and mixed warrants for their validity: common professional sense, aspirational, rarely linked to student learning
- Rubrics for evaluating practicing teachers generally focus on cross-cutting domains of teaching rather than specific practices: e.g., reflection, planning, instruction

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Needed: A new generation of assessments of teaching practice

Useful for: diagnostically-based improvement; licensure; hiring decisions; licensure renewal and advancement

Based on specific core practices for teaching specific K-12 content (keyed to the Common Core)

Scored based on how well candidates use a particular practice to reach particular content-specific instructional goals

Based on actual performance appropriate to the practice being assessed: e.g., planning versus leading a discussion versus diagnosing common patterns of student thinking

Conducted in real classrooms, in performance centers, through simulations ("standardized patient" or computerized); some live and some scored through records of practice

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An example: Analyzing errors

What mathematical steps could have produced this answer?

(a)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 405 \\ 108 \\ \hline 1485 \end{array}$$

(b)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 225 \\ 100 \\ \hline 325 \end{array}$$

(c)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 1250 \\ 25 \\ \hline 1275 \end{array}$$

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Eliciting student thinking

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4. Toward a collective effort to develop teachers' professional training

- What do we need to make the practice of teaching broadly learnable in ways that are reliable, equitable, and responsible?

- What would it take? How could we work together more effectively?

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Common resources for building professional practice

1. Develop a common technical and professional language for critical elements of the work (e.g., questions)
2. Build broadly shared and accessible collections from practice (student thinking, classroom episodes, "textbook cases," unpacking of common core content ideas and practices) from a wide and representative set of contexts and communities
3. Develop ways to work on practice collectively that help to define what is common, what is contextual, what is personal/stylistic

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Collective professional work on practice

1. Agreements about the specific high-leverage capabilities necessary for independent responsible practice
2. Direct assessments of those capabilities
3. A systematic approach to research
   a) Continuous improvement of the bets
   b) Evidence of efficacy

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Thank you!

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