

IS THIS REFLECTION?

Examining Reflective Discourse in Teacher Education Standards and Performance Assessments

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INTRODUCTION

Reflection is a vital process in teacher preparation and development. Dewey (1933) pioneered the concept of pedagogical reflection, an iterative process examining the pragmatic aspects of teaching through querying one's pedagogical choices, embracing doubt, and adjusting instruction to promote student achievement. Scholars have since offered a variety of insights on the phenomenon, particularly with regards to its relationship to teacher education. For some stakeholders in the field, reflection holds with Dewey's more traditional presentation of the term—that is, a process tied to fine-tuning instructional maneuvers in an effort to maximize pedagogical effectiveness. But this understanding of reflection departs from the aims of critical reflection, a practice encouraging teachers to explore their own complicated sociocultural positions in an effort to become aware of and disrupt the power structures that create inequitable conditions for K–12 students (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003).

Because reflection is a multidimensional concept laden with myriad meanings and applications, the word is commonly applied to describe fundamentally different practices.

In the absence of a uniform understanding of reflection, teacher candidates may receive conflicting messages about the reflection processes they should undertake to meet the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Should teacher candidates focus on classroom management? Unpacking the nuances of their pedagogy? Or understanding the ways in which their own teaching identities inform their instructional maneuvers? Competing (re)presentations of reflection may confound and distress teacher candidates as they work to develop a reflective skill set on which they will be summatively assessed (Rodgers, 2002). They may also depart from the critical reflection processes social justice-oriented teacher educators value and promote. In this context, we attempt to untangle the ways in which teacher education standards and performance assessments—specifically, the Inter-

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state Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards, Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) Secondary English Language Arts Assessment Handbook, the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT) Candidate and Educator Handbook, and the PPAT Reflective Practice Handbook—frame and portray the concept of reflection to teacher candidates. Specifically, we investigate:

1. How, and in what ways, do the InTASC standards, the edTPA Secondary ELA Assessment Handbook, the PPAT Candidate and Educator Handbook, and the PPAT Reflective Practice Handbook portray the concept of reflection?
 - Does this portrayal align with more traditional or critical conceptions of reflection?
 - Do the documents negotiate traditional and critical portrayals of reflection and, if so, how?

We conclude this work by discussing ways teacher educators can help their students reconcile potential incongruities in and among teacher education standards and performance assessments and, in doing so, position their students to think, and teach, in more socially just ways.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Largely attributed to the work of Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching assumes that schools as institutions have historically marginalized and oppressed students of color. Culturally responsive teaching, an equity pedagogy rooted in the scope of multicultural education (McGee Banks & Banks, 1995), posits the wealth of assets culturally and linguistically diverse students bring from their homes and communities when they enter the classroom, and that tapping into these funds of knowledge (González,

Moll, & Amanti, 2013) provides a means by which to disrupt oppressive educative conditions. Culturally responsive teaching promotes critical, sociopolitical awareness for teachers and students alike; thus, culturally responsive classrooms and schools become engines for equity and individual-community renewal and transformation (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To effectively prepare teacher candidates capable of positioning all students to meet the markers of traditional academic achievement, teacher educators must work to develop students' social justice dispositions in sustained, contextual ways (Bissonnette, 2016; Miller, 2006).

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection processes play a crucial role in the creation of culturally responsive classrooms (Howard, 2003). While students in the United States reflect an ever-diversifying spectrum of sociocultural identities (Hussar & Bailey, 2013), its teaching force is largely White (Boser, 2014). To mitigate the effects of potential sociocultural incongruities between teachers and students, teachers must engage in critical reflection. Smyth (1989) posited that critical reflection entails four sequential stages: (a) describing (What do I do?), (b) informing (What does this mean?); (c) confronting (How did I come to be like this?); and (d) reconstructing (How might I do things differently?). With Smyth (1989) and Howard (2003), we envision critical reflection as a process that depends first on teachers' examining their own sociocultural identities, privilege, and bias—a basic but foundational opening—then applying this understanding of self to teaching practice so they may create more equitable, socially just conditions for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Considering Howard's work, critical reflection is a necessary precursor for creating a more robust and sustainable culturally responsive pedagogy. While critical reflection expands on Dewey's concept of pedagogical reflection, we find fruitful Dewey's (1929) framing of reflection as a "restless disposition"—thus, we

advance critical reflection as ongoing in a teacher's work of building, through dialogue and collaboration with students, communities, and institutions, a sustainable culturally responsive teaching repertoire. Critical reflection and culturally responsive teaching provide us, as researchers, with a nuanced interpretive lens and purpose for reading and analyzing our corpus of data. These bodies of literature, furthermore, provide us with tools for noticing when teaching and learning are framed as apolitical; when curriculum design ignores students' diversity and funds of knowledge; and when teacher reflection fails to interrogate relations and structures of power that reproduce inequality inside (and, thus, outside) classrooms and institutions of learning.

METHODS

Data

In order to query the forms of reflection presented to teacher candidates, we turned to widely implemented standards and assessments designed for teacher preparatory programs. Of particular interest were assessments teacher candidates are required to satisfy in order to graduate or receive certification; these high stakes assessments are likely the ones on which teacher candidates and their teacher educators focus their attention and efforts. While the InTASC standards and the PPAT are used across grades and subject levels, the edTPA is a subject-specific evaluation. Because of our backgrounds as English/literacy teacher educators, we focused on the edTPA Assessment Handbook designed for secondary English teacher candidates.

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards. Endorsed by The Council of Chief State School Officers, the InTASC standards offer "a model [of] core teaching standards that outline what teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every K–12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce in today's world" (Council of Chief

State School Officers, 2011, p. 3). These 10 standards, which are consistent across all subjects and grade levels, organize various principles and foundations of instructional practices believed necessary to promote student achievement.

Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT) Candidate and Educator Handbook. The PPAT is an Educational Testing Service-created teacher performance assessment that scores teacher candidates on their mastery of four tasks, all related to the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. The PPAT asks teacher candidates to upload artifacts, videos of their teaching, and written commentary to demonstrate their basic pedagogical content knowledge and ability to apply this knowledge. The candidate and educator handbook includes an overview of all major components of the exam, thinking and writing prompts to support student performance, and instructions on video recording and submission. The handbook includes all prompts and instructions for the PPAT exam itself; analyzing the handbook allows us to analyze the exam simultaneously.

PPAT Reflective Practice Handbook. The reflective practice handbook supports candidate understanding of the purpose of professional reflection and assists them in developing a professional growth plan through ongoing self-assessment, goal setting, and analysis of teaching. The handbook supports candidate understanding of the purpose and process of reflection in relation to the four tasks of the assessment.

Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA): Secondary ELA Assessment Handbook. Lastly, we examined the edTPA Secondary ELA Assessment handbook. The edTPA was created by faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (2015) to evaluate teacher candidates' readiness for effective teaching. To satisfy the edTPA, which teacher education programs nationwide have adopted widely, teacher candidates complete a subject-specific portfolio during their clinical teaching experience. Like

the PPAT, teacher candidates supply their evaluators with written documents, videos, and teaching artifacts on which they are assessed. The assessment rates teachers on the planning, instruction, and assessment tasks, across 15 different rubrics. The Secondary ELA Assessment handbook is meant to introduce and prepare candidates for the exam; it includes scaffolding for student thinking and writing for all major exam components. The edTPA Handbook houses the edTPA exam in its entirety, meaning that analyzing the handbook allowed us to analyze the exam simultaneously.

Data Analysis

Summative Content Analysis. A division of scholarship that calls upon the collection of various forms of texts to elucidate a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2013), content analysis is a research method that uses “mute evidence” (Hodder, 1994, p. 393) as data. Using this method, text—as either spoken or written—serves as the unit of analysis. This study assumes the framework of summative content analysis in that it begins with identifying certain word/phrases with an ultimate purpose of uncovering and understanding the contextual use of the word/phrases. To begin our analysis, we used the ctrl+f function to electronically search each document to ascertain the number of times the words “reflect,” “reflection,” or “reflective” appeared and documented this finding. We tallied but ultimately did not include in the final percentages mentions of the word that appeared in the table of contents, section headers, or citations. We also tallied but did not include in the final percentages mentions of the word that did not align with pedagogical reflection (e.g., “This is a standards-based assessment that *reflects* the elements of teaching described by the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards”). Summative content analysis involves a detailed latent content analysis, or interpretation of content (Holsti, 1969); accordingly, we examined the

conversation around each instance of the term, an investigation led by our code list.

Deductive Codes. Using an a priori deductive approach to analysis, we applied Van Manen’s (1977) framework, informed by the germinal work of Habermas (1973), that offers reflection as a three-level hierarchal process, with level one as *technical reflection*, level two as *practical reflection*, and level three as *critical reflection*. We chose this framework not only because of its foundational relationship to the field, but because it encompasses a continuum of reflection processes that accounts for the improvisational and context-dependent nature of pedagogical work. Van Manen’s levels of reflection are not mutually exclusive and do not denote a developmental scale. A teacher can critically reflect in and on practice with regularity *and* engage in technical reflection to solve given job demands as they arise. In other words, a teacher can question the ends of curricula and schooling, redesigning lessons and courses to align with a social-justice orientation (critical reflection) *and*, at the same time, strategize ways she can maintain order (technical reflection). Reflective activity is context- and problem-dependent. Table 1 illustrates the levels for which we coded as well as the pedagogical goals and questions associated with each level.

Technical Reflection Processes. Van Manen notes that technical reflection is concerned chiefly with “means rather than ends.” A teacher’s reasoning about instructional adjustments and pedagogical decisions, both in the teaching moment and after, are based on “principles of technological progress—economy, efficiency, and effectiveness” (1977, p. 226). This dimension of reflection is void of norms, values, and ethics outside of those mentioned above. A teacher engages in technical reflection processes to address disruptions in a smoothly functioning classroom to better enforce order.

Practical Reflection Processes. The aim of practical reflection, for Van Manen, is to establish clear classroom communication and understanding. This “hermeneutic-interpre-

TABLE 1
Levels (Codes) of Reflection

<i>Reflection Level</i>	<i>Level Description (Deductive Code)</i>	<i>Goal of Reflective Activity</i>	<i>Questions by Level</i>
Level 1	Technical Reflective Processes (Technical Rationality)	To maintain effective and efficient control of teaching environment; ends or goals of curricula or schooling not questioned	<p><i>“Are students doing what they are supposed to be doing? How can I alter my practices to create and enforce order?”</i></p> <p>No coded examples of technical reflection were found by researchers in the examined documents.</p>
Level 2	Practical Reflective Processes (Practical Action)	Investigate assumptions and predispositions that lead to teacher or student action/ reaction; instructional goal is to maximize student learning and teacher effectiveness; the “ends” of teaching and learning are unexamined	<p><i>“A curricular problem must be solved in order to maximize effectiveness. What are the available tools to solve said problem?”</i></p> <p>Coded example from PPAT Reflective Practice Handbook: “reflection bears a strong relationship to the unique improvisational thinking teachers do on the spot while teaching: they use what they know about teaching to implement planned instruction in the classroom, and as they do this, they think about which strategies are and are not helping specific students learn” (p. 8).</p>
Level 3	Critical Reflective Processes (Critical Reflection)	To question the aims and goals of instruction and schooling; to examine how one’s values, commitments, and sociocultural position inhibit or enable equity and socially just teaching practices.	<p><i>“How does my identity and sociocultural position shape how I teach and interact with students?”</i></p> <p><i>“How can I examine this position and support more equitable, just curricula and classroom environments?”</i></p> <p><i>“Am I teaching what students need to know in order to promote a freer, more just community and society?”</i></p> <p>Coded Example from InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: “The teacher reflects on his/her personal biases and accesses resources to deepen his/her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning experiences” (p. 18).</p>

tive” dimension of reflection asks the teacher to analyze and clarify “individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, prejudgments, and presuppositions” for the purpose of improving practical classroom action (Van Manen, 1977, p. 226). Here teachers aim to understand a student’s experience of and how

they might adjust instruction to improve communication and, ultimately, learning and student achievement. This orientation to reflection is consistent with standardized approaches to teacher education, alluded to earlier.

Critical Reflection Processes. Van Manen’s highest level of reflective activity

incorporates the other two levels and adds a sociopolitical-ethical dimension. Critical reflection addresses, “itself to the question of the worth of knowledge and to the social conditions necessary for raising the question of worthiness in the first place. [Critical reflection] involves a constant critique of domination, of institutions, and of repressive forms of authority” (p. 227). The purpose of the critically reflective educator is to, in dialogue with students, promote ends consistent with justice, equality, and freedom. Van Manen’s concern with critically reflective practice mirrors contemporary literature on critical reflection (see, e.g., Bissonnette, 2016; Howard, 2003).

To ensure intercoder reliability, we independently coded the data, then conferred at various points during the analysis phase to discuss our findings. We shared analytic memos and, in instances of coding incongruity, discussed the data until we reached a decision. Decisions made as a research collective were then applied across the data sources to ensure credibility of analysis. This process allowed us

to achieve consistent, and authentic, data analysis.

RESULTS

Our analysis of the InTASC standards, PPAT candidate and educator handbook, the PPAT reflective practice handbook, and edTPA secondary ELA assessment handbook, revealed that practical reflection, level two of Van Manen’s framework, was the most commonly described approach to reflection processes. Level one reflection was completely absent from all documents; level three, critical reflection, emerged only rarely in the documents. Table two offers a comprehensive illustration of the summative content analysis findings.

The documents—taken together—do not address the concerns of critically reflective practice, namely interrupting privilege; distributing power to and among students; interrupting structures and relations of domination; or, promoting justice and freedom in society. In the following sections, we tend to level-specific coding revelations.

TABLE 2
Summative Content Analysis Findings

	<i>Number of Times Reflect/ Reflection/ Reflective Appears</i>	<i>Number of Times Reflect/ Reflection/ Reflective used to Denote Instructional Decisions or Professional Improvement</i>	<i>Coded Instances that Signaled Technical Reflection (Level 1)</i>	<i>Coded Instances that Signaled Practical Reflection (Level 2)</i>	<i>Coded Instances that Signaled Critical Reflection (Level 3)</i>
InTASC	9	8	0	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)
PPAT Candidate and Educator Handbook	54	33	0	33 (100%)	0
PPAT Reflective Practice Handbook	353	172	0	172 (100%)	0
edTPA (Secondary English Assessment Handbook)	7	5	0	5 (100%)	0
Total coded instances across all documents	423	218	0	217 (99.5%)	1 (0.46%)

Evidence of Technical Reflection

Across the four documents, we found zero instances of technical reflection prescribed, mandated, or recommended. Worth noting is that technical and practical reflection often work in tandem, and, as such, may be impossible to untangle (Van Manen, 1977). Consequently, the instances of practical reflection, discussed in the subsequent section, likely entail aspects of technical reflection. The teacher, as positioned in these documents, is a thinker and problem solver, dynamic in the potential resources she recruits to solve problems and improve curriculum delivery and teaching effectiveness. She is not a cog in the institutional wheel or abiding by a checklist. However, as will be seen below, neither is she positioned as an agent of or participant in social or political change.

Evidence of Practical Reflection

Practical reflection is the dominant mode of reflective thought and practice across documents. Practical reflection is described as ongoing action instrumental to improved practice and improved student learning. The teacher is a “learner,” with reflection the ongoing linchpin for professional growth. In the PPAT candidate and educator handbook and reflective practice handbook, the act of practical reflection is ongoing, a professional mindset instrumental to growth and improvement (as a professional and as a mediator of student learning). In the “Why Reflection Matters” section of the reflective practice handbook, we find these samples representative of the kind of practical reflection recommended to candidates.

Reflection bears a strong relationship to the kind of improvisational thinking teachers do on the spot while teaching. (2015, p. 8)

Teachers reflect on the tools available to them in concert with what they know about students and curriculum to determine which

strategies—and modifications to those strategies—suit their students current needs. (p. 9)

Practical reflection is also linked to careful consideration of evidence, whereby the candidate must make claims about the quality of their planning and their knowledge of students, illustrated in this example: “[the candidate, you] describes, analyzes, and reflects on the evidence; and reflects in what ways the evidence you have collected impacts your understanding of the knowledge of students and the classroom learning environment” (p. 13). Reflection is the act that links “data” from one teaching situation to the instructional planning of another.

The edTPA secondary English assessment handbook (2015) lacks substantial discourse on reflection. When reflection does appear, it is often coupled with “analysis” of student learning. The handbook, for instance, delineates four practices successful teachers undertake: “Successful teachers [...] ‘reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on student learning’” (p. 1). Similarly, in a section explaining that student learning depends on the dynamic interplay among planning, instruction, and assessment, the handbook reads, “As you develop, document, and teach your lessons, you will reflect upon the cyclical relationship among planning, instruction, and assessment with a focus on your students’ learning needs” (p. 2). The purpose of reflection, in this document and similar to the PPAT handbook, is to analyze the relationship among planning, design, instruction, and assessment; reflection is student-, evidence-, and future-focused. While we find this orientation practical, helpful, and important to preparing teachers, practical reflection processes, as represented in these documents and assessments, do not ask candidates to question the purpose of lessons and units. Valuable questions might be asked in these documents, including: whose knowledge is being privileged and reproduced? Does my teaching help students consume and compose for a freer, more just society? How does my raced-,

classed-, and gendered-self influence what and how I teach? Who benefits or suffers from this inevitably partial orientation and how could these constructs be dismantled and rebuilt equitably, with more attunement to difference? But they are not.

Evidence of Critical Reflection

The singular coded instance of critical reflection comes from InTASC Standard 9, “Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.” Through “ongoing professional learning” and close examination of evidence, the teacher is expected to evaluate the effects his instructional decisions have on others (students, parents, the community). This ethic alone positions reflection as critical in nature. Subsection “e” of the standard reads,

The teacher reflects on his/her personal biases and accesses resources to deepen his/her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning experiences. (2011, p. 18)

Here, encouraging teachers to examine “personal biases” signals critical reflection given that understanding one’s sociocultural identity as an interpretive framework is where critical reflection begins (Howard, 2003). Engaging in this critical analysis of self primes teacher candidates for the important work of culturally responsive teaching. However, the emphasis of the standard as a whole is understanding diversity for clearer communication and improved student learning. While this is a step in the right direction—and is a well-worded standard to promote culturally relevant teaching—the incisiveness of critical reflection is muted. The teacher, for instance, is not asked to access resources that deepen his understanding of social inequality or structures of oppression, factors that influence students’ lives and academic performance. As stated, the goal is to improve teacher candidates’ understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences in order to maximize efficient

classroom learning, not to undertake the daily work of dismantling the structures of oppression and inequality that make such communication gaps the norm (see, e.g., Delpit, 2006).

Despite its alignment with the aims of critical reflection, examining “personal biases” presents another dimension of concern. The “personal” is problematic insofar as it mitigates who or what can be critiqued. Pathologizing the individual teacher and his or her lack of familiarity with difference only masks the larger cultural, historical, social, education, and institutional forces of discrimination. While we did code the one instance of reflection as critical, it comes with an asterisk: this singular instance superficially highlights the aims and modes of critical reflection.

What’s Missing?

In keeping with the techniques of summative content analyses, the focused terms for analysis were “reflect,” “reflection,” and “reflective”; however, while reading the documents in their entirety, we noticed a significant paucity of vocabulary related to social justice-oriented teacher education. In the secondary English edTPA assessment handbook and the PPAT handbook, these terms are not found: society, justice, race, gender, equity, transformation, or diversity. The InTASC standards do include a helpful statement on diversity, diverse learners, and inclusive learning environments (p. 21). The statement emphasizes the unique needs of every learner in order to participate meaningfully in mainstream instruction and in learning traditional academic content (perhaps in innovative ways).

DISCUSSION

Perhaps the most interesting, and troubling, conclusion from our analysis is that while all the documents studied promoted student learning, achievement, and higher standards, we interpret these as empty signifiers. What are students supposed to learn and achieve?

Higher academic standards. The circularity of rhetoric leaves one wondering what the implicit “end” of education is. What knowledge is of most worth? What is the purpose of schooling? What is the relationship among academic knowledge, equality, justice, and social transformation (Pinar, 2012)? Rigorous academic knowledge is positioned as an end for itself; and teacher reflection is the vehicle to ensure the smooth, uninterrupted passage from a teacher’s planning to student achievement.

Teachers as Agentic Professionals

The preponderance of level two reflection positions the teacher as an agentic (if not overburdened) professional. She is instrumental in the academic success and achievement of students through the powers of her planning; her consideration of student background, interests, or assets; her varied and strategic assessment repertoire; and her ability to analyze student learning for future teaching. In these documents, the teacher is rhetorically framed as the always thinking, always doing professional, never content but always striving to improve her students’ academic potential and success. But this masks, we think, the vacuity of these reflective activities in the absence of the critical ethics provided by level three. In the absence of critical reflection, the teacher is ensuring the smooth functioning of an institution that needs, continually, to be interrupted and questioned about the just and equitable ends it (does not) serve(s). Furthermore, the injunction to practically reflect and monitor one’s thinking serves the needs of audit culture and social efficiency. Dunn’s (2005) work helps us understand how and why audit cultures need workers who have internalized the injunction to self-monitor. She notes, “standards work ... by standardizing people and making them into self-monitoring, self-motivating persons who ... align themselves with regulations ... spurring themselves to action by constantly monitoring their individual performance” (Dunn, p. 189; quoted in Taubman,

2009, p. 114). Taubman, in his work on accountability culture and its effects on teachers and teaching, is critical of this narrowed version of reflective practice, noting that a teacher’s focus is not “the larger social, political, or economic situation in which he or she works but on the progress he or she makes toward meeting the particular standards as measured by his or her own and his or her students’ discrete performance” (p. 115). Framed and read critically, practical reflection and the injunction to continually self-monitor, self-correct, turns into a pedagogical Panopticon: internalized outer directives ensure that the audit comes from within.

Paucity of Critical Reflection

Lastly, the infrequent conversations around critical reflection were unsettling given the relationship between critical reflection processes and equity (Gay, 2010). However, this paucity is not particularly surprising given that research shows there is little consistency among teacher education programs as to what qualifies as critical reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1993). That language around critical reflection is all but absent from teacher education standards/assessment documents helps explain why critical reflection is an infrequently performed facet of in-service teachers’ pedagogical reflection skill set (Bissonnette, 2016; Howard, 2003).

To that end, teacher educators should support and encourage their students to develop the sociocultural awareness foundational to critical reflection. This means having explicit conversations with teacher candidates about issues of equity, such as the impact of Whiteness on one’s pedagogy (see, e.g., Sams & Allman, 2015). Students need to see their professors modeling critical reflection and examining their own positionalities in relation to their instructional goals and choices and the purposes of higher education (Bissonnette, 2016; Cook & Bissonnette, 2016). Teacher educators should also help students question and examine the “ends” of education and the

purposes of schooling (Labaree, 2011). If students cannot conceptualize the relationships among curricula, academic knowledge, justice, and social transformation, then the answer to the question of what knowledge and skills matter most will always be answered by others.

CONCLUSION

Teacher candidates are increasingly subjected to an array of standards and assessments intended to evaluate their readiness and ability to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Taubman (2009) notes that accountability and audit cultures narrow the goals of instruction and schooling to a standardized version of achievement, muting issues of justice, equity, and the role of learning and of school in transforming society. Despite these disparate ideologies and approaches to teacher preparation, teacher candidates and their teacher educators cannot escape, in the short term, the realities of neoliberal reform, including the standards and performance assessment tasks candidates are expected to master to graduate and/or obtain teaching credentials. Thus, it becomes imperative for researchers and teacher educators to question how these assessment documents represent (and thus validate through measurement) acts and habits of reflection. If teacher education programs align their courses, instruction, and formative assessments to edTPA and PPAT, we worry future teachers will understand reflective practice as entirely instrumental. Critically reflective practice holds issues of justice, equity, and freedom in the light. It continually calls persons and institutions to account for “why” and “for whom” we educate children. If teachers and students are to engage in rigorous and meaningful work together, then teacher educators must reintroduce opportunities for their teacher candidates to witness, learn from, and practice critical reflection.

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