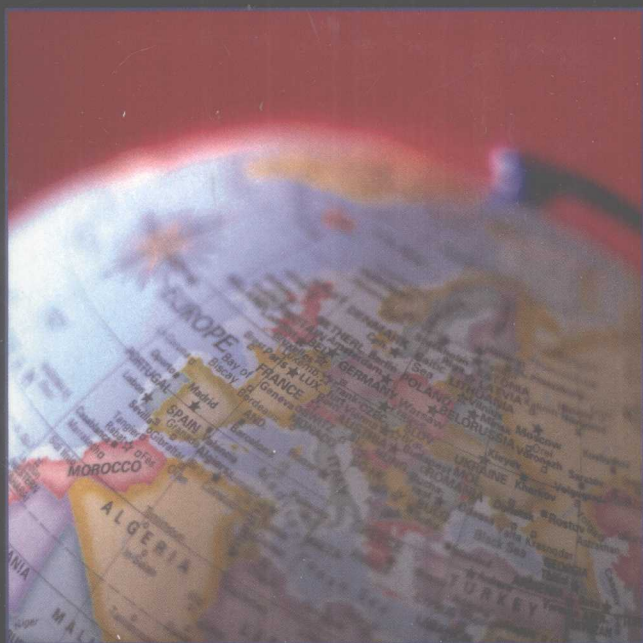


INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON THE **IMPACT** OF ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Teacher Education Yearbook XV



LOUISE F. DERETCHIN & CHERYL J. CRAIG

International Research on the Impact of Accountability Systems

Teacher Education Yearbook XV

EDITED BY LOUISE F. DERETCHIN
AND CHERYL J. CRAIG

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Teacher Education Yearbook XV

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Foreword

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Jane McCarthy, Ed.D., is interim dean and professor, College of Education, UNLV, and currently serves as president of the Association of Teacher Educators (2006–2007). She is also the director of the UNLV Center for Accelerated Schools, a national school reform effort that works with schools with high percentages of children in at-risk situations. Her writing and research are concentrated in the fields of teacher education, school reform, and working in American Indian schools. She has consulted internationally, spending extensive time in Germany and India working with schools and teachers.

The theme of my presidency for the Association of Teacher Educators is “Reinventing the Educational Landscape: Restoring Hope, Heart and Vision for Teachers, Learners, and Communities.” I selected this theme because the traditional ways of schooling, pre-K through 12, and the traditional methods of teacher education no longer seem to be meeting the needs of today’s school populations and families. I can remember asking my father, toward the end of his life, how many children in his elementary school did not learn to read. He looked at me very puzzled and said, “We all learned to read.” He grew up in an inner city as a child of Irish immigrants and went to school with other first- and second-generation immigrant children. He was unusual in that he actually finished high school and some college. And yet, they all learned to read and write. I have seen correspondence he has had with his peers over the years, and all letters were well written, grammatically correct, and with few, if any, misspelled words.

How did the educational system of the early nineteenth hundreds facilitate the successful mastery of basic skills for what was a generation of poor, immigrant children, many of whom spoke English as a second language? We really can only surmise at this point since standardized testing was not really developed

until World War II. How could teachers, many of whom had only a normal school preparation program, be so successful? Again, any theories can only be suppositional. Why are today's students and teachers not as successful as those of the past? Or is the success of the past only a myth perpetuated by anecdotal evidence such as mine?

The current movement toward standards-based education and assessment and the whole accountability issue is taking place not just in this country but in others as well. Will this movement help renew the hope, heart, and vision of learners, teachers, and communities, or will it hinder the efforts educators make to facilitate the success of all students? This current volume seeks to address these issues and more surrounding the impact of accountability systems around the world. Are the data collected by such accountability endeavors actually used to improve student learning? Or do they in fact hinder student learning? Do teachers know what to do with the data that are collected? Are meaningful school improvement plans derived from the data or are the data used to "punish" what are considered "underperforming" students and "inadequate" schools?

Bernhardt (2003) suggests that schools can use data to analyze student performance and to revise learning strategies and school plans based on information collected. This requires, however, intensive professional development for teachers and administrators.

The authors and editors of this *Yearbook* look at the reality of what is happening across the world with regard to accountability. The book has four divisions that examine distinct aspects of the topic. The first looks at the philosophy, history, and design of the accountability movement. The second looks at the impact and consequences of accountability systems. Do they help, hinder, or are they neutral with regard to learner and teacher success? The third section looks at personal perceptions and perspectives of accountability on the part of teachers and teacher educators. The fourth division looks at underpinnings of powerful accountability systems, primarily from an international perspective. I won't spoil the ending by giving away conclusions the editors reach. Suffice it to say that Deretchin and Craig have put together an impressive array of research and reflections by prominent scholars and authors that address a wide array of issues. Their volume is a must-read for all educators whose lives are impacted by issues of accountability. (And that means all of us!) They have done the profession a great service in the production of this volume.

Reference

- Bernhardt, V. L. (2003). *Using data to improve student learning in elementary schools*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Introduction

Louise F. Deretchin

Houston A+ Challenge

Cheryl J. Craig

University of Houston

Louise Deretchin, Ph.D., is director of higher education for the Houston A+ Challenge (formerly the Houston Annenberg Challenge). She has extensive experience in information technology and education. She is a co-founder of the Regional Faculty, whose purpose is to take a regional approach to directing the growth of educational systems. Her work focuses on creating collaborations among colleges, the business community, and school districts to improve teacher education, teaching, and learning. Deretchin is a fellow in the Association of Teacher Educators Leadership Academy and serves on the Texas Higher Education Board's P-16+ Council.

Cheryl J. Craig, Ph.D., is professor and coordinator of the Teaching and Teacher Education Program at the University of Houston and the past president of the American Association of Teaching and Curriculum. Craig's most recent book is *Narrative Inquiries of School Reform: Storied Lives, Storied Landscapes, Storied Metaphors* (2003). Her research appears in such journals as the *American Educational Research Journal*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *Teachers College Record*.

When we, as coeditors, issued the call for prospective manuscripts for *International Research on the Impact of Accountability Systems: Teacher Education Yearbook XV*, we knew that accountability sat at the center of national and international debates concerning teaching and teacher education, but we had no idea how individual authors would respond to the seed of an idea nor the range of essays that the accountability theme would engender. Only as we (along with a panel of blind reviewers to whom we are grateful) poured over the manuscripts did the subtleties and complexities of how accountability policies play out in

particular national and international settings become apparent, along with their global magnitude. Once the essays were received, we realized we had struck a deep chord with authors and that the accepted chapters approached the accountability theme in multi-dimensional ways. Four variations of the accountability theme quickly emerged around which this book cohered: Philosophy, History, and Design of Accountability Systems; Impact and Consequences of Accountability Systems; Perceptions and Perspectives of Accountability Systems; and Underpinnings of Powerful Accountability Systems.

For *Teacher Education Yearbook XV*, we decided to deviate from the tradition of inviting well-recognized scholars to provide commentaries on each of the topics. Instead, we turned it around and invited educators from schools and teacher preparation programs—the very people that are subjected to, and implementers of, accountability systems—to provide commentary on the scholarly works of well-recognized and up-and-coming researchers. By giving voice to these educators, an additional and valued perspective is gained.

In the *Yearbook*, each of the four topic areas is introduced and commentaries are provided by different sets of authors. Philosophy, History, and Design of Accountability Systems is introduced by members of the longest standing teacher research group of the Houston A+ Challenge (formerly the Houston Annenberg Challenge)—the Portfolio Group of Teachers. These teachers have consistently met to deliberate on their practices since 1998. The second and third sections, the Impact and Consequences and Perceptions, and Perspectives of Accountability Systems, are presented by different members of the Faculty Academy, an initiative of the Houston A+ Challenge school redesign movement. The purpose of the Faculty Academy is to increase school-university collaborative forms of research and to serve as members of a Regional Faculty in the Greater Houston area.

The final section, Underpinnings of Powerful Accountability Systems, is presented by a recent graduate of an education doctoral program. His analysis brings a deeply philosophical perspective to the overview and summary of the concluding division.

After reading the manuscripts selected for *Yearbook XV*, and experiencing the passion and intellect evident in the writings, we felt compelled to conclude this volume with an afterword that brings forth the interrelatedness and interweavings of the experiences, hopes, and fears expressed by chapter authors and respondents.

We hope that the following chapters which take a critical look at the use and misuse of accountability systems—the good, the bad, and the possible—will help schools, communities, and legislators make informed decisions on the design of accountability systems so that they may become welcomed enhancements to teaching and learning.

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Division 1

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND DESIGN OF ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Overview and Framework

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Donna Reid

Educational Consultant

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Drew Academy for Mathematics, Science, and the Arts

Michaelann Kelley is a visual arts teacher at Eisenhower High School in the Aldine Independent School District. She has been teaching for the past 14 years. Michaelann is also a doctoral student at the University of Houston.

Donna Reid is an educational consultant who supports the development of Critical Friends Groups in Houston schools. She taught history and English at the middle school level for eleven years.

Gayle Curtis is the vanguard dean at Hamilton Middle School in Houston Independent School District. Her experience as a bilingual educator for 11 years includes teaching at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Ron Venable has taught for 27 years. He works with students enrolled in regular and advanced placement studio art classes at Eisenhower High School. He has also been a member of the Eisenhower Critical Friends Group for nine years.

P. Tim Martindell works as a program coordinator for the Houston A + Challenge. He is a doctoral student at the University of Houston and has 19 years of experience teaching middle and high school English in urban schools.

Allison Hamacher has been a teacher for 25 years. Having completed her master's degree in administration in 2004, she continues to teach with some administrative duties as well as to mentor new teachers.

Each author in this edited volume writes from authority. Those who present overviews and who frame the four sets of chapters also speak from authority. In the teacher research group, where we have consistently met to reflect on and account for our teaching practices, our authority arises from individual and collective experience springing from over 150 years of working in urban schools peopled by students from diverse socioeconomic and multicultural backgrounds. That authority of experience inevitably involves daily encounters in our classroom and school settings with the accountability phenomenon that forms the topic of this *Teacher Education Yearbook XV*. Living with accountability at the ground level necessarily informs this introduction to the chapters in the first division of this volume of international research into the impact of accountability systems.

The first three chapters of this book address similar aspects of the influences that accountability exerts on internal and external systems. In chapter 1, *The Uses and Abuses of Measurement*, Wheatley and Rogers make the important assertion that measurement is critical, but only to the extent that it tells us what we need to know in order to move forward in more instructive ways. For Wheatley and Rogers, measurement is one of a full range of tools, a means that brings about additional insights and spurs further action, rather than an end unto itself. The authors write that “the longer we try to cultivate . . . behaviors through measurement and reward, the more damage we do to the quality of . . . relationships, the more we trivialize the meaning of work, and the more disengaged people become.”

In chapter 2, *Keeping Education in Teaching*, Keltchermans centers on the clash between performativity and teacher self-understanding from an international perspective. His policy research undertaken in Belgium includes both European and American examples. It suggests that American teachers are not the only ones struggling with the possibility of the de-professionalization and