The National Council on Teacher Quality
Organizational Aims and Assessment Methods

Spring 2013
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEY TAKEAWAYS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOUT THE DATA AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Council on Teacher Quality
Organizational Aims and Assessment Methods

Spring 2013

OBJECTIVE

The pending release of the National Review of Teacher Preparation by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has served as a strong impetus for leaders of teacher preparation programs to better understand NCTQ as an organization. There has been a dearth of information regarding NCTQ’s organizational and programmatic goals and activities. The objective of this brief is to address part of this information gap by providing leaders of teacher preparation programs with transparency into NCTQ’s internal processes and structures. Eduventures is not an advocacy organization and therefore does not evaluate or proffer opinions on the merits of an organization’s claim. As a research and advisory firm, we seek to provide usable insight into key trends and important forces shaping the contemporary higher education landscape to inform the strategic decision-making of higher education leaders.

BACKGROUND

NCTQ is a registered 501(c)(3) tax-exempt education research and policy organization based in Washington, D.C.. Founded in 2001, NCTQ operates three distinct programs that seek to change the way that teachers are trained, licensed, hired, and fired. These three programs – the National Review of Teacher Preparation, the State Teacher Policy Yearbook, and Tr3: Teachers’ Rules, Roles, and Rights – focus on teacher preparation programs, state-level education policy, and district-level teacher contracts, respectively. All three of these programs receive major funding from some of the country’s largest philanthropic organizations.

Recently, NCTQ partnered with the US News and World Report to publish the National Review of Teacher Preparation. The National Review rates teacher training programs in the United States on a scale of A to F. The grade that a teacher training program receives is assigned based on the school’s performance against measures of quality developed by NCTQ. While NCTQ has previously released Reviews for individual states around the country, June 2013 will mark the release of the first edition of the National Review. Previous research by Eduventures found that the individual state reports contained deep methodological flaws. In spite of these flaws, NCTQ continued to utilize its existing methods, receive considerable funding for its activities, and attract media attention. The combination of flawed research methods and the potential for negative media exposure has caused a number of leaders of teacher training institutions around the country to be concerned about the potential impact that the forthcoming release of the National Review could have on public perceptions of program quality.

1See Eduventures Report (2011) Review & Critique of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) Methodology to Rate Schools of Education.
2Eduventures approached both NCTQ and US News and World Report for information about any changes in methods that might have been made for the forthcoming report; however, both organizations declined to comment.
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Based on analysis of publicly available NCTQ organizational data, Eduventures has reached the following conclusions about NCTQ’s explicit objectives, tactics, and success metrics:

- **NCTQ is not designed to be an objective evaluator of teacher preparation programs.** NCTQ is a social change organization, not a research organization.

- **NCTQ’s approach intentionally seeks to close some teacher training programs.** Success for the National Review of Teacher Preparation means teacher training programs conform to NCTQ’s standards of quality or they are forced out of business.

- **NCTQ explicitly uses public opinion, rather than research, to achieve its goals.** The NCTQ theory of change involves the selection of winning and losing teacher training programs and the use of media channels in order to shape market demand for specific teacher training programs by influencing public opinion.

ABOUT THE DATA AND ANALYSIS

The organizational data that were analyzed for this brief were accessed on the Guidestar.org website. Guidestar is a 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to provide researchers and donors with accurate and comprehensive organizational information about non-profits in the United States. In order to accomplish this goal, Guidestar created a non-profit database that combines several different data sources. Much of the organizational data come from IRS databases that contain information about all tax-exempt non-profit organizations in the United States. In addition to these IRS data, Guidestar encourages non-profits to upload additional information about their organizational structures and activities. The self-reporting of internal operations, goals, and progress toward the achievement of program mission has become standard practice for “high-performing” non-profits that seek major funding from philanthropic organizations; NCTQ is one such organization. The self-reported data stored in the database provides a window into how NCTQ views and presents itself as an organization to potential funders and the broader non-profit community.
FINDINGS

NCTQ IS A SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATION, NOT A RESEARCH ORGANIZATION.

Social change organizations develop metrics for success that focus on changing a particular social, cultural, environmental, political, or policy problem. Research organizations develop program and organizational metrics that focus on the quality of research in addition to impact. NCTQ’s program success metrics operate on the assumption that its findings are of the highest quality and unassailable. There is no mention of further refining research processes to ensure the accuracy of its findings or any mechanism to promote verification and ongoing improvement. Instead, the metrics focus exclusively on the social impact of the report. This is how a social change or advocacy organization measures its success or failure.

NCTQ measures its short-term success against the following stated goals, among other metrics:

- Improvements we hope to see within the three-year mark of our first National Review’s publication include:
  - Districts begin to change their hiring practices.
  - We continue to add endorsements for the work from state and district superintendents as well as education advocacy organizations. […]
  - More education advocacy organizations make teacher preparation a priority.
  - We continue to engage the press around our work and teacher preparation.

SUCCESS FOR THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF TEACHER PREPARATION MEANS TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS CONFORM TO NCTQ’S STANDARDS OF QUALITY OR THEY ARE FORCED OUT OF BUSINESS.

Because NCTQ is primarily concerned with the size of its impact, and funders want to see demonstration of its impact, it has developed success metrics that focus exclusively on the size of NCTQ’s impact on changing teacher preparation.

The following are the success metrics that NCTQ lists as the primary way by which it will evaluate the extent to which the National Review program has been successful:

- From first edition to the third, how many institutions improved their ratings on the 18 standards? How many stayed the same, and how many declined?
- Have institutions rated highly by NCTQ drawn more applicants? Have institutions rated poorly by NCTQ lost applicants?
- How many low-rated programs were shut down? How many programs lost program approval? How many were put on probation?
- Have any states introduced measures to control the supply of new teachers? Have they used that authority to reward high-performing programs or punish low performers?
NCTQ’S THEORY OF CHANGE SEeks TO SHAPE DEMAND FOR TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS BY FIRST IDENTIFYING WINNERS AND LOSERS AND THEN USING THE MEDIA TO DISSEMINATE THIS INFORMATION.

In other words, NCTQ believes that the best way to achieve its change goals is through the manipulation of market levers. Its theory is that change can best be achieved through the identification of winners and losers in the teacher training program market and the use of the media to influence the demand for specific teacher preparation programs by potential students and school districts.

NCTQ characterizes its theory of change as follows:

▶ … [w]e are relying on the marketplace as the primary lever for change. By providing school districts with better information about where to go to hire the best-trained teachers and by providing prospective teachers with information about where to go to get the best training, we can alter the marketplace for new teachers.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the merits of NCTQ’s claims about the state of teacher preparation programs, which Eduventures leaves to others to debate, our analysis of the organization’s structure and self-reported metrics for success suggests its motivations and objectives stem from an advocacy mission rather than a desire to evaluate information objectively and add a constructive voice for change into ongoing and important debates over educator preparation. Greater transparency around NCTQ’s methodologies and explicit plans to refine those methodologies over time would mitigate the impression of an apparent lack of focus on replicable and objective research. In the absence of such transparency, however, we encourage all parties to interpret NCTQ’s forthcoming National Review in light of the organization’s own self-reported intentions and success measures.
APPENDICES

The following appendices present the raw qualitative data gathered from Guidestar.org about NCTQ’s three ongoing programs. This information was written by NCTQ staff about NCTQ’s mission, vision, theory of change, and performance metrics.

A. NCTQ’S NATIONAL REVIEW OF TEACHER PREPARATION

Budget: $5,000,000


Program Description:

We are examining how teachers are prepared in the 1,400 education schools across the country. Our first National Review of Teacher Preparation and subsequent annual reviews will be published by US News & World Report.

Our goal for this endeavor is to ensure that new teachers are able to start their jobs “classroom ready.” To achieve this goal, we are relying on the marketplace as the primary lever for change. By providing school districts with better information about where to go to hire the best-trained teachers and by providing prospective teachers with information about where to go to get the best training, we can alter the marketplace for new teachers. Over time, great programs will flourish and weak ones will not. We will also want to help the best programs earn the recognition they deserve and to serve as models for others to improve. In addition to this market-based strategy, we are also developing a number of strategies designed to help policymakers implement long-needed reforms in the teacher preparation arena.

Long-Term Success:

We estimate that the project’s success will best be judged after the third edition of the review is published. The expectation is to build a “brand” for the project with aspiring teachers and school districts in order to alter the marketplace for new teachers.

After three years, we will assess the extent to which schools we’ve identified as low-performing have been closed, those needing improvement have improved against our standards, and whether the models we highlighted as exemplary are being replicated.

We’ll assess whether we are in fact altering the marketplace for new teachers in terms of where prospective candidates choose to go for teacher preparation and from which school districts hire new teachers.
Short-Term Success:

Improvements that we hope to see within the three-year mark of our first National Review’s publication include:

1. Districts begin to change their hiring practices.
2. We continue to add endorsements for the work from state and district superintendents as well as education advocacy organizations. To date, 107 school district superintendents and 15 state school chiefs (including Mitchell Chester) have endorsed this project. We also have endorsements from 27 advocacy groups from all over the country, including Mass Insight Education & Research Institute and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education. The Council of the Great City Schools, which represents 65 large urban school districts in the nation, provided an unprecedented endorsement.
4. We continue to engage the press around our work and teacher preparation.

Success Metrics:

- From the first edition to the third, how many institutions improved their ratings on the 18 standards? How many stayed the same, and how many declined?
- Have institutions rated highly by NCTQ drawn more applicants? Have institutions rated poorly by NCTQ lost applicants?
- Have school districts changed their hiring practices?
- How many low-rated programs were shut down? How many programs lost program approval? How many were put on probation?
- Have any states introduced measures to control the supply of new teachers? Have they used that authority to reward high-performing programs or punish low performers?
- Have any states installed a strong inspectorate program to conduct meaningful evaluations of program quality?

Success Examples:

We know that college ratings influence institutions to change (e.g., The Princeton Review and the US News tell us so). We also see that institutions tout their ratings when they’re high, so we are confident that rating schools will result in change.

Even more so, it’s important to note that without having published a word of analysis or piece of data, our National Review has already done what no other reform effort to improve teacher preparation has done before it: it has rocked the boat. The mass boycott of the review by the institutions, as well as the steady stream of press-documented pushback we’ve gotten from schools is sheer evidence that our work has teeth. We are greatly anticipating the release of the review early next year, as we see its ability to ultimately force education schools to improve or face loss of approval and clientele as inevitable.
B. NCTQ’S STATE TEACHER POLICY YEARBOOK

Budget: $575,000


Program Description:

We produce the five-volume State Teacher Policy Yearbook each (a comprehensive version every other year is alternated with a smaller volume focusing on a particular topic) not just to document the current policies of states, such as a journalist might do, but to lay out a blueprint for reform. Our intent is to guide state action in this complex arena, urging them to address what most would consider largely anachronistic, ineffective and often counterproductive policies governing the teaching profession. For that reason, the Yearbook is not just an encyclopedia. Instead, it measures, grades and ranks each state against a whole range of policy recommendations (currently 36 goals) covering teacher preparation, retention, dismissal, evaluation and compensation. If the content of our advocacy fails to ignite enthusiasm for reform, we also hope to motivate states to act if for no other reason than to improve their ranking and grade.

Program Long-Term Success:

When we put out our first Yearbook, now five editions ago, states largely ignored us or were angry, telling us that we had it all wrong. That isn’t the case anymore. The Yearbook actually laid much of the foundation for what states needed to achieve in the Race to the Top competition. The Department of Education drew heavily from the Yearbook for the policy language it needed to guide the teacher portion of the competition. Further, Yearbook has become a go-to resource for policymakers working at the national, state and local levels, including governors, state legislators, and school boards. It is also an invaluable resource for change agents, particularly foundations and advocacy groups interested in advancing teacher quality, including 50CAN and Stand For Children. Moving forward, we will continue to track states’ progress against our framework for reform.

Program Short-Term Success:

We’re proud of the impact Yearbook has had on state policy thus far. Connecticut, Minnesota, Wisconsin, [and] Oklahoma now offers a stand-alone licensure test on the science of reading instruction. Pennsylvania eliminated its K-12 special education license. California, Illinois, New York and Washington have removed barriers limiting alternate route providers. Florida and Tennessee now hold teacher preparation programs accountable through the use of student achievement data. Florida, Indiana, Idaho, and Ohio prohibit districts from basing their salary schedules on years of experience.

Program Success Monitored by:

We are able to measure the success of this project by virtue of the fact that we publish an edition each year and grade states every other. Thus, every two years we can measure how states’ grades improved against our framework for reform. We have also developed a progress indicator, which allows us to see whether states have made progress toward Yearbook goals, even if their grade might remain the same.
Program Success Examples:

At the state level, it’s clear that the Yearbook has an impact in terms of both raising awareness around state teacher policies and driving state regulators to adopt policy changes in line with our recommendations. We can see our mark being made when we look at changes to states’ Yearbook grades as well as state progress on our policy framework. Between 2009 and 2011, the average state grade improved from a D to a D+. The number of states earning a C- or higher nearly tripled by jumping from eight to 23. We also gave out our first-ever B grade in 2011 to Florida. Five states made progress on 10 or more Yearbook goals (there are 36 goals in total). 28 states’ grades improved. We also work with more than a dozen states on both a formal and informal basis to help them advance teacher quality.

C. NCTQ’S TR3: TEACHER RULES, ROLES, AND RIGHTS

Budget: $1,100,000


Program Description:

NCTQ is currently working in communities to provide customized analysis of district human capital policies, primarily focusing on the teachers’ contract. These reports serve as a starting point to refocus district efforts on teacher quality. Specifically, the reports shed a light on which policies are working well and which are not, while also comparing a district’s policies with those of surrounding districts and other smaller districts nationally. We lay out a blueprint of suggested improvements and highlight possible solutions that have been successful elsewhere. These reports helped shape the scope of teacher contract negotiations and have resulted in major reforms in urban school districts around the country. This work developed from our comprehensive Tr3 database that captures the teacher policies of 113 districts, including the largest district in every state and those that are members of The Great City Schools.

Program Long-Term Success:

Ultimately, we want districts to incorporate our policy recommendations into new contracts that are negotiated. We’ve seen a number of our recommendations taken into account in districts we’ve worked in, including Boston, Seattle and Baltimore.

Program Short-Term Success:

We’ve partnered with local groups that have helped to build coalitions around incorporating needed reforms into new teachers’ contracts. In Baltimore, we saw the new contract adopt our specific recommendation to base pay on teachers’ contributions to student learning and the school in lieu of salary schedules tied to years of service and advanced degrees.
Program Success Monitored by:

We can see our success when a new contract agreement is made in the districts we’ve worked in. We hope to do more targeted follow-up studies in those districts to build off the reports we’ve already completed and are in talks with Baltimore to do just that.

Program Success Examples:

One of our most recent program successes was actually a long time in the making. We were the first to point out that Chicago’s teachers were working a significantly shorter work day than teachers in surrounding districts, and thus students were in school learning for less time. That bit of information helped the district and the mayor eventually make the case that the district’s school day needed to be expanded, which the union is in negotiations over right now.
EDUVENTURES

ABOUT EDUVENTURES
Eduventures is the industry leader in research, data, consulting, and advisory services for the higher education community. For nearly 20 years, college and university leaders and education industry providers have looked to Eduventures for innovative and forward-looking ideas, for insights into best practices, and for help with making the strategic and operational decisions vital to their success. More about Eduventures can be found at www.eduventures.com.