Alberta's New Teaching Quality Standard and Its Implications for Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the implications of the new provincially mandated Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) for teacher education programs in Alberta, Canada. We review the current context of teacher education in Alberta and the policy background of the TQS. We then consider how the TQS might serve as an appropriate framework for teacher preparation programs and suggest, using Bell and Stevenson's (2015) policy analytics, how the new TQS has emerged and may be enacted. We conclude that if the TQS is to serve as a framework for teacher preparation, increased collaboration is needed among those providing teacher preparation programs, and indeed among all education stakeholders, as is assurance of ongoing democratic processes for negotiating and reviewing the policy and its practices.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher preparation, teaching quality, teaching competencies, standards of practice, education stakeholders, policy framework, policy analysis, Alberta

RESUMÉ: Nous analysons ici les répercussions du nouveau mandat de la province sur le *Teaching Quality Standard (TQS)* dans les programmes de formation des enseignants en Alberta, au Canada, ainsi que le contexte actuel de la formation des enseignants en Alberta et le contexte politique de TQS. Ensuite, nous réfléchissons sur le moyen adéquate à employer pour que TQS serve de cadre dans les programmes de préparation des enseignants et laissons entendre, à l'aide des analyses politiques de Bell et Stevenson (2015), la manière que TQS est apparue et la manière dont cela peut être promulgué.

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En conclusion, si TQS doit servir de cadre pour la préparation des enseignants, cela renforcera la collaboration nécessaire pour ceux qui créent les programmes de préparation des enseignants et certainement pour toutes les parties prenantes de l'éducation comme si ; TQS assurait des processus démocratiques permanents pour négocier et réviser les pratiques politiques.

Mots clés : formation des enseignants, préparation des enseignants, qualité pédagogique, compétences pédagogiques, critères de l'exercice pédagogique, parties prenantes de l'éducation, cadre politique, analyse des politiques, Alberta

The Ministry of Education in the Government of Alberta, referred to as Alberta Education, has recently released a new Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) policy that "provides a framework for the preparation, professional growth and evaluation of all teachers" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 2). This new policy is a ministerial order that will replace the current Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order #016/97), which was approved in 1997 (Alberta Education, 1997). The introduction of this new policy is an opportunity to consider some recent critiques of teacher education in Alberta that have been offered by education stakeholders (Task Force for Teaching Excellence [TF], 2014). We will also explore how the TQS may lead to changes in the province's university teacher preparation programs.

We begin the paper with a section that provides the context and an explanation of teacher education in Alberta, followed by an account of the TQS policy background. We then focus on three critiques of teacher education that have provided some of the impetus for the revised TQS: (a) a lack of a shared vision and purpose; b) a lack of standard models or pathways to degrees among Alberta's teacher education programs and, therefore, a significant variance in the preparedness of graduates; and c) a need for program relevance, enhanced practicum experiences, and quality mentorship for students. Finally, to understand the potential implications of the TQS, we draw on Bell and Stevenson's (2015) policy analysis framework to explore how educational policies move from development at governance levels to enactment at organizational levels. We conclude by arguing

for collaboration among not only teacher preparation program providers but also all education stakeholders, and for assurance of ongoing democratic processes for negotiating and reviewing the policy and its practices.

Teacher Education and the Alberta Context

Alberta is home to approximately four million people. With 83% of residents living in urban settings, and more than 60% in the two major cities of Edmonton and Calgary (each with over one million people), the remaining population is scattered in pockets across the province (Alberta, 2016). Aside from online options, rural residents often need to leave their home community to attend college or university (Dupuy, Mayer, & Morissette, 2000). Post-secondary students can choose from 15 different public and private institutions at which to complete some or all requirements of a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree (Nickel, O'Connor, & Falkenberg, 2015). Most students attend one of nine institutions, completing a program through either a secondary or elementary route (Alberta Education, 2014; Nickel, O'Connor, & Falkenberg, 2015); there are also six college-based university transfer programs at which students can complete the first and/or second years of their degree. The various teacher education programs in Alberta fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Advanced Education, the government department responsible for post-secondary institutions.

Graduates of teacher education programs in Alberta will have completed four years of university education and obtained a recognized degree that includes a minimum of 16 three-credit courses in teacher education and a minimum of 10 weeks of student teaching. To begin teaching in Alberta, graduates must apply to the Ministry of Education for an interim teaching certificate. Generally, permanent certification is granted upon recommendation from a school authority that attests to an interim certificate holder's successful completion of two years of full-time teaching based on two evaluations of knowledge, skills, and attributes, as outlined in the TQS (Alberta Education, n.d.-b). Throughout their careers, teachers are expected to demonstrate the competencies outlined in the TQS (Alberta Education, 2018).

The province's K–12 education system comprises 76 publicly funded school authorities, including 17 separate (Catholic), 4 francophone, and 13 charter school divisions; several accredited international schools; 35 First Nations band schools; and over 150 private (often faith- or culture-based) school authorities, all of which are governed by the Ministry of Education (Alberta Education, n.d.-a). Once employed in an Alberta school system, teachers in publicly funded schools are required to become members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), which has approximately 40,000 members (ATA, 2016). A branch of the ATA, the Teacher Qualifications Service, evaluates credentials (years of post-secondary education and teaching experience) for salary purposes.

Teachers are responsible for the delivery of a provincial curriculum, available in both English and French, for all subject areas in grades K–12. Alberta students perform consistently well on international comparative assessments. Based on the 2015 results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted in 72 countries, Alberta students were among the highest performing in the world, with average scores ranking second overall in science, third in reading, and fourteenth in mathematics (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], 2016). Similarly, the Alberta grade four students who participated in the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) were above the international average in both mathematics and science (CMEC, n.d.).

Policy Background

In 2008, then-Premier Ed Stelmach called for a new long-term vision, to 2030, for the province's K–12 public education system. The Hon. Education Minister Dave Hancock initiated the development of this vision by forming a 22-member Steering Committee, which, along with a stakeholder and cross-government Working Committee, led a process of broad public consultation involving over 3,800 stakeholder participants. This process resulted in the April 2010 report *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue With Albertans* (Alberta Education, 2010). Identified in the report as "policy shifts to achieve the vision" (p. 22) were "Centred on Learners" and "Building Competencies" (pp. 24–28). In

consideration of these policy shifts, a spotlight was put on teaching and teacher preparation.

To implement the vision promoted in *Inspiring Education*, in September 2013 the next Minister of Education, the Hon. Jeff Johnson, formed a Task Force for Teaching Excellence (henceforth referred to as the Task Force, or TF in parenthetical citations) that was based on the following rationale:

> Alberta has a very strong education system—it has served our province and its students very well. So why establish a Task Force on Teaching Excellence? The largest part of the answer rests in *Inspiring Education*—Alberta's long-term vision for education centered on the student. . . . We must determine what is working well and what can be improved. Because teaching is at the core of a successful education system, we must do all we can to achieve teaching excellence. (TF, 2014, p. 6)

The Task Force undertook another consultation with Albertans, involving more than 3,000 participants, including school board trustees, education district administrators, school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. Its report, *Task Force for Teaching Excellence, Part I: Report the Minister; Part II: What We Heard – Community and Stakeholder Consultation*, was released in May 2014. The report identified teacher preparation as significant means to improve the quality of teaching in Alberta, and pointed to the three concerns mentioned earlier: (a) a lack of a shared vision about the purpose of teacher education, (b) a lack of a standard pathway to a BEd degree, which, coupled with minimal program entrance requirements, has resulted in great variance in the preparedness of graduates; and (c) a need for teacher education programs to be relevant and to include enhanced practicum experiences and quality mentorship (TF, 2014).

To attend to these concerns, the Task Force (2014) directed four of their 25 recommendations toward teacher preparation, including "that the Ministry of Education facilitate an annual discussion among Alberta's teacher preparation institutions on alignment of their programs with *Inspiring Education*, including its vision, values, principles, and policy shifts" (p. 33). In addition, the Task Force recommended that the 1997 version of the TQS also be revised to align with *Inspiring Education*, stating that the new practice standards much "rigorously and clearly define

expectations" (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 22) for teacher excellence. Given these recommendations, it is not surprising that the new *Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS) is to serve not only as the set of standards for evaluating practicing teachers and measuring their professional growth, but also as the framework for the *preparation* of new teachers in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2018).

Critiques of Teacher Education in Alberta

As outlined above, although the Alberta school system seems to be performing well on the international scene, education stakeholders have raised three main concerns about teacher education in the province, related specifically to vision alignment, program variance, and relevance. In the following section, we discuss each of these concerns in more detail, and we explore the potential of the new TQS, as a framework, to shape changes to teacher education programs in Alberta.

Issue 1: Vision Alignment

In its submission to the Task Force for Teaching Excellence, the Alberta Association of Deans of Education was concerned about a vision for education being too narrowly focused on "educating workers for an information-based economy . . . prepar[ing] students only for university [or] . . . raising scores on standardized tests" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 145). The deans submitted a recommendation to "define quality teaching in a way that acknowledges a diversity of meaning to the purpose of education" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 146). Other stakeholders' input reflected more specific visions of what might be considered a market-oriented purpose of education, reliant on certain assumptions about business (e.g., employee compliance, negative motivation, utility, efficiency, productivity). For example, the contributions of the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta pointed to how the new TQS should be a means to increase the accountability of teachers and teacher education programs: "Teaching excellence will not be achieved without consequence for non-compliance to standards" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 148). This is representative of what Hull (2013) described as the persistent efficiency model, characterized by "heavy-handed emphasis on efficiency, standardization, and measurement of learning" (p. 20).

Taking a quite different position, the Alberta School Boards Association asserted that "excellent teachers are engaged and build genuine rapport with students to help each student realize his/her full potential. Facilitating student learning, in a collaborative, empathetic and nurturing learning environment is critical to ensuring greater opportunities for student success" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 168). This view of teaching excellence is characteristic of what Hull (2013) described as a relational approach, where excellent teachers "foster meaningful relationships in their classrooms. They must be people of vision and deeply understand how to teach and encourage their students' learning" (p. 27). In the proposed new TQS, both the efficiency and relational views of teaching excellence seem to be promoted, as represented in Table 1.

Table 1
TQS Competencies in Terms of Hull's (2013) Views on the Purposes of Education

Teaching Quality Standard	Efficiency view	Relational view
1. Fostering effective relationships		A teacher builds positive and productive relationships with students, parents/guardians, peers, and others in the school and local community to support student learning.
2. Engaging in career-long learning		A teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning
3. Demonstrating a professional body of knowledge	A teacher applies a current and comprehensive repertoire of effective planning, instruction, and assessment practices to meet the learning needs of every student.	

4. Establishing inclusive learning environments		A teacher establishes, promotes, and sustains inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.
5. Applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit	A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students.	
6. Adhering to legal frameworks and policies	A teacher demonstrates an understanding of and adherence to the legal frameworks and policies that provide the foundations for the Alberta education system.	

If the new TQS is to be the framework for teacher preparation programs, both its efficiency and relational views of teaching competencies must be taken into consideration. Specifically, it will be important for universities, school board trustees, the ATA, and parent groups to work collaboratively to seek a common understanding of the overlapping, and sometimes competing, purposes of education and respective definitions of teaching quality and excellence.

In its submission to the Task Force, the College of Alberta School Superintendents put the onus on teacher education programs to "enhance the level of competency of beginning teachers and also the confidence they will have upon [program completion]" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 190). If this is the case, the new TQS may be a vehicle for discussion as teacher educators and local stakeholders negotiate meaning, build shared understanding, and develop a "shared vision of initial teacher education and a clear profile of the kind of teacher to be developed" (Desbiens, Gervais, Lepage, & Correa-Molina, 2015, p. 176). Further, if the new TQS is to provide a framework for teacher preparation, its

implementation can provide an opportunity to improve and align teacher education programming, course content, and teaching and learning practices in accordance with a common vision for teaching quality. As it becomes enacted, this policy has the potential to greatly impact teacher education programs in Alberta.

Issue 2: Program Variance

As outlined previously, nine public and privately funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta offer unique paths to a BEd degree, and six others offer university transfer programs that allow students to complete the BEd at another institution. As indicated by the Alberta School Boards Association, "It is uncertain as to whether or not this variety best serves the needs of students and therefore warrants further consideration" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 171). Some stakeholders, mentioned hereafter, concerned by variability of teacher education programs, have called for standardization of teacher education, questioned the multiple pathways, and proposed more stringent program entrance requirements.

Standardization. In its feedback to the Task Force, the ATA called for "top quality teacher preparation programs, not alternatives that allow anyone to teach" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 161). More particularly, the ATA was concerned with alternate pathways to teaching that would see uncertificated individuals responsible for classroom instruction. The Alberta School Boards' Association questioned the length of programs, admission requirements, and the number, duration, and legitimacy of practicum placements, and asked if teacher education "should be standardized in some manner" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 171). The College of School Superintendents likewise recommended a "provincial approach/model for teacher education" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 190). Opposing the ATA's desire to be self-governing and to regulate teacher certification (TF, 2014, p. 160), the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta called for government standardization: "Given the key role of teaching to the achievement of students and to Alberta's future as whole, ideally the Minister of Education should regulate and govern the teaching profession" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 219).

Further illustrating a desire for standardization, in their study of teacher education programs, Nickel et al. (2015) signaled the discrepancies in the Ministry of Advanced

Education regulating teacher education programs and the Ministry of Education regulating teacher certification. In other Canadian provinces, these roles are governed by a College of Teachers (Nickel et al., 2015, p. 51; Young & Grimmett, 2015, p. 129). Young and Grimmett (2015) found that much of the research on the Colleges of Teachers in British Columbia and Ontario focused on the "contested concepts and discourses of teacher professionalism/professional autonomy associated with their creation and development within a neoliberal policy context" (p. 144) as universities, governments, and professional associations negotiated their respective roles and purposes. Thus, if the Alberta government follows through and uses the new TQS as a standardized framework for teacher education, there will likely be tension among stakeholder groups related to professional autonomy versus standardization that will need to addressed.

Multiple pathways. In order to obtain interim certification, a preservice teacher needs to complete the degree requirements set by the post-secondary institution and approved by the Ministry of Education (i.e., four years of university education, 48 credit hours of courses, 10 weeks of practicum, and a certain number of credits in either elementary or secondary specialization courses) (Alberta Education, n.d.-b). Other than referring to "professional teacher education courses throughout your degree" (Alberta Education, n.d.-b), there is no mention of pedagogy, assessment, or curriculum requirements which, arguably, represent the core knowledge and skills needed to teach effectively (Danielson, 2016; Friesen, 2009; Hattie, 2012).

Given the variety of teacher education programs offered across the province of Alberta, post-secondary institutions currently seem to have a lot of programming autonomy, resulting in variance in preparedness among graduates. For example, beginning teachers can have completed a 4- or 5-year degree, or a 2-year after-degree program. The Alberta School Boards Association asked the Task Force the following question: "Should the length of a program vary? Does it take four, five or six years to prepare someone as a teacher?" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 171). In addition, across Alberta's BEd programs, practicum durations range from 13 to 26 weeks (Nickel et al., 2015, pp. 48–50). Further, there are different course requirements for elementary and secondary trained students, which also varies greatly between

and within institutions. An effect of these differences is that the quality of graduates is often seen as being determined by the institution they attended. The implementation of a new TQS creates an opportunity to consider the design of teacher education programs to ensure better alignment, more consistency, and, ideally, better teaching quality resulting from a common set of competencies.

Entrance requirements. Admission to various teacher education programs is as disparate as the programs themselves. Whereas Alberta's public universities base admission to teacher education programs entirely on an applicant's grade point average, faith-based institutions consider other factors (Nickel et al., 2015, p. 48). In the Task Force (2014) report, various stakeholders suggested more stringent entrance requirements to teacher education programs as a means to improve teaching quality. For example, the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools suggested the following approach: "Teacher preparation program recruitment and admissions procedures should be reviewed, enhanced and modified to ensure that individuals with the qualities and competencies related to teaching excellence are being selected as future teachers" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 164). According to the Alberta School Councils' Association, a possible strategy is to "review and amend teacher preparation program entrance requirements—raise the bar and ensure the right people are accepted into the program" (as cited in TF, 2014, p. 181). The resulting Task Force recommendation was "that Alberta's teacher preparation programs be encouraged to look beyond grades, when making admission decisions, to consider other relevant criteria in the spirit of *Inspiring Education*" (TF, 2014, p. 32). However, Wiliam (2016) cautioned that "any attempt to make entry into teaching more selective risks excluding those who would be excellent teachers" (p. 61). As opposed to limiting access to the profession through teacher education entrance requirements, perhaps the new TQS can paint a picture of the competencies required for teaching excellence and help instructors and students, early in teacher education programs and coupled with K–12 practicum experiences, determine students' individual suitability for teaching.

Issue 3: Program Relevance

A final major concern that Alberta stakeholders shared with the Task Force was related to the relevance of teacher

education programs: "While participants in the Task Force consultations believed teacher preparation is important, some questioned whether Alberta's teacher preparation programs are adequately equipping their students for the changing classroom" (TF, 2014, p. 32). This sentiment was echoed in the Alberta Education (2015) annual report, which indicated that 36% of school principals felt that graduates of teacher education programs were not adequately prepared for teaching responsibilities. In their submissions to the Task Force, stakeholders called for more practicum experiences throughout the teacher education program and increased collaboration with school divisions to ensure quality mentoring.

Both of these recommendations are supported by recent research on teacher education, such as Desbiens et al. (2015), who identified that successful teacher programs depend on collaboration among stakeholders (p. 170), and Falkenberg (2015), who implored school divisions and the teaching profession to take more responsibility for initial teacher education. The following Task Force (2014) recommendation supports these arguments:

> A more formalized process of shared and collective responsibility (of leaders of teacher preparation programs, school authorities, school leaders and teachers) be adopted to ensure there are an appropriate number of practicum placements in the system, and that those supervising pre-service teachers are consistently demonstrating effective teaching practices in accordance with the Teaching Quality Standard. (p. 36)

Increased collaboration could also lead to teacher educators being more involved in local schools, working with mentor teachers, and supervising student teachers, as well as school partners being more involved in the teacher education program as instructors, seminar leaders, and program designers (Desbiens et al., 2015, p. 170).

In addition, Falkenberg (2015) called for increased connections between theory and practice: "The university-based coursework and the school-based field experiences need to be much more integrated than they currently are" (p. 13). In their study, Russell and Dillon (2015) found that most teacher education programs were largely based on coursework and ended with a significant practicum of varying length. They indicated that this model is generally ineffective, as "teacher candidates appear unable to use the theory-driven

guidelines offered in their course work" (p. 162). These researchers have promoted program designs that better integrate theory and practice by providing earlier, longer, and more frequent practicum experiences in conjunction with coursework. In this vein, Desbiens et al. (2015) determined that "the quality of practical experience in an authentic school context has a direct impact on the quality of initial teacher education" (p. 167). Following these arguments, the new TQS could be seen as catalyst for addressing the theory–practice gap, as teacher education programs, in collaboration with school district stakeholders, explore ways to integrate coursework with practicum experiences. This integration would not only increase the preservice teacher competencies, it would also be one way to ensure the relevance of the university-based courses and to implement a shared vision of teaching quality across institutions.

Further, the design of practicum evaluation forms, if based on the TQS, could increase program coherence. As Kralovec and Lundsford (2016) have argued, "If the characteristics on observation forms that are used in universities differ from those used in schools, the gap between schools and teacher education programs cannot be bridged" (p. 121). If the same teaching practice standards that apply to the teacher educators who are designing the practicum experiences and modeling the TQS competencies are used to evaluate preservice teachers, universities are more likely to graduate well-prepared beginning teachers.

In light of the critiques of teacher education in Alberta, we now use a policy analysis lens to explore how the new TQS policy may help to address the issues of vision alignment, program variance, and relevance.

Discussion

The Bell and Stevenson (2015) policy analysis framework outlines four elements that can be used to explore how the new TQS policy has been developed and will potentially be enacted in Alberta: sociopolitical environment, governance and strategic direction, organizational principles, and operational procedures and practices. For the purposes of analysis, the first two elements comprise the policy development stage and the second two comprise the policy enactment stage.

The first element, sociopolitical environment, provides the context

> "in which policies begin to be framed. It provides the forum for ideological and philosophical debates and contested discourses from which the organization of education is derived . . . with a particular focus on the specific way in which policy problems are presented." (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 148)

This element takes into consideration the social and political environment—the Alberta policy context—of the work of the Inspiring Education Steering and Working Committees and the Task Force for Teaching Excellence. In both cases, great importance was placed on a democratic process to ensure stakeholder consultation and input in the early stages of the initiatives. This approach has been a hallmark of Alberta's policy development culture for many years. Although the process is imperfect, as is any attempt at democracy, stakeholder consultation nevertheless allows for diverse philosophical, ideological, and practical concerns to be heard. For example, the perspectives of a range of participant groups were equally welcomed and valued by the Task Force (2014), but the submissions also revealed quite disparate ideas about teacher education, reflecting diverse views about the purposes of education.

In addition to the local (provincial) context, the element of sociopolitical environment also recognizes the influence of global trends that may shape policy development. For example, Bell and Stevenson (2015) highlighted the global persistence of neoliberalism in education: "The continuing policy commitment to accountability, competition, choice and the economic utility of education is derived from a broader commitment to free market economics" (p. 148). Teacher accountability is certainly prevalent in the language of the Task Force (2014) report, but it is also countered by the language of public assurance in the report recommendations and in arguments related to professional autonomy. Thus, it is apparent how, in the development work that was to become a precursor to the TQS, "philosophical debates and contested discourses" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 148) set the stage. It is interesting to note that although the Task Force report and *Inspiring Education* likely influenced the development of the new TQS, their contributions toward it have not been publicly acknowledged.

Bell and Stevenson (2015) have argued that, although debates and contestation characterize the sociopolitical

environment of policy development, "the dominant discourses of the time . . . both formulate the overarching guiding principles and are reflected in educational policies" (p. 148). This seems to be the case "as policy begins to emerge in a more explicit form" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 148) such that the accountability discourse underpins the new TQS mandate of being the "consistent standard of professional practice for all teachers" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 2) in both teacher preparation programs and for ongoing evaluation. Reflected here is what Bell and Stevenson referred to as the policy development element of *governance and strategic direction*, which explains

> the way in which policy trends emerge with increasing clarity from the socio-political environment, and the parameters within which policy is to be established are set and policy priorities are established. This broad policy is developed and enacted within specific policy domain. Here, policy provides the structure of governance within which the organization of educational institutions is shaped. The influence of major policy discourses can be seen in the establishment of the patterns of governance and the strategic directions within which educational institutions are organized. (2015, p. 148)

Specific to our analysis, the second of Bell and Stevenson's (2015) elements, governance and strategic direction, is evident in the way that the TQS policy, as a framework, is to inform how the teacher education programs of Alberta post-secondary institutions will be shaped. However, citing Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2011), Bell and Stevenson (2015) pointed out the "complex and hybrid processes of enactment by which different types of policy become interpreted and translated, reconstructed and remade in different but similar settings" (p. 148). So, although the Ministry of Education may be the "dominant power of the superordinate bodies in framing policy agendas and asserting decisive influence on the way they are experienced" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 148), how and to what extent the TQS will actually frame changes to teacher education remains to be seen.

Bell and Stevenson's (2015) third element, organizational principles, moves from the policy development stage to the enactment stage:

> Once the structure for the governance of education has been articulated, the concomitant organizational principles begin to focus on the specific ways that policies shape the nature of educational institutions and provide the organizational context

> within which management and leadership take place. At this stage, policy becomes clearer and success criteria are also articulated with increasing clarity. Targets are set, and patterns of state, local and, eventually, institutional control procedures are established. National responsibility and local flexibility relating to implementation are determined. (p. 148)

According to this conceptualization, following the ratification of the policy through legislation, stakeholders can expect the "success criteria," along with the objectives of the framework, to take on new meaning and to be interpreted in a range of ways, from being seen as prescriptive and regulatory to being understood as a flexible set of recommendations.

Likewise, Bell and Stevenson's (2015) second enactment element, operational practices and procedures, is likely to have a range of local effects on teacher education programs, from justifying substantial and immediate changes to offering direction for making incremental changes over time. Bell and Stevenson explained this final element as occurring when the governance model and strategic direction of the policy are "manifest in the daily activities and experiences of those who work and study in individual institutions. The curriculum and modes of assessment are revised . . . institutional policies are developed and secured, and monitoring mechanisms established" (2015, p. 149). However, many factors, such as the structure and culture of the organization, the type of leadership and management, and second-order values, can influence and mediate how the "policy developed 'up there' is experienced and enacted 'down here'" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 149). In this sense, Bell and Stevenson acknowledged how policy can be "reshaped and contested from below . . . [or] is subject to multiple interpretations based on the specificities of local contexts, and the nature of the work of educators, of their professionalism and of the procedures deployed to lead and manage" (2015, p. 149).

According to Bell and Stevenson's (2015) policy conceptualization, its apparent that there is potential for the new TQS to foster change in teacher education programs. As revealed in our above analysis of the critiques of teacher education and the responses to these concerns in the various Task Force (2014) recommendations, there is promise in the enactment stage of the TQS and call for continued democratic approaches as it becomes enacted in various ways within various contexts. For example, we have referred to the possibility of tension among stakeholder groups related to

professional autonomy versus standardization that will need to be negotiated, especially if this policy is interpreted by some as a prescriptive accountability tool. As another example, we also referred to the potential of improvement to teacher education programs through collaboration among stakeholders, such as universities, school divisions, and the teaching profession (Desbiens et al., 2015; Falkenberg, 2015). As Zeichner (2010) suggested, such collaboration is an "opportunity to establish forms of democratic professionalism in teaching and teacher education where universities, schools, and communities come together in new ways to prepare teachers who will provide everyone's children with the same high quality of education" (p. 1550).

We argue that representatives from the universities, the Ministry of Education, the professional associations, and other interested stakeholder groups have ongoing opportunities to inform the terms, priorities, procedures, and strategies of the TQS through democratic approaches and collaborative work. Furthermore, although the new policy has potential to have a great impact across the province, much hinges upon the governmental will and skill to see it as a guiding framework and to *expect* it "to be mediated, and contested in different ways and at different levels in different contexts" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 148), and to be interpreted and implemented in different ways. Helpful in making this point is the following synopsis of policy research offered by Bell and Stevenson (2015):

> These tensions and discourses create contested and challenging environments within which the policies, governance, leadership and management of public education, as well as the work of those in educational institutions, are located. How, for example, have schools responded to marketization? At least one analysis suggests that co-operation and collaboration can co-exist with competition (Bell, 2004a).
>
> At the same time, alternative strategies can be developed for responding to the emphasis on the economic functionality of education (Bell, 2004b) and for supporting marginalized young people (Simmons et al., 2014). Similarly, a detailed understanding of the relationship between political ideology and the work of teachers and lecturers in schools and colleges can help in developing coping and avoidance strategies in the face of the tensions between educational policy and teacher professionalism (Aubrey and Bell, 2015). (Bell & Stevenson, 2015, p. 149)

We suggest that, if considerations related to expecting and working within tension and contestation (Bell & Stevenson, 2015) and to ongoing opportunities for policy interpretation and negotiation (Desbiens et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2010) are not taken seriously, the TQS will lose its transformative power. To avoid this, the policy itself must be seen as a "living" document—an evolving construct, open to question and revision as changes in both local and broader education contexts pose challenges to teacher education and to teaching in our province.

Conclusion

By presenting explanations of the contexts of teacher education in Alberta and of the new TQS (Alberta Education, 2018), along with an analysis of the stakeholder feedback provided to and the recommendations of the Task Force for Teaching Excellence (2014), we have provided both insight into the TQS and the data necessary to put to use Bell and Stevenson's (2015) framework for analyzing the development (i.e., sociopolitical environment, governance and strategic direction), potential enactment (i.e., organizational principles, and operational procedures and practices), and possible implications of the TQS policy. Through this analysis, we found that the new TQS may have a significant impact on teacher education programs in Alberta. As well, it has the potential to address the challenges and concerns related to program variance, relevance, and vision that stakeholders have identified. In considering the degree of success that might be experienced in the adoption and implementation of the TQS, following Bell and Stevenson, we call for an understanding of policy development and enactment that acknowledges the necessarily contested and mediated nature of both of its stages and all four of its elements. We therefore argue that possibilities for interpreting and challenging the policy and its practices must be seen as ongoing and iterative, and continually supported by democratic and collaborative structures and approaches.

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