THE CALIFORNIA HISTORY–SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK: A STUDY IN THE DE-PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHERS

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In his Foreword, California Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig suggests that the History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools "encourages teachers to unleash their pedagogical energies in a variety of ways."1 The authors suggest that implementing the Framework requires cooperative planning, promotes team teaching, and supports instructional methods like cooperative learning.

A superficial reading of the Framework might lead us to believe that California has indeed created a curriculum that "will strengthen and enrich what students learn in history and the social sciences not only in California but throughout the nation as well."2 It has been widely heralded by those who have criticized present efforts in social studies education.3 Although considered revolutionary in some circles, the Framework is also part of a major California initiative to reform the curriculum.4

We can look at this document in many ways. Generally, policy statements have implications far beyond the obvious. The obvious in this case is a change in the content of the California social studies curriculum. Less obvious, perhaps, are the implications for the movement to professionalize teaching.

The Framework has much to say directly about students and the content of their history and social science courses. Absent, however, is much about

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2 Ibid., p. viii.
3 One of the most interesting things about the Framework is the obvious disregard of the term social studies and the adoption of "history–social sciences." The shift follows from the reorientation of the curriculum from the more general social studies to the more specific discipline focus of history–social sciences. Given the incredible number of topics to be covered in this curriculum, however, I wonder whether a real change in content and structure has occurred.
4 The state of California has issued curriculum guidelines since the 1960s. Early efforts took the form of advisories to local educators. Since the 1980s, the influence of the guidelines or frameworks has increased, particularly in textbook selection.
teachers and teaching. The purpose of this article is first to uncover what the Framework says about teachers and, second, to discuss the implications for the growing professionalization movement.

The Framework arose, Honig claims, as a “direct and powerful answer to widespread public demand for a revival of teaching of history and geography.” Echoing recent criticisms, he dismisses the subject of social studies as shallow, scattered, and lifeless. Missing is the conceptual glue necessary to shape the discipline into a worthwhile pursuit. The Framework, which “places history at the center of the social sciences and humanities, where it belongs,” has that glue, Honig contends.

From a curricular perspective, however, the glue will have to be strong. The Framework’s three goals are divided into 12 strands, and all are described as equally important. In addition, the authors suggest that the history–social sciences curriculum is an appropriate place to integrate instruction in the humanities—art, music, and literature. Pieced together in this way, the authors of the Framework have a large vision for the content of the curriculum.

The authors of the Framework also have a vision for how students will learn. Convinced that students in the earliest grades have been shortchanged by prevailing social studies programs, the authors propose that historical studies begin when a child first enters school. Rather than teach children things they already know (home, family, school), the authors contend that students are interested in and ready for “close encounters with powerful ideas, great events, major issues, significant trends, and the contributions of important men and women.” Furthermore, the Framework was not written as a static document. Instead, it is meant to suggest the dynamism and vitality of both historical and contemporary life:
Students need to understand the importance to a democracy of citizens who are willing to participate actively in government, think critically and creatively about issues, confront the unsolved problems of society, and work through democratic processes toward the fuller realization of its highest ideals in the lives of all its citizens.\textsuperscript{10}

A discussion of two curriculum elements—content and students—makes up the vast portion of the document. Other major sections outline the criteria for evaluating instructional materials and assessing and evaluating students. Teaching, however, is not discussed much. If the essence of teaching and learning is represented in the interactions between content, students, and teacher, then one of the players is missing. To say that teachers are entirely absent from the text would be an exaggeration; to say that they are vastly underrepresented, however, seems abundantly clear. Despite the occasional reference to “unleashing their pedagogical energies” or the notion that they are expected to “integrate and correlate these strands as part of their teaching,” teachers are essentially a silent voice in the conversation.

There could be any number of explanations for this situation. Perhaps the authors simply assumed that teachers and teaching strategies do not need to be explicitly addressed. After all, teachers are trained and certified and presumably know how to teach. Or the authors may have thought addressing content and students was more important, saving pedagogical discussions for another time.

We should not disregard these possibilities out of hand. The power and influence that this document is expected to have suggests, however, that the authors did not simply overlook such an important factor. I contend instead that the Framework downplayed teachers’ role in the curriculum intentionally to promote a new conception of the curriculum-reform process. In essence, we could characterize the process by (1) defining the content of the curriculum through a conceptually oriented policy statement, (2) providing specific instructions to textbook publishers hoping to attain a spot on the approved adoption list, and (3) developing a statewide assessment test directly aligned with the content expressed in textbooks. Described in this fashion, California’s curriculum-reform process raises a host of interesting questions. In this article, however, I concentrate on the implications of the process and the assumptions behind it for the movement toward teacher professionalization.

**THE FRAMEWORK AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALIZATION**

Long a subtheme in education, the professionalization of teachers has recently emerged as a dynamic movement. Although some would argue that the pursuit of professionalism may be counterproductive,\textsuperscript{11} most others are

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 23.

\textsuperscript{11}David Labaree, “The Politics of Teacher Professionalization in the 1980s” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC, August 1990)
supportive. My intent is not to argue for or against professionalism but rather to examine the implicit and explicit effects a policy like the Framework might have on the effort.

Teacher professionalism can be defined in several ways. For example, Sykes gives a functional description of key characteristics of professionalism. Recognizing the inherent tensions and dilemmas created through the interaction of policy and practice, he uses the schemata of authority, regard, resources, and knowledge to develop a conception of teachers as professionals. Labaree focuses on the elements of knowledge and autonomy. He maintains that a bargain is struck whereby "technical competence is exchanged for technical autonomy, practical knowledge for control over practice." In this article, I use Labaree's descriptors to frame my discussion.

Labaree and others posit that one main characteristic of a profession is the possession of formal knowledge. Sykes suggests that "professional status and authority rest on a claim to knowledge." But claims are simply that—claims. Although we never question the professions of medicine or law, many people express uncertainty about the notion of a professional knowledge base in education. Despite efforts to create one, Sykes says, "there seems, then, to be considerable, commonsense evidence that no special knowledge is needed to teach well." The authors of the Framework appear to support this view. Of course, knowledge is important. In fact, the Framework has been criticized for being a form of cognitive overkill. The distinction is one of form, the authors of the Framework privilege content knowledge of history but discount craft or pedagogical knowledge.

Besides Honig's reference to "unleashing their pedagogical energies," the Framework makes few direct references to teachers. They are expected

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to "integrate and correlate" the various strands of the curriculum and to engage in cooperative planning and team teaching and to provide experiences in "civic participation, community service, ... and cooperative learning." But the Framework mentions these ideas only in passing. The authors never explain how to develop these activities or why they might be worthwhile to pursue. The only other reference to pedagogy comes in the form of a brief list of instructional strategies. The authors of the Framework suggest that teachers can use "original source documents, debates, simulations, role playing, or whatever means" to teach the content. That these methods have been advocated for at least 25 years speaks more to the authors' undervaluing of teachers' knowledge than to improved instructional practice. With pedagogical knowledge effectively dismissed, the perennial practice of "teaching as telling" seems assured.

In an article purporting to describe improvements in teaching history, Crabtree contends that the most important factor is "improving teachers' background knowledge in history." She does not mention the need for solid pedagogical knowledge and skills. Instead, she details the development of "teaching guides," "exemplary programs," and "teaching units" that will ostensibly help teachers implement the new curriculum. In short, according to the prevailing view, teachers simply need to know more history. Failing that, and for the "large numbers of teachers minimally educated in history," ready-to-use, off-the-shelf instructional units will be written and made available.

We are forced to conclude that curriculum policymakers in California hold little regard for teachers' knowledge about content or pedagogy. Much of the Framework assumes that teachers don't know much history; their pedagogical knowledge is either disregarded or considered counterproductive. Therefore, it is difficult to see how the Framework supports teacher professionalization.

A second defining characteristic of professions is autonomy. Yet the nature and value of teacher autonomy is not universally acclaimed. Lortie, for example, raises serious questions about whether schools' organizations and structures provide the kind of autonomy that will help teachers and benefit

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21Ibid.
students. Most authors, however, while acknowledging Lortie's point, argue against organizations and structures that inhibit teacher autonomy. Chubb, for example, reports that the autonomy of teachers and schools is directly responsible for increased student academic performance. Others, making less inflated claims, position teachers at the center of any substantive change in schools and argue that teachers must therefore be autonomous decision makers.

What worries many advocates of teacher professionalism is the seemingly steady decline in teacher autonomy as teachers and schools become increasingly subject to centralization and bureaucratization. Sykes, for example, warns of the "migration of authority from the classroom teacher to a variety of agents outside the classroom, including state and federal governments, school boards and administrators, textbook publishers, social scientists in the university, and others." Chubb argues a similar point, stating outside pressures that reduce teacher autonomy are a "threat" to the educative functions of classrooms and schools.

TEACHER AUTONOMY AND THE FRAMEWORK

What part, then, does teacher autonomy, particularly in curriculum development and implementation, play in the Framework? The answer is not immediately clear.

Certainly in comparison with some other state curriculum guides, the Framework is less prescriptive and therefore more open to individual teacher decision making. Gagnon claims that autonomy at the local level is essentially undisturbed. "It is a framework only, not a curriculum but a guide, useful to those responsible for the detailed curriculum planning to be done at the local level for schools and districts."

According to Alexander and Crabtree, the California Department of Education recognizes that local districts have both the responsibility for and

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25 Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, Education under Siege (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1985).
28 The North Carolina state social studies curriculum, for example, is over 500 pages compared with the approximately 100-page California Framework.
the authority to develop appropriate implementation plans. In short, those looking for a step-by-step curriculum guide will not find it in the Framework. As a policy statement, however, the Framework is only one part of the professional autonomy issue.

The architects of curriculum policy in California have clearly established the direction they intend to pursue for curricular revision. In California classrooms, more than the written policy shapes the curriculum. In both the History—Social Science Framework and the Mathematics Framework, the policy statement has introduced the intended reform. But the main audience for the documents appears not to be public school teachers and administrators but rather textbook publishing companies. With more than six pages of detailed criteria on textbooks and teachers' manuals, the authors of the History—Social Science Framework appear to be outlining the specifications for instructional materials that will meet the state adoption committee standards. Apparently trusting the oft-related notion that teachers teach textbooks, the Framework authors see the reform being implemented, in part, not by encouraging better teacher knowledge and autonomous decision making, but by manipulating textbooks.

But changing textbooks is apparently not sufficient. California has a long history of statewide assessment testing. Traditionally associated with evaluating individual students, the California Assessment Program (CAP) is being used to support programmatic changes in curriculum. Despite a statement in the Framework assuring readers that student success will be measured "not only in test scores," the centrality of the CAP test is obvious. In the "Assessment and Evaluation" section of the Framework, the authors note that the history—social science test will survey students' knowledge, basic skills, thinking, and social participation. Because of the Framework's extreme attention to the cognitive knowledge base of history and the social sciences, the reflection of these four components on the test is interesting. But it is not difficult

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30 Francie Alexander and Charlotte Crabtree, "California's New History—Social Science Curriculum Promises Richness and Depth," Educational Leadership 46 (September 1988): 10-13. Paul Gagnon has been a frequent critic of "social studies" and was one of the principal authors of the Framework. Alexander and Crabtree were also contributors to the document.

31 California has been using matrix sampling as a means for statewide assessment for 15 years. The test based on the History—Social Science Framework, however, has not yet been developed. See California Assessment Program Staff, "Authentic Assessment in California," Educational Leadership 46 (April 1989): 6.

32 Assessing students' affective and participatory knowledge and dispositions has long puzzled standardized test-item writers. In effect, how does one "assess" another's values and beliefs? Further, how can an objective test measure a student's participation? How the California Assessment Program developers intend to accomplish this goal is not clear, but the Framework language is essentially passive and decontextualized. Thus, the Framework calls for students to be able to "identify" controversial issues, "recognize" prejudice and discrimination, "understand" the need for ethical behavior, and exhibit a "willingness" to accept the consequences of one's actions. Expressed in such highly cognitive terms, the Framework objectives may not be as difficult to assess "objectively" as might be supposed.
to imagine that the CAP history-social science test closely reflects the Framework and the resultant textbooks.

But do textbooks and tests really influence teacher autonomy adversely? Will they, in fact, affect teachers' development as professionals? I believe that the answer to both questions is yes.

Textbooks and tests have long been part of teachers' stock in trade. But classroom researchers have found that teachers use these things in highly individualistic ways. Thus, although teachers rely heavily on textbooks, they tend not to use them exactly as they are written. Tests, too, are generally classroom-based, measuring what an individual teacher considers important. As a result, until recently, teachers in the classroom have primarily shaped the curriculum. Efforts like the Framework are clearly designed to discourage that situation. California policymakers intend to use the prescription of textbooks and the accountability of tests to ensure individual teaching and learning outcomes.

This alignment of statewide assessment tests with state-adopted textbooks, both originating from a state-issued policy, does not speak well of efforts to develop teacher autonomy and professionalism. Instead, a picture emerges of teachers as functionaries—"low-level employees or civil servants whose main function is to implement reforms decided by experts in the upper levels of state and educational bureaucracies." Sykes argues that the effect of much recent policy is to "reduce and direct their [teachers'] discretion, not enhance or cultivate it." Apparently, the main audiences for the Framework are the textbook publishers who will compete for spots on the adoption committee list and the CAP authorities responsible for creating an assessment that reinforces the policy intent. Far from seeing teachers as integral to curricular change, the Framework has been designed around them, undercutting their autonomous decision making and disregarding their professional knowledge.

For a state seemingly grounded in principles of individuality and initiative to so vigorously move to curb those characteristics in teachers is curious. Set against a national movement to strengthen teachers' position as professionals, California's action seems strangely out of step. Yet, as Cohen adroitly observes,
contradictory, countervailing, and paradoxical practices have long characterized the American educational system.\(^{38}\)

Representing both the best and the worst of education, teachers and teaching have been subject to all manner of concern. Considering the extended call for reform typical of the last decade, we should not be surprised, then, that state leaders have pinned their hopes to the increased rationality that bureaucratization promises.\(^{39}\) Streamlining educational decision making and practice should bring a large measure of order and logic to an unruly, chaotic enterprise. By attaching their fate to the security of rationality and bureaucracy, however, California policymakers seem to be backing a flagging horse.\(^{40}\) The simple irony, of course, is that they are ignoring the same lessons of history they so carefully espouse in the Framework. The more things change...

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