**Let’s Raise the Bar on the Preparation of Teachers**

**By Steven Brint**

Abraham Flexner’s 1910 report led to the merger or closing of about half of all American medical schools. These schools were admitting more or less all comers and were not teaching medicine using the principles of mainstream science. Following Flexner, the number of doctors trained declined, but the quality of those who graduated and were licensed for practice improved dramatically. New schools with stronger standards rose to take the place of those that had been closed, and standards were enforced by the American Association of Medical Colleges. Arthur Levine, the president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, has estimated that about half of education schools have admission standards and performance expectations that are too low to produce well-prepared teachers. The country now requires the equivalent of a Flexner report for education.

The preparation of secondary school teachers in the future should be based on strong content knowledge, as demonstrated by 3.0 or above level grades in a standard college major, followed by two years of master’s training. The first year of master’s training will be far more oriented to the scientific literature on teaching and learning than is currently true. The second year will follow from the existing practices for National Board Certification. As part of the process to become a National Board Certified teacher, candidates must analyze their teaching context and students’ needs, submit videos of their teaching, and provide student work samples that demonstrate growth and achievement. Currently only 100,000 of more than 3.7 million school teachers are National Board Certified. In the future this certification should gradually become the norm.

Teacher’s status in society will increase with more stringent selection, more advanced curricula, and higher requirements for certification. These are characteristics of teacher preparation in nearly all societies whose students are performing well above U.S. students on international tests of educational achievement. Even as standards rise, young people from all backgrounds will continue to be attracted to teaching, because of its grounding in community life and the intense satisfactions that come from contributing to students’ development. However, it will be difficult to recruit strong students, if teachers’ pay remains the lowest of all common college majors and below the median household income.

Where will the funds come from to raise teachers’ salaries? Here’s where the courage we need in our world’s political leaders comes in. Some economists are now advocating a progressive wealth tax as an antidote to the social division that is growing due to the 20% share of wealth now held by the top one-tenth of one percent of the population. The revenues we need for educational improvement can come from revenues produced by a progressive tax on wealth. If states raise the bar for the preparation of teachers, as I have described here, some funds derived from a new wealth tax should be explicitly allocated for improving the pay of teachers.

Evaluating teachers by the performance of their students on standardized tests is consistent with higher professional standards, but it is an unbalanced approach. If teachers are as important to America’s future as we think, we should expect them to reach levels of professionalism in their knowledge and skill levels, their capacity for informed judgment, their status in society, and also their incomes. Let’s cure education’s ailing personnel production system and create a “race to the top” for the teaching profession.