



# Book Review on Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs

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**How to cite this paper:** Nian, Z.H. (2022) Book Review on Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9: e9274.  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1109274>

**Received:** September 1, 2022

**Accepted:** September 12, 2022

**Published:** September 15, 2022

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## Abstract

This article is a book review article. This is an academic work on the evaluation of teacher preparation courses by scholars at American academic institutions. This book contains four chapters on the purpose and context of teacher preparation plans and principled evaluations, sources of evidence involved in evaluations, designing appropriate evaluation methods for purposes, and decision-making frameworks. The research in this book uses qualitative research methods to accomplish its primary goal: to clarify the complexities of evaluating teacher education programs and to suggest a potential decision-making framework for designing improved evaluations in the future. The findings build a decision-making framework covering seven key issues to help assessors design evaluation solutions that are appropriate to specific contexts. At the same time, the reader's attention is shifted from the use of evaluation systems to improve the quality of teacher preparation program results to higher-level reflection, leading readers to reflect on issues such as diversity and inclusion, educational equity, and non-cognitive factors, etc.

## Subject Areas

Education

## Keywords

Book Review, Teacher Preparation Programs, Evaluation

## 1. Introduction

The book, entitled "Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs: Purposes, Methods, and Policy Options", is a collaborative effort of four American scholars, including Michael J. Feuer from George Washington University, Robert E. Floden from Michigan State University, Naomi Chudowsky from Caldera Research, and Judie G. Hoffman from the National Academy of Education. The

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book is published by the highly respected American publisher, the National Academy of Education. As a whole, the purpose of this book for readers seeking to assess teacher preparation programs is not to tell readers a definitive answer to the evaluation criteria but rather to provide a multifaceted, dialectical consideration of the system of assessing teacher preparation programs in the context of our complex and diverse society. In terms of the book's content framework, it is based on the general direction of evaluation of teacher preparation programs and is presented in four chapters: the first chapter provides an overview of the purpose and context of evaluation, as well as the principles of evaluation. The second chapter sets out a holistic vision of evaluation, covering the sources of evidence used and the issues arising from a variety of evaluation systems. The third chapter focuses on the mapping of methods to purpose in program evaluation and provides a dialectical analysis. The fourth chapter: reviews the key elements of the previous three chapters, construct a framework for decision-making and attempts to explore new directions for future research and development within the context of this research theme. The framework of this book covers all four of these areas, and although the authors of this study conducted research on this topic exclusively in the United States, the book's dynamic research findings with dialectical thinking involve ideas that still bring meaningful references to other countries.

## **2. Purposes, Context, Principles**

This section is based on the first chapter of the book and provides an overall introduction to the evaluation of teacher preparation programs, covering the key points of purposes, contexts and principles. With regard to the Purposes aspect of the evaluation, overall, the evaluation has three basic purposes: to hold teacher preparation programs to account, to inform prospective student teachers and potential employers; and to support the self-improvement of teacher preparation programs. However, the authors also suggest that there are risks involved: these criteria are not always clear and there can be some deviations in the settings of different institutions. Also of note: evaluation creates incentives for some to manipulate what is measured, which can result in an over-focus on those criteria that are measured in the design of the evaluation while ignoring those that are not. The purpose of this study, as further elaborated in this book, is not to identify flaws in evaluation methods but to acknowledge that evaluation criteria are hardly perfect, but that what the current study can try to do is to sort out the complexities inherent in the evaluation system of teacher preparation and to suggest a constructive framework for designing improved evaluation systems in the future. With regard to the context of evaluation, one perspective is from a theoretical context where the study is based on three basic assumptions: firstly, that quality of teaching plays a central role in student learning; secondly, that teacher preparation programs contribute to the quality of teaching and learning; and thirdly, that the evaluation of teacher preparation programs can provide

useful information for policy and practice improvement. In addition, another perspective is taken from the context of current realities, and the book draws on the literature of several scholars to illustrate the frequent and intense criticism of teacher preparation programs in the United States on a number of fronts, pointing to problems such as an overemphasis on pedagogy, inadequate philosophical foundations, and the reluctance of educators to accept criticism. In terms of the principles of evaluation, the book sets out seven core principles, which are summarised as follows: internal links between key elements to facilitate teaching and learning; evaluation of multiple systems that encompass different purposes and interest groups; validity as the primary criterion; recognition of the limitations of evaluation itself, balanced against potential strengths; consideration of variability for different groups; acceptance of criticism and accountability within the evaluation system itself; and dynamic adaptation of the evaluation system. and accountability; and the dynamic adaptability of the evaluation system. It is clear from these principles that the evaluation systems advocated in this book are not static or follow the needs of a fixed group or authority but place greater emphasis on equity and responsibility, taking into account the multiple groups involved and the changes and challenges of the complex environment ahead.

### 3. Landscape

This section is based on the second chapter of the book, which focuses further on the specific multifaceted aspects of evaluation evidence. As a whole, all of the evidence is aimed at enhancing teacher preparation, but the sources used as evaluation evidence are diverse in areas such as performance evaluations of teacher candidates, teacher evaluations of student achievement and surveys of employers. Evidence of evaluation that focuses on teacher preparation programs refers primarily to the required hours in the curriculum or key subjects and notes in detail that the expected curriculum is not fully taught to students, but that it is the actual curriculum developed in teacher preparation that is actually delivered to students. At the same time, the evidence for evaluation involves sources of evidence such as field practice of student teachers in schools, teaching examples, teacher qualifications, and accreditation of teacher training programs, and affirms that evidence of the quality of student teaching experiences is a central component of the evaluation. However, the book also analyses the limitations; for example, the evidence on teacher qualifications is not comprehensive and does not take into account teachers who are not professionally trained in colleges of education; the primary model of evaluation construction is innovative but still in its infancy and has many problems; the evidence on teacher training programme accreditation is more specific and standardised, but more outcome-oriented. The evidence on the accreditation of teacher training programs, although more specific and standardised, is more outcome-oriented and has given rise to controversial “stifling consistency”. [1] In addition, this section raises some very provocative questions and explorations, for example, about

whether accredited teacher preparation programs produce higher quality teachers than non-accredited programs. For example, on other potential sources of evaluation evidence, the possible future use of well-designed classroom observations as a component of teacher evaluation systems; new perspectives on teacher evaluation for more specific purposes; the dialectical introduction of experiences from other countries to obtain useful reference information in the specific context of teacher education; and so on. It is clear from the contents of this chapter that the evidence on evaluation presented in this book is not perfect and fixed, and although it has limitations, the existing perspectives presented in the book and the possible perspectives to be explored in the future still provide inspiration for teacher education.

#### **4. Mapping Approaches to Purposes**

This part is based on the third chapter of the book, which is, in short, dialectical thinking and a perspective that does not seek perfectionism: what kind of evaluation method is sought or designed for what purpose. This chapter reviews the factors involved in the main purposes of evaluation systems mentioned in Chapter 1, and then focuses on these factors from the perspective of the evaluation designer, analysing them to help identify the evaluation system best suited to the realities of the moment; in addition, consideration is given to how the evaluation system can be used consistently and effectively; and careful consideration is given to the coherence between evaluation methods and purposes, and it is suggested that attention be focused on the use of the advantages and potential risks of various evaluation methods. The chapter also emphasises accountability, with evaluation as an accountability tool of the week ultimately aimed at the general public, who have the power to know whether their resources are being used wisely; at the same time, accountability is tied to social trust, and in the face of diverse groups, the book focuses on the criteria for general evaluation, as well as advocating for more attention to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Unlike the relatively homogenous evaluation methods I have seen in the past, the point of this chapter is that different types of evaluation systems yield different evidence and allow for different inferences to be drawn. Rather than asking which evaluation method is the best, it is more important to consider: to what extent does each evaluation method serve a particular purpose? While there is no definitive answer to this provocative question, there are possible paths to explore in the interplay from purpose to evaluation method, based on the acknowledgement that no evaluation system is designed to be perfect: understanding the strengths and limitations in practice, setting reasonable expectations for the effectiveness of evaluation in relation to specific purposes, in order to improve teacher preparation and student learning.

#### **5. Towards a Decision Framework**

This section is based on the fourth chapter of the book, which aims to provide a

tool for use by decision-makers working in different contexts, and which deals with the design and use and interpretation in the evaluation of teacher preparation programs. The key contribution of this chapter is the construction of a decision-making framework comprising seven questions: What is the main purpose of the evaluation system? What aspects of teacher preparation are most important? What sources of evidence provide the most accurate and useful information about aspects of teacher preparation of primary interest? How can these measures be analysed and combined to judge the quality of the program? In a broader sense, what are the intended and potential unintended consequences of the evaluation system? How will transparency be achieved? What steps will be taken to help users understand how to interpret results and use them appropriately? How will the evaluation system be monitored? These are the seven key questions that the authors of this book propose as a framework for decision-making. Thinking deeply about these seven questions, looking for possible answers in context, and allowing for critical and different answers. The chapter also suggests possible directions for future research on this research topic, including how differences in teacher preparation can market graduate effectiveness in the classroom; exploring the integration of comprehensive measures of teacher effectiveness into evaluation systems, including non-cognitive factors such as accountability, motivation, and curiosity; and so on. The main contribution of this chapter is to provide readers, as well as researchers, with a relatively coherent and factor-linked framework for decision-making, in an attempt to help groups with different needs to design possible evaluation frameworks in the context of their specific realities. At the same time, the chapter re-emphasises the point made repeatedly throughout the book: good teachers may come from teacher preparation programs that are identified as poor or substandard, while poor teachers may also come from teacher preparation programs that receive overall higher ratings. It is worth noting that the ideas in this chapter go some way towards helping readers to look at educational phenomena and educational issues dialectically, as well as learning to analyse specific problems.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, this book is a research report on the evaluation of teacher preparation programs. The findings do not only provide a reference on the feasibility of a framework for designing an evaluation system, but in the process of research and analysis, based on the complex social context and the multiplicity of factors in the educational process, as well as on the strengths and limitations of accepting criticism and maintaining rational thinking, the authors attempt to convey to the reader the need to identify more. Rather than focusing solely on how to construct the perfect evaluation system to maximise the quality of teacher preparation programs, the authors attempt to convey to the reader the need to identify the issues that require more attention than just focusing on how to construct the perfect evaluation system to maximise the quality of teacher preparation

programs. The book leads the reader to consider the educational equity of the different groups involved in the evaluation process. Going beyond the usual results-oriented evaluation style, the book leads the reader to consider whether factors that are not considered in the evaluation system are equally relevant in the long term, affirming the future trend towards the co-existence and evolution of diverse evaluation systems. However, even though evaluation of teacher preparation programs is important, it is not sufficient in itself to improve variables such as teacher quality and student learning and the knowledge base on the fundamentals of teaching is still in its infancy, and there is still much to learn about effective teacher preparation practices, which are limiting factors that need to be further explored in the evaluation of teacher preparation programs.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **References**

- [1] Feuer, M., Floden, R., Chudowsky, N. and Ahn, J. (2013) Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs: Purposes, Methods, and Policy Options. National Academy of Education, Washington D.C.