

Pearson Learning and the Ongoing Corporatization of Public Education

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Over the past 20 years, Pearson Learning has become the largest and most powerful publisher of educational textbooks and education-related materials used throughout P-12 public education, as well as in higher and adult education in the United States. The Pearson brand includes both print and digital texts, internet learning platforms, test administration materials, test scoring rubrics, test-preparation materials, and Pearson's latest venture, its administration of the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (EdTPA), created at Stanford University's Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). In the past 10 years alone, Pearson has gone from annual revenues of \$2 billion in the early 2000s, to nearly \$6 billion in the 2014 fiscal year (Pearson, 2015). Pearson's increasing profits come, in no small part, from the company's continued influence over federal and global education initiatives which has led to the wholesale adoption of Pearson's products in nearly every aspect of public education today.

Jennifer Reingold (2015) wrote recently in *Fortune* of the growing concern over Pearson positioning itself to dominate nearly every aspect of schooling in the United States, from curriculum, textbooks, and standardized tests, to overseeing teacher preparation and evaluation. As Gail Collins (2012) argued in *The New York Times*, "An American child could soon go to a public school run by Pearson, study from books produced by Pearson, while his or her progress is evaluated by Pearson standardized tests. The only public participant in the show would be the taxpayer" (p. 2). Lamenting that the adoption of the Common Core

State Standards, which Pearson helped create and disseminate along with Jeb Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education (FEE), will lead to greater corporate involvement in schools, Michael Apple's fear is that "by and large Pearson will become the department of education in the United States, and in many ways that's happening now" (Schneider, 2014, p. 3).

Pearson Learning: A Brief History

The Pearson Corporation was founded as an engineering and construction company in London in the mid-1800s (Pearson, 2015). Existing as a successful construction supply company throughout the nineteenth century, the company began a period of aggressive growth and acquisition throughout the early twentieth century. Pearson's first forays into publishing came in the 1920s with the purchase of several newspapers in London that the company consolidated into the *Westminster Times*. In the 1950s, Pearson continued its growth by buying both the *Financial Times* and a controlling stake in *The Economist*, selling its 50 percent stake in *The Economist* for \$730 million in 2015 (Scott, 2015, p. 2). Throughout the latter half of the 20th century Pearson continued to strengthen its place in publishing through the acquisition of other brands such as Penguin Books and Simon & Schuster.

Pearson Education was formally created in 1998 when Pearson PLC purchased the education division of Simon & Schuster from Viacom and merged it with its own education division, Addison-Wesley, and Longman, thus marking the beginning of Pearson's effort to dominate the education materials market. Pearson Education was rebranded Pearson Learning in 2011 and split into international and North American divisions. Though Pearson generates approximately 70% of its sales in North America, they operate in more than 70 countries with headquarters in London. Today, Pearson is the largest education materials company and the largest book publisher in the world (Pearson, 2015), owning more than 100 leading educational brands or tools including the following: ACT Aspire, eCollege, enVisionMath Common Core, TestNav, Project Stem, MyMathLabforSchool, Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, Penguin Readers, Prentice Hall Writing Coach, York Notes, and the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), just to name a few.

In his report to the British Columbia Teacher's Federation entitled, *Pearson's Plan to Control Education*, Donald Gutstein (2012) cites the work of the global economic research company Sanford C. Bernstein in looking into Pearson Learning's three-pronged approach to dominating the education market. First, Pearson is using its vast capital and

holdings to continue its aggressive acquisition of competitors in the education market. Between the years 2007-2013, Pearson spent \$5 billion dollars acquiring 25 smaller education publishing companies, which has led to Pearson now being three times larger than its closest competitor. Second, Pearson aims to dominate content delivery online by creating courses that tout flexibility and choice via online academies and virtual charter schools. Pearson's third growth strategy involves their notion of personalized education, which relies on online learning modules "customizable" for individual students, as well as Pearson's role in standardizing teacher education certification via the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (EdTPA). Eventually, nearly every teacher and every student in the U.S. will be a Pearson customer.

Part of Pearson's current rapid growth trajectory began in 2000 when it spent \$2.5 billion dollars to acquire National Computer Systems (NCS), which had been the leading provider of test-evaluation systems in the U.S. The timing was fortuitous and perhaps not unintentional. Several months after the Pearson acquisition of NCS, George W. Bush was elected president with the help of his education platform, stressing increased accountability and evaluation of teachers and students. Just days after Bush's election, a Pearson executive displayed a quote from Bush that called for increased state testing and individual school report cards to a ballroom-full of Wall Street analysts and announced, "This almost reads like our business plan" (Metcalf, 2002, p. 10).

Within the context of the reform efforts over the last 20 years, it is not surprising that Pearson Learning grew exponentially more powerful and profitable since the turn of the 21st century. On the heels of the mandatory testing required under *No Child Left Behind*, through *Race to the Top*, with its grants for states and systems that heighten accountability, Pearson's profits and domination of the education market has only continued to grow. Pearson, relying on its near-monopoly in the test creation and test scoring industry, has continued to reap enormous profits from education policies that mandate schools, students, and teachers, use the services Pearson provides. In fact, with the onset of Common Core State Standards and corresponding high stakes tests, the past five years have been lucrative for venture capitalists and private companies like Pearson. In 2016, the market size of P-12 education is projected to be nearly \$800 billion dollars, with much of that money going to the private sector. Donald Cohen, the executive director of In the Public Interest, suggests that the education market is "the last honeypot for Wall Street" (Fang, 2014, p. 3). Further, venture capitalist Eric Hippeau, a member of Lerer Ventures, the capital firm behind the viral entertainment company BuzzFeed, recently claimed that, "despite

the opposition of unions, public school bureaucracies, and parents, the education market is ripe for disruption” (Ibid., p. 3).

Pearson’s positioning itself to profit from education policy imposed over the last 20 years involved ongoing political connections, lobbying, and manipulating state policy by its political and corporate collaborators. Since 2010, Pearson has been accused of ethics violations in states such as Georgia, New York, New Mexico, Virginia, and Maine (Winerip, 2011). These violations stem from state education leaders and policymakers attending Pearson-sponsored junkets to places such as Las Vegas, Hawaii, and Mexico. Each of those states, in turn, signed lucrative contracts allowing Pearson to be the chief administrator of testing in each state.

Through its non-profit arm, the Pearson Foundation, Pearson has long been a financial supporter of and collaborator with Jeb Bush’s Foundation for Excellence in Education (FEE), an organization that has, among other things, helped bring the Common Core State Standards to fruition and argued for high stakes testing and connecting teachers’ evaluations to student test scores (Fang, 2013). FEE has worked over the last 10 years to influence state and federal policy that benefits FEE’s corporate partners including Pearson. Consider Florida, where FEE was instrumental in influencing state education policy that supported the use of Pearson testing materials. In large part because of FEE’s influence Florida awarded Pearson a \$250 million contract to provide testing administration and scoring services for Florida (Strauss, 2013). In New Mexico, Pearson, along with FEE, was instrumental in helping to elect school officials that promote a privatization agenda and enact policies that promote standardization and accountability for the benefit of Pearson and other corporate entities (Aragon, 2013). Pearson now maintains contracts in New Mexico for administering teacher evaluations, books and software, as well running a public virtual charter school.

Pearson and FEE also have long-standing connections to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). ALEC, founded in 1973, is a legislative body composed of lobbyists and state legislators committed to advancing free markets while limiting the reach of government. ALEC does this with monetary support from corporate and foundation partners including the Koch Foundation, Exxon, Walmart, and AT&T, among others. ALEC creates policy briefs for states that the states then amend and use to implement policy. ALEC has been instrumental in creating policy briefs that argue for, among other things, increasing market factors in schools via competition and less government intervention, privatizing education through the development of charter and online schools, and increased testing and accountability of students and teachers via standardized tests (Underwood & Mead, 2012). Further, ALEC, FEE,

and Pearson have been at the forefront of the argument for increased accountability of teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs, which is exactly what EdTPA was designed to provide.

The Education Teacher Performance Assessment

The Education Teacher Performance Assessment (EdTPA), which is providing Pearson with its best access yet to the teacher education market, was developed at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), in collaboration with the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE). In line with ongoing corporate and federal education reform efforts, EdTPA aimed at, among other things, increasing accountability over teacher candidates, as well as increasing accountability of teacher education programs, something that former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan long supported. Needing assistance with the delivery and administration of EdTPA on a national scale, the team at Stanford made Pearson an operational partner to EdTPA, putting Pearson in charge of developing the assessment materials, online technologies and online scoring platforms, program resources, and other supports required to administer the program. Pearson now fully supports EdTPA through web-based platforms that handle user registration, teacher training, an EdTPA portfolio-submission platform, scoring of EdTPA submissions and results reporting, and the recruitment and qualification of EdTPA scorers.

The EdTPA process requires that teacher candidates identify and collect subject-specific evidence of their “effective teaching” from a learning segment of up to five lessons from a unit of instruction for one class of students. Teacher candidates must submit authentic artifacts from what Pearson refers to as a “clinical field experience” (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2013). Teacher candidates also submit commentaries that provide a rationale to support their instructional practices based on the learning strengths and needs of students. According to the information provided by EdTPA/AACTE, teacher candidates’ evidence is then evaluated and scored within the five dimensions of teaching that include the following:

1. **Planning Instruction and Assessment** establishes the instructional and social context for student learning and includes lesson plans, instructional materials and student assignments/assessments. Candidates demonstrate how their plans align with content standards, best practices, and how instruction is differentiated to address student needs.
2. **Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning** includes one or two unedited video clips of 15-20 minutes from the learning segment

and a commentary analyzing how the candidate engages students in learning activities. Candidates also demonstrate subject-specific pedagogical strategies and how they elicit and monitor student responses to develop deep subject matter understandings.

3. Assessing Student Learning includes classroom based assessment (evaluation criteria), student work samples, evidence of teacher feedback, and a commentary analyzing patterns of student learning. Candidates summarize the performance of the whole class, analyze the specific strengths and needs of three focus students, and explain how their feedback guides student learning.

4. Analysis of Teaching Effectiveness is addressed in commentaries within Planning, Instruction and Assessment tasks. In planning, candidates justify their plans based on the candidate's knowledge of diverse students' learning strengths and needs and principles of research and theory. In Instruction, candidates explain and justify which aspects of the learning segment were effective, and what the candidate would change. Lastly, candidates use their analysis of assessment results to inform next steps for individuals and groups with varied learning needs.

5. Academic Language Development is evaluated based on the candidate's ability to support students' oral and written use of academic language to deepen subject matter understandings. Candidates explain how students demonstrate academic language using student work samples and/or video recordings of student engagement. (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2013)

The five dimensions of teaching are evaluated using 15 analytic rubrics on a five-point scale focused on what are termed student learning outcomes. Pearson is responsible for the design and development of an online training system for teacher candidates and for setting subject-specific benchmarks the teacher candidates are expected to meet. According to Pearson, qualified scorers are trained to use EdTPA rubrics to evaluate candidate submissions consistently and fairly. Local, state and national scorer pools include teacher education faculty and clinical supervisors, as well as K-12 educators. All EdTPA scorers must meet what Pearson calls "rigorous qualifications" including subject-matter expertise, recent experience teaching the subject to P-12 students or methods courses to candidates, as well as mentoring or supporting beginning teachers (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2013).

Teacher candidates, who will be required to pay Pearson Learning \$300 for this experience, must submit their EdTPA portfolios online directly to Pearson, or via an approved, integrated EdTPA platform provider such as Folio180, LiveText, or TaskStream. University faculty can provide formative feedback to candidates while they are developing

EdTPA materials within these platforms; however, score reports that include individual candidate scores are confidential.

A portion of the \$300 that teacher candidates must pay Pearson allows Pearson to pay its scorers \$75 per candidate portfolio scored. Scorers are put through a “qualifications test,” which includes a brief survey and phone interview, and once hired, are paid \$20 per hour during approximately 10 hours of training. Once trained, scorers are expected to complete eight assessments per month, using EdTPA/Pearson’s standardized rubrics for good teaching, allotting two to three hours per assessment. Not to be overlooked is the fact that EdTPA scorers, which include higher education faculty, K-12 teachers, retired teachers, and administrators, will become part-time Pearson employees. One of the conditions of employment with Pearson forbids scorers from engaging in critical public commentary about the instrument or process.

In summary, EdTPA is a teacher education evaluation and certification tool created by Stanford University’s SCALE, with administration and scoring by Pearson, the largest corporate entity in publishing. Further, in keeping with Pearson’s corporate objective of “personalizing” education by making every student and teacher a customer, as more states sign on with EdTPA, Pearson is nearly guaranteed that the majority of the teacher candidates in the U.S. will be required to become a Pearson consumer. And while the focus is right now on teacher candidates, one could imagine a scenario where EdTPA could be used to one day evaluate veteran teachers as well.

Homogenization, Imposition, Hegemony

Applying a technology-driven, corporate model of public education allows Pearson to view all students, and all teachers, as consumers of their educational products. By conceptualizing students and teachers as existing only within a market context, students are relegated to the status of consumers who engage with educative material not for intellectual or emotional development, but rather to obtain some “thing” (a certification, a diploma, a completion certificate, a rubric scored). Maxine Greene (1988) argues that adopting a consumerist notion of schooling allows schools to be understood as institutions that process products (students or student teachers) to fit into a stratified system where economic and social structures are well-established. Reducing the school experience to another marketplace activity allows educative experiences to be subverted in favor of consumer activities in which a student works, in this case a teacher candidate creates an EdTPA portfolio, so as to receive a form of payment, in this case a passing grade on

EdTPA from Pearson. Such reductionism does not allow for questioning the dominant consumer ideology. Rather, it privileges consumerism as a given and reshapes what teaching and inquiry in education means.

As stated earlier, Pearson's role in EdTPA is mandating specific standards and behaviors for how teachers teach. We are theorizing three constructs to better understand what Pearson is actually perpetuating: (1) homogenization; (2) imposition; and (3) hegemony. For (1), Theodore Levitt's (1983) work, *The Globalization of Markets*, is central to understanding the purposes of and for homogeneity. Levitt argues that corporations that intend to qualify their goods and services to meet local needs and interests will fail. Indeed, Levitt's argument is that to be a multinational corporation is to miss the point. Global corporations, like Pearson, are successful when they homogenize varying wants and needs. Levitt argues,

The multinational corporation operates in a number of countries, and adjusts its products and practices to each—at high relative costs. The global corporation operates with resolute constancy—at low relative cost—as if the entire world . . . were a single entity; it sells the same things in the same way everywhere. . . . Ancient differences in national tastes or modes of doing business disappear. (p. 72)

Schools and colleges that find themselves under the yolk of Pearson/EdTPA requirements are no longer contextual spaces for difference. Teacher candidates must conform to the strictures of Pearson / EdTPA rubrics and must upload “their” work to be evaluated by scorers who follow yet more rubrics to allow generalization and comparison. The goal is sameness, no matter how often EdTPA leaders wish to restate how much “context” matters.

For all of the unique characteristics and traditions of the various students, faculty members, and institutions, successful completion of Pearson edicts means structurally denying difference, thus reifying homogeneity. Pearson's organizational structures ultimately and necessarily situate students and faculty at the receiving end of hierarchical management schemes that advance and perpetuate the logic of globalization and the status quo. What might it mean for “diversity” and “difference” to operate in a world in which they are subordinated to pre-ordained organizational and corporate expectations? What implications are there for ideas like democracy and criticality?

As Stuart Ewen (1976) notes, regarding the history of corporatism, it became a central function of business to be able to define a social order which would feed and adhere to the demands of the productive process and at the same time absorb, neutralize, and contain the transitional

impulses of a working class emerging from the unrequited drudgery of nineteenth-century industrialization. (p. 51)

Such absorption, neutralization, and containment are consistent with homogenization insofar as they each represent restrictions on growth and individuality. Andrew Wernick (1991) pushes the point further by maintaining that “during the course of advanced capitalist development the globalization and intensification of commodity production have led to a crucial economic modification in which (a) with mass production and mass marketing the moments of distribution, circulation, and exchange have become as strategic as technical improvements in production for profitability and growth, and (b) through commodity imaging the circulation and production processes have come to overlap” (p. 185). Mass production and mass marketing, what might be called the “massification” of society and culture, are also features of homogenization (Scott, 1995). For massification applied to Pearson, the implication is that the larger the group of teachers, the less important and influential the individual student wishing to become a teacher. Uncoupling power from ethics and social responsibility means divorcing individuals from transitive action and allowing consumer materialism to function as culture.

Bill Readings (1996) helps clarify the homogenizing aspects of Pearson/EdTPA when he writes about the role of individuals in communities within a bureaucratic apparatus. Faculty members and their teacher candidates are forced to homogenize themselves in the name of compliance, frequently believing that because EdTPA is imposed upon them they have to conform. “The effect of domination inherent in this fiction of [EdTPA requirements],” writes Readings, “is apparent once we consider how the alleged autonomy of the subject . . . is conditional upon its subjection to the idea of [EdTPA]” (181). Readings continues:

The subject is “free” only insofar as she or he becomes, for her- or himself, primarily a subject to [Pearson/EdTPA]. [Pearson/EdTPA] positions individuals as subjects subject to the idea of [EdTPA] as an instance of community. Subjects, that is, first have an allegiance to the idea of [EdTPA]. . . . The singularity or difference of others is reduced, since community with others becomes possible only insofar as those others are . . . civil subjects. . . . In this sense, [EdTPA] is inherently universalizing, since it is based upon the assumption of a shared human capacity for communication. (181-182, emphasis in original)

Pearson communicates what the expectations are for professionalism and “good teaching,” as though they actually know what either concept requires. Ethics factor into EdTPA in atypical ways, too. Faculty members have ethics dictated to them in terms of what is or is not acceptable in

supporting students' development of their portfolios. One can ask the student questions about her writing sample, for instance, but these questions must be of a particular sort. They cannot be too directive, but they are supposed to advance "critical thinking." The arbiter for what is acceptable or not is Pearson/EdTPA, informed by Stanford's SCALE perhaps, but *not* the faculty member or teacher candidate. Other ethical issues include the costs associated with submitting and potentially resubmitting work to Pearson at \$300 each time. Longitudinal research on the future demographics of teachers will need to consider socio-economic status, but there does not appear to be any concern on the part of Pearson that the costs are exorbitant because fiscal exploitation would require ethical considerations outside the realm of the logic of corporate profits.

For (2), imposition, EdTPA standards can be understood in Deweyan terms as ends, or those things that represent the culmination of the teaching and learning that occurs in P-12 and now higher education classrooms. The ends represent a temporary endpoint or completion of a series of activities that demonstrate lessons learned. John Dewey (1916/1997) warned of the detrimental impact that pre-scripted, externally-imposed ends has on students and teachers 100 years ago in *Democracy and Education*:

The vice of externally imposed ends has deep roots. Teachers receive them from superior authorities; these authorities accept them from what is current in the community. The teachers impose them upon children. As a first consequence, the intelligence of the teacher is not free; it is confined to receiving the aims laid down from above. Too rarely is the individual so free from the authoritative supervisor, textbook on methods, pre-scribed course of study, etc., that he can let his mind come to close quarters with the pupil's mind and the subject matter. (pp. 108-109)

For Dewey, externally mandated ends undermine the teacher's, or in our case the teacher candidate's, ability to interact with his or her students, and each student's individual experiences with the curriculum. When teacher education is prescribed within a series of imposed standards and rubrics, future teachers and teacher educators are reduced to de-contextualized functionaries, accountable to remote, prescribed notions of what it means to teach.

We think Dewey's critique of corporate influences extends this point and is instructive. Writing in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920/1957), he states,

In spite of its interest in a thoroughly social aim, utilitarianism fostered

a new class of interest, that of the capitalistic property-owning interests, provided only property was obtained through free competition and not by governmental favor. The stress that Bentham put on security tended to consecrate the legal institution of private property provided only certain legal abuses in connection with its acquisition and transfer were abolished. *Beati possidentes*—provided possessions had been obtained in accord with the rules of the competitive game—without, that is, extraneous favors from government. Thus, utilitarianism gave intellectual confirmation to all those tendencies which make “business” not a means of social service and an opportunity for personal growth in creative power but a way of accumulating the means of private enjoyments. (pp. 182-183)

Dewey is not arguing against businesses, per se. He is arguing against the logic of business as a mechanism for private profit at the expense of a critical, democratic society.

Extending Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu (1998; 2003) challenges the rhetoric of universalism that sets up the structures within which teacher candidates and their faculty mentors operate as stifling places for imposition. For Bourdieu (1998), “the effect of shared belief . . . removes from discussion ideas which are perfectly worth discussing.” (p. 6) Indeed, Bourdieu envisions a kind of collective intellectualism that challenges deeply held beliefs. Long standing assumptions like what it means to be a good teacher and what role “assessment” should play in developing good teachers become the focus of renewed critique and action. He is specifically interested in examining the major power brokers in modern society. As he puts it,

the power of the agents and mechanisms that dominate the economic and social world today rests on the extraordinary concentration of all the species of capital—economic, political, military, cultural, scientific, and technological—as the foundation of a symbolic domination without precedent. (2003, p. 39)

This symbolic domination is difficult to critique, however, because of the power it has over members of society. Following Dewey and Bourdieu, we wonder how EdTPA can be a pathway to good teaching when its business model restrictively defines what counts as good teaching.

For our third construct, hegemony, we question whether colleges of education, education deans, and university faculty have been instrumental in the imposition and maintenance of EdTPA. Over the last few years, EdTPA has quickly been accepted as the model for accountability over teacher educators and teacher candidates in the U.S. In Georgia, the roll out of EdTPA has been done with workshops and trainings provided by Pearson/EdTPA in conjunction with faculty from many, if not

all, of Georgia's universities and colleges. Of concern, for the purpose of this paper, is the hegemonic function of higher education faculty and administration in supporting EdTPA/Pearson as a given for teacher education. The widespread support for EdTPA is evidenced by the number of scholars and faculty promoting a tool that ultimately undermines criticality and the academic freedom that is supposed to be a hallmark of faculty professionalism.

This hegemonic support of EdTPA can be seen in the number of education faculty that are scorers and trainers for EdTPA, as well as the growing efforts on college campuses around Georgia—and elsewhere—designed to help students and faculty be successful with EdTPA. For example, at several universities around Atlanta, EdTPA Coordinator positions have been created and filled by teacher education faculty. EdTPA Coordinators, faculty who once taught education courses, are now charged with tasks such as: implementing EdTPA support groups on campus for students, establish faculty development regarding EdTPA implementation, and serving as liaisons between universities and the state department of education and EdTPA and Pearson. EdTPA coordinators are responsible for leading faculty meetings in which faculty receive “guidance” in adhering to EdTPA strictures and where EdTPA handbooks with titles like *Making Good Choices* and *Understanding Rubric Level Progressions* are disseminated.

In light of the hegemonic role that universities have accepted in terms of EdTPA, we wonder who will critique/resist/reject EdTPA/Pearson if the people who should be refuting it are disseminating, promoting, and even personally profiting from it. Within the context of our argument here, we assert that the real triumph of EdTPA is that it has convinced the faculty it is being imposed upon that it is a necessary, if not positive, initiative. Gert Biesta's (2012) writing on hegemony and discourse is instructive here. Biesta argues

It is, therefore, first of all the convergence towards one particular way of thinking and talking about teaching and teacher education that we should be worried about. After all, if there is no alternative discourse, if a particular idea is simply seen as “common sense,” then there is a risk that it stops people from thinking at all. A particular discourse becomes hegemonic when it begins to monopolize individual's thinking and talking about any idea. It's not so much that the discourse has the power to change everything, but rather that people begin to adjust their ways of doing and talking to such ideas. (p. 12)

What is the result, then, of this hegemonic discourse dominating over time? The result is: more homogenization and more standardization. Homogenization and standardization of the ways in which higher

education faculty think about and react to basic questions like: “what is the purpose of education?” and “what should teachers teach?” Given Pearson’s dominance, we fear that these questions are no longer open to consideration since Pearson and EdTPA have already answered them.

The imposed focus on standardization, accountability, and outputs embedded in EdPTA represents what Biesta (2012) has called the “learnification of education.” Within this framework the process of education is stressed over the purpose of education. This learnification, which we argue is increasingly dependent on the standardizing technologies of power administered by companies like Pearson, advances an agenda that renders education functionary; that is, it imposes upon students, teachers, and teacher educators an end that is easily homogenized, standardized, and measured.

EdTPA is perhaps a crowning achievement for current federal education policy that has longed to make teacher education programs more “accountable.” An ancillary consequence, though perhaps not an unintended one, is that adoption of EdTPA has only extended Pearson’s involvement in public education. The quest for accountability and standardization in schools, propagated by corporations like Pearson that stand to benefit from those ideas, has continued to homogenize and standardize ideas around what teachers must teach, what students must learn, what good teaching even is, and how teachers must hegemonically demonstrate they are qualified.

We argue that there are key questions that should be posed and considered by those currently caught up in the EdTPA movement. Will a Pearson-sponsored education help students and future teachers develop critical consciousness about their lives and the lives of their students? How does EdTPA allow teacher candidates to contextualize their teaching to fit the needs of the communities they serve? Does EdTPA encourage or even allow teachers to be professionals, capable of being ethical actors in the lives of their students and communities? As Biesta (2015) argues in his call to reclaim teacher professionalism:

If we wish to reclaim a space for teacher professionalism and educational professionalism more generally, it is important to see current developments in the field of education for what they are and not for what they pretend to be. It is important to see—and make visible to the profession and the wider public—that these developments do not enhance teacher professionalism or good education, but constitute a threat to the strive for good education and professional conduct. (p. 84)

While issues of accountability and standardization are not new ideas for P-12 teachers, Pearson’s partnership with EdTPA requires that higher education faculty and scholars alike continue to question the

degree to which corporations like Pearson, and standardizing tools like EdTPA, increasingly mediate our notions of teaching, understanding, and inquiry in education.

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