Trust and Accountability in U.S. Educational Policy:
A Conceptual Reexamination

Michael S. Katz
San Jose State

&

Lawrence Quill
San Jose State

4080 Villa Vista
Palo Alto, Ca. 94306

Email address:
Mskatz1944@yahoo.com

The purpose of this paper is to explore the tension between "trust and accountability" in recent policy efforts to regulate education in the U.S. and suggest some of the conceptual and practical problems that flow from this tension. First, we will examine the background of the problem; then we shall clarify the notions of trust and trustworthiness and consider four models of trust in ; following that discussion we will clarify the notion of "accountability" and what it has come to mean; in this discussion we will distinguish between "accountability" and "responsibility"; finally, we will consider how a revised notion of accountability would be fruitful for revisiting the essential purposes of schooling in the 21st century.

## I. Background to the Problem

I.

Although Americans from the middle of the nineteenth century through most of the twentieth century expressed virtually boundless faith in the possibilities of public schooling to expand both their children's life chances and the quality of their society, that faith appears to have waned significantly in recent decades. Criticism of American public schooling from both the left and the right of the political spectrum have led many to believe that our public schools are failing; some even believe that they cannot be resuscitated in their present state and that private alternatives to the public schools, through publicly subsidized vouchers, should be pursued. Others believe the answer lies in holding school leaders and teachers "more accountable" to the public through administering high-stakes standardized tests and intervening through a system of rewards and punishments for schools that do not meet pre-established performance standards, especially in the area of mathematical and verbal literacy.

The accountability movement, embraced by both Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. through the last three administrations, and one which has taken similar political and cultural forms in other societies, has as its professed intention the restoration of public trust in the nation's system of public schools and, increasingly, even in its universities. It has also held out the promise of increasing the equality of opportunity of those now most poorly served by the public schools, namely poor and minority children.

It seems hard to oppose, at one level, the promised restoration of trust in the public schools' ability to serve all of its children well, and to increase the equitable chances of those most likely to be left behind in the competition for schooling success. But "restoring public trust" through standardized forms of assessment has had many unintended and unfortunate consequences; these include: a) the demoralization of teachers and administrators who no longer feel trusted to exercise their professional discretion; b) the narrowing of the curriculum so that test taking efficiency in areas of verbal and mathematical literacy trumps higher-order thinking and cultivating the skills and dispositions critical for working with diverse others in a multicultural democratic society; c) increased drop-out rates and declines in graduation rates, especially among minority children; d) the virtual elimination of serious conversation over the broad purposes of universal education in contemporary life. (Meier, 2000; Meier and Wood, 2004; Madaus, et. al, 2009) Thus, as is often the case when political promises are translated into public policy, a gap emerges between the promise of reform legislation and policy, and the subsequent reality of those policies.

Some might argue that this "gap" between the restoration of trust in public schools and the real consequences of *The No Child Left Behind* policy (hereinafter

referred to as NCLB) and similar policies elsewhere has actually become a yawning chasm--a chasm that grows increasingly wider as the policy continues to be experienced by teachers, students, and administrators across the U.S. In fact, one serious irony of the extreme version of accountability built into NCLB is that it has created a culture of frustration and demoralization among many administrators and teachers, especially in many urban schools with diverse populations--populations the accountability focus was designed to help most. Moreover, it has often exacerbated rather than reduced the achievement gap between those who are privileged and those who are most in need of more equitable educational opportunities. (Meier and Wood, 2004; Sleeter, 2007)

Instead of restoring faith and confidence in the nation's public schools, the accountability movement has often produced a significant backlash among the administrators and teachers asked to implement its policies. But, perhaps more significantly, another unfortunate outcome of the accountability movement has been that a broad, sensible conception of what it means to be educated—namely, education as the development of whole persons into intelligent, socially competent citizens equipped with the skills and dispositions to become lifelong learners—has been replaced with a reductionist view of education as a limited form of cognitive achievement, particularly in reading and mathematical literacy, as measured by standardized tests. In so doing, it has restricted the discretionary authority of teachers and administrators to find creative, appropriate ways of educating their own students and meeting their context-specific educational needs. Often, it has narrowed curricular choices and reduced the emphasis on science, social studies, music, and art. For teachers, it has reduced, or even eliminated, much of their discretionary creativity and redefined their role as a mere instrumentality

for improving students' test scores. (Meier and Wood, 2004) Moreover, failure to attain the goals, something for which schools and administrators are now punished, is also based on something very difficult to do: raising tests scores among all kinds of ethnic and other groups. It is especially difficult to do in the extremely short time frames required by the policies without additional resources and without the support of parents and communities. In many cases, where the challenges are greatest--in inner city schools--resources are often severely lacking. Thus, the critical irony of recent accountability policies can be summarized as follows: rather than building morale among educators and restoring trust in the public schools and universities, the accountability movement has often undermined this morale and the accompanying trust quite seriously.

## II. 4 Models of Trust in Teaching

In this section, we will first examine the concepts of trust and trustworthiness from the perspective of teachers working in different kinds of educational settings. Then we will contrast four hypothetical models of trust in schools by describing four imaginary situations borrowed indirectly from either literature, history or real life; in so doing, we will examine some differences among the following 1) blind, unqualified trust; 2) complete distrust; and 3) something that lies between these two.

### Clarifying the notion of "trust"

We begin by considering one preliminary issue: how trust as a psychological category might be distinguished from "trustworthiness," a moral category. First, how might we usefully distinguish between "trust" and "trustworthiness"? Trust is a psychological category, not a moral one; we may trust people who deserve to be trusted

as well as those who may not warrant such trust; the moral category related to trust is "trustworthiness," i.e. the quality or qualities, or the conditions that warrant someone being entrusted by someone else with something.

Trust is a relational concept—one with three components. In such a relationship, there is the one trusting, the one trusted, and that with which one is entrusted. Trusting someone with something is thus a tripartite relationship. Moreover, most trust relationships should be viewed from within a larger social and cultural context. Thus, it makes sense to say that our trusting relationships occur within a larger context. We might call the primary trust relationship "the foreground relationship" for trust; we can refer to the context in which this relationship occurs as the background context or climate in which trust is given. This background context or climate is often an institutional one such as that of a school culture; but it also may be a political context such as the political culture in a country at a particular time. For example, if an authoritarian regime is arbitrarily restricting the freedoms and privileges of many of its citizens, the background climate might legitimately become one of distrust. In summary, trust has both foreground conditions affecting trusting relationships and a background climate or context in which these relationships occur. What is peculiar about the accountability movement is that it seems to function within a background climate of distrust for the educators entrusted with educating their students; there seems be considerable irony in this circumstance; one might even consider the irony to constitute a paradoxical condition. The paradox is this: those responsible for restoring trust in the public schools, namely the educators themselves, are viewed within the larger political context of schooling policy as people who cannot be expected to deserve this trust.

As Annette Baier (1994) has forcefully pointed out, it is hard to underestimate the functional and pervasive role that trust plays in our everyday lives. The pervasiveness of trust is so extensive and widespread in our everyday lives, argues Baier, that we scarcely notice it, but its importance is unquestionable. She writes:

> Trust, the phenomenon we are so familiar with that we scarcely notice its presence and its variety, is shown by us and responded to by us not only with intimates but also with strangers, and even with declared enemies. We trust our enemies not to fire at us when we lay down our arms and put out a white flag. In Britain burglars and police used to trust each other not to carry deadly weapons. We often trust total strangers, such as those from whom we ask directions in foreign cities, to direct rather than misdirect us, or to tell us so if they do not know what we want to know. And we think we should do the same for those who ask for the same help from us. (1994, p. 98.)

Since trust is so pervasive and extends itself into so many varied relationships in our daily lives, we might consider what differentiates trusting others from merely relying on them. Baier thinks the distinction lies mainly in the "goodwill" those we trust have for us, not merely in their dependable habits. This goodwill may be minimal not extensive, but it must be there if we are to trust others reasonably.

When we trust others, relying on their goodwill towards us, we necessarily put ourselves at some risk; we make ourselves vulnerable. Trust, writes Baier, "is accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one." (p. 99.)

**Four imaginary models of trust in educational settings**

So, if trust is pervasive, takes many forms, relies to some extent on the other's good will, and makes us vulnerable, how might we think of trust in the framework of educating our children. What does it mean to trust another blindly, and without

qualification, with our child's education? What might it mean not to trust those whom we are educating? And what might it mean to be guarded or cautious in deciding whom we might trust and why? Let us consider four imaginary models of "trust" in educational settings.

The first model is one of "blind trust" both of parents in a teacher and students in their teacher, and the literary derivative is *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark, wherein Miss Jean Brodie is trusted in such an unqualified way both by the parents of some of her students and by the students themselves that she essentially takes it upon herself to mold them in her own image. (Katz, 2006)

Imagine that you had sent your ten-year-old girl to a private girls' school in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 1930s—the context for the novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.* Would you expect that your daughters might be spending many of their weekends at the estate of a man their teacher was having an affair with? I doubt you would.

Although viewed with suspicion by the headmistress and other teachers, Miss Jean Brodie exercises her widespread discretionary authority over her Brodie set of selected girls without hesitation or doubt; she has no trouble justifying taking her small band of Brodie girls to Crammond to spend the weekend with the music master and herself—and her parents do not object. They trust her implicitly, and blindly, having unquestioned faith in her good will and her good judgment. In fact, Miss Jean Brodie has picked her group of special Brodie girls simply because she knew that their parents would trust her. In fact, her selection of her special group of "Brodie girls" revealed a special recognition of which girls could be completely trusted—trusted, that is, to be thoroughly

dominated by Miss Brodie's charismatic personality with their parents raising no serious objections to her influence on them; Muriel Spark writes:

> Miss Brodie had already selected her favorites [by 1931], or rather those whom she could trust; or rather those whose parents she could trust not to lodge complaints about the more advanced and seditious aspects of her educational policy; these parents being either too enlightened to complain or too unenlightened, or too awed by their good fortune in getting their girls' education at endowed rates, or too trusting to question the value of what their daughters were learning at this school of sound reputation (6)

Miss Brodie clearly picked students whose parents, for very different reasons, would trust her in a very uncritical way with how their daughters' teachers behaved. That these women did not raise questions about their daughters regularly accompanying an unmarried woman on weekends to an unmarried teacher's estate reveals a part of their overly trusting nature, something Jean Brodie could exploit as she crossed the traditional boundary of not exposing one's students to the intimate details of one's private life.

That Jean Brodie's specially selected "favorite" ten year old girls would be disinclined not to trust her completely seems almost too obvious to mention, but it must be duly noted. The girls followed Miss Jean Brodie's instructions and allowed her influence to dominate their lives for several years, even after she stopped being their official teacher. It should be noted that overly trusting relationships increase the possibility for such trust to be abused by a teacher such as Jean Brodie, as one's skeptical guard is not raised very high; conversely, one's vulnerability to a powerful, trusted person is simultaneously increased. Teachers, like parents, and other childcare providers, are clearly in a unique position. This unique position affords them the opportunity to abuse their sacred trust to act in the best interests of their students, to guard these students against harm rather than inflicting it unintentionally through their weakness of character

or their bad judgment. So, we draw upon the model of Miss Jean Brodie to illustrate one extreme--a case of “blind trust.”

What might we appeal to as a case of the opposite extreme: that of complete distrust? Here our imaginary example can be drawn from the history of American schooling at the turn of the century. Imagine a situation where the superintendent of schools felt secure in knowing that at a particular time every morning, all of his social studies teachers would be on a particular page of the same social studies text, having these students acquiring the same information largely by reciting and memorizing what they were reading line by line from their textbook.

Historian David Tyack tells us that Aaron Gove, superintendent of schools in Denver, took pride in knowing this and compared his teachers to factory workers sewing stitches in a pair of boots; Gove suggested that the teachers’ freedom resided in how quickly or slowly they sewed these stitches but emphasized that the boots were designed to come out according to a prefabricated design, all looking the same.(Tyack, 1967, pp. 334-339.)

That metaphor of the student as a “product” produced by a standardized approach to education with the teacher viewed as a loyal worker following directions is one that still inspires certain efficiency-minded educators today. It places no discretionary trust in the teacher to make his or her own decisions regarding the curriculum, the texts to be used, or the teaching methods to be employed.

A somewhat parallel version of distrust in the teaching learning process can be found in Dickens’ classic novel *Hard Times.* It begins as follows: ‘Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant

nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!' Here we meet one of Dickens' more infamous characters, Mr. Gradgrind, a teacher, guided totally by his strong, unqualified views about facts and how children ought to be 'filled' with them. In his container theory of knowledge each student becomes the receptacle of the teacher's scholarly wisdom. Children under the careful scrutiny of Mr. Gradgrind, were to be 'regulated and governed,' taken captive and dragged into 'gloomy statistical dens by the hair' (1987, p. 16).

Gradgrind's classroom tyranny and his didactic, authoritarian teaching were based on a total distrust of his students' ability to think for themselves, to formulate their own ideas and defend them, or to imagine other possibilities and other worlds; his teaching methods were designed explicitly to prepare students for their future lives in the 'machine culture' of the nineteenth century, a culture where every person occupied a proper place in the efficient order of things. Like the historical example of Aaron Gove in Denver, *Hard Times* presupposes that there is only one way to teach and one way to learn—by stuffing information into student's heads with or without their compliance.

Having provided two extreme cases, one of blind trust and one of complete distrust, what might a more guarded, more nuanced and more cautious view of "trust" in an educational setting look like. Here we offer two possible scenarios. First, we might consider a university seminar, one where students brought a reasonable degree of subject matter expertise to bear on their learning. We can imagine a teacher not presuming that his students will "trust" everything she says, that she will not assume there is only one

way to view a controversial issue; rather arguments must be made to support one's articulated views. The task of learning would certainly not be viewed as discovering the "right answers" on multiple choice tests, for such tests presuppose that one need not examine whether the question makes sense or is the right question to ask. Critical thinking should be required and such thinking presupposes that students must learn how to challenge not only answers but the questions themselves; they will need to learn how to evaluate whether questions or problems are well formed, useful, and relevant to the issues worth examining.

What will count as "good reasoning" and "poor reasoning" should come into play on a regular basis. Within such a setting, one's teachers will probably have earned a prior reputation for being open-minded or not; moreover, students will experience whether the classroom is a safe place with which to disagree with the teacher and with one's fellow students. In such settings, "trust" is something that teachers will have to earn by demonstrating not only their expertise, but by their honesty and intellectual humility; their honesty and intellectual humility will be demonstrated, in part, by their willingness to qualify their epistemic claims in light of how much or how little certainty they have for making these claims.

Dialogue rather than lecture will probably characterize many of the classroom interactions; inquiry, investigation, and research could reasonably be expected of students seeking to solve problems and present their findings. Such an imaginary university classroom scenario will seem quite plausible to those of us who view teacher-learner relationships as dynamic, interactive, and reciprocal; in these relationships the teachers may see themselves as learners much of the time; moreover they will probably view

"giving and getting right answers" as far less important than learning to make reasoned judgments. It is unlikely that such educational settings will fit easily into models of education where "student performances" are viewed as "outputs to be measured" or standardized tests to be scored for the number of right answers produced. It is also unlikely that in such settings students will have "blind trust in their teachers" or administrators will have no trust in either their teachers or their students. Coming to be seen as trustworthy, i.e. as deserving of warranted trust will be both an epistemic matter of evaluating truth claims and a moral matter of deciding whether teachers treat their students as individuals deserving owed respect as persons and learners. i.e. people capable of reasoning for themselves and forming their own intelligent judgments.

A fourth imaginary scenario for thinking about trust in a more nuanced way might be an elementary classroom wherein teachers and students came to see themselves as creating a caring, respectful community in which learning would be serious and joyful, exploratory but disciplined. Mutual caring and respect among teachers and students would characterize this community where students could be trusted to take their own learning seriously and where teachers could be trusted to do everything possible to insure the appropriate educational growth of their students.

Their aim would be to help their students become flourishing, responsible, open-minded, and creative learners; let us imagine this elementary classroom in a bit more detail. It would be a place where students' natural curiosity could be fostered in various ways and where students' questions and confusions could be seen as critical, not detrimental, to their educational growth; in this imaginary classroom teachers would open themselves up to constructive criticism from their colleagues and supervisors. Moreover,

the teachers' administrators would encourage them to engage their own creativity fully. In such a classroom, learning to express oneself honestly and creatively would be essential. Here students would learn to appreciate everyone as an individual with distinctive abilities and a unique biographical and cultural perspective.

Such a deep appreciation of their students' abilities and differences would inform the teachers' willingness to believe in—and fully trust-- the educational possibilities of their students. These educational possibilities would be viewed broadly as central to a large vision of developing broadly educated persons. These broadly educated individuals would have learned not merely to acquire and memorize useful factual information and develop cognitive skills in reading and math; they would have also learned about their own culture and other cultures, would have acquired mature social and moral understandings and habits. These understandings and habits would enable them to relate effectively to students different from themselves, and to treat others with sensitivity, kindness, and respect. This kind of elementary classroom would be characterized by administrators, teachers, and students trusting each other. But this would not be blind trust; rather it would be trust based on a deep faith in the possibilities of all participants doing their very best every day to make learning an ongoing experience of intellectual, social, and moral growth.

What these four hypothetical models illustrate, in part, is that issues of trust and trustworthiness seem connected not only to our faith in teachers' abilities to promote learning but to two additional things: 1) our sense of what kind of learning makes the most sense, i.e. what kind of learning is "educational," in the best sense of that term; and 2) our view of how our students as learners should be viewed or conceived?

Is learning a matter of "molding character" as Miss Jean Brodie believed? For Miss Brodie, her motto was "Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life." Dynamic, charismatic teachers were there to impose their vision and values upon their students in ways that would leave an indelible imprint.

Or is learning and teaching to be conceived as Aaron Gove and Mr. Gradgrind conceived it—as stuffing the right stuff into the empty receptacles called "students' minds"—through lecture, memorization, recitation, and regurgitation of information? Or should we think of the teaching-learning relationship as more dynamic, open-ended and focused on the cultivation of reason and judgment, inquiry and investigation—one wherein teachers and texts are not viewed as the unquestioned authorities providing truth but as experts who can facilitate dialogue, promote reasoned disagreement as well as thoughtful conversation, cultivate curiosity, and challenge taken-for-granted views.

Should we think of the teaching learning relationship as one that fosters social skills and moral understandings—or one that views these as unimportant and worthy of neglect? Should teaching learning relationships foster creativity and curiosity, open-mindedness and sensitivity to others—or are these educational dispositions too vague to be taken seriously?

Notice how even our language for discussing teaching and learning builds into it what Wittgenstein suggested were "pictures" of the way the educational world is or might be. And, without doubt the larger problem of what is effective schooling presupposes that we have examined the aims and purposes of education so that we can be clear about whether we are evaluating what deserves to be evaluated—or something less important.

## III. The Notion of Accountability

In recent years, institutions of education have been compelled to rationalize budgets and resources as well as attend to the increased demands for 'accountability'. For 'stakeholders' including parents, students, and faculty, concern is expressed over how to contend with these competing and often conflicting demands. One answer is to move education towards 'standards-based reform' and scientifically based research in order to assess the 'effectiveness' of the teaching process. Accountability is the new watchword. But, how does accountability differ in education from its original context? What is its precise meaning?

### Why 'nothing will come of nothing'

In the opening scene of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the old king declares his intention to retire from formal leadership, while retaining all the 'sway' of a monarch. His 'darker purpose' is the division of his kingdom between his three daughters thereby shaking 'all cares from the business of our age.' To each he offers a portion of land dependent upon their profession of love. Which daughter, he asks, 'doth love us most?'

Goneril and Regan are quick to quantify their love for their father. Goneril, the eldest daughter, suggests among other things that she loves the old king more than eyesight and freedom, more, in fact, than 'words can wield the matter'. After hearing this, Regan argues that her sister does not go far enough. Indeed, the love she has for her father is paramount making her 'an enemy to all other joys'. This leaves only Cordelia, Lear's youngest child and his favorite, to speak sense to the old man by refusing to 'play the game', refusing to speak about love in terms that are wholly inappropriate. For

Cordelia, her love for her father is 'more ponderous than her tongue', a love that cannot be quantified. Her loyalty as a daughter is a proper expression of sincerity (see Trilling, 1972). To proclaim the love for her father in the manner of her sisters would be to diminish her commitment and to participate in a fiction about the nature of filial obligation. As Cordelia states:

> Good my lord,
> You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
> Why have my sister's husbands, if they say
> They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
> Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
> To love my father all.
> (Act 1, Scene 1)

When Cordelia is *called to account*, she refuses, protesting that such a demand, while it might be possible to satisfy, as her sisters demonstrate, is unreasonable. It displays a profound misunderstanding of the nature of deep relationships. The result, as we all know, is disaster and tragedy. In a fit of rage, Lear cuts Cordelia from his will and sets out on a path that leads to destruction, civil war, and ultimately his own death along with that of his daughters.

One could be forgiven for seeing the argument between Lear and Cordelia as analogous to the current dispute between teachers and legislators. For teachers, the demand for accountability displays an almost tragic failure in understanding. While it might be possible to reduce the relationship between teacher and student to a series of 'exchanges' and 'contracts', in so doing, it runs the risk of belittling teachers, destroying creative and independent thinking in students, and producing measures of proficiency that

are too narrow in scope to satisfy anyone but those who take joy in collecting and processing 'data.' As one colleague of mine once put it: 'teaching was once a craft. Now we all must paint by numbers' (also see Sennett, 2008).

Within the past generation a new, a critical ethos has emerged amidst a rising 'culture of suspicion' (O'Neill, 2002) and a growing distrust of the professions. Indeed, an 'audit culture,' has clearly developed (Strathern, 2000), one that places faith in 'the market', the collection and analysis of figures, and a reliance upon high-stakes testing as an appropriate benchmark for comparison. At the heart of this emerging "audit culture" is the notion of "accountability." Unfortunately, the term accountability suffers from an ambiguity of meaning. It is conceptually 'slippery', with two distinct yet often conflated meanings, one technical-managerial sense, and a more commonplace meaning that denotes being held responsible or being answerable to someone or some standard (Charlton, 1999). The technical-managerial use of the term refers to a 'duty to present auditable accounts', specifically financial documentation. As Biesta (2004) notes, the history of the technical dimension within a financial context refers specifically to wrongdoing, the ability through auditing procedures to detect incompetence and dishonesty. The managerial dimension of this term extends this 'duty' with its corresponding distrust to organizations or institutions. Consequently, an organization or institution ought to present 'auditable accounts of all its activities' (p. 235).

As O'Neill (2002) notes:

> In theory the new culture of accountability and audit makes professionals and institutions more accountable to the public. This is supposedly done by publishing targets and levels of attainment in league tables, and by establishing complaint procedures by which members of the public can seek redress for any professional or institutional failures. But underlying this ostensible aim of accountability to the public the real requirements are for accountability to regulators, to departments of

> government, to funders, to legal standards. The new forms of accountability impose forms of central control – quite often indeed a range of different and mutually inconsistent forms of central control.(O'Neill, 2002)

The broad point here is that when accountability means accountability to regulators. Understood in this way, accountability has clearly become an end in itself, not a means to a more meaningful purpose. Yet, arguably, what this newer managerial version of accountability reflects is conceptual confusion. For Noddings (2008), *responsibility* ought to be the motivating concept for understanding relationships within education rather than accountability, since the latter term implies judgment, punishment and distrust. Teachers recognize that their responsibilities differ according to the differences in ability within each group of students. Of course, if teachers behave in an irresponsible fashion, those abuses need to be remedied. But, these remedies do not necessarily require the development of new systems of measurement for accountability purposes. As Buckman (2007) notes, the irony of current discussions concerning accountability is that there already are systems of accountability in place within education, systems that had been around for centuries and that included peer review and assessment, research papers, short essays, in-class tests, field trips and so on.

A culture of accountability applied generally to a profession like teaching ignores the degree of autonomy and trust that teachers require in order to *be* teachers; moreover, it directly reduces their status as professionals to that of 'semi-professionals' (Myers, 1973). As Noddings notes: 'Teachers may be *accountable* to administrators for certain outcomes, but they are *responsible* to their students for a host of outcomes. Many of these outcomes are not easily measured.'(2007, p. 39).

Where teachers and the profession of teaching fit within this framework of responsibility/accountability is becoming all too obvious. Yet, as Noddings forcefully argues, an undue emphasis on accountability, outcomes, and the bottom line of standardized testing narrows the curriculum and produces accomplished test-takers at best. Responsibility remains a much deeper concept, one that implies concern for the well-being of those in our care. Consequently, professional responsibility implies both a responsibility to the profession of which one is a member and to those individuals with whom we are entrusted to serve.

## IV. Where do we go from here? Rethinking Accountability

If our discussion focused around the concept of responsibility, we would be compelled to ask 'responsible to whom?' and 'responsible for what?' In so doing, the discussion of educational reform would expand. It would have to include a consideration of the aims and the proper purpose of schooling. As Fritschler (2007) eloquently argues: '… we should support research to determine what works best in the classroom, and create incentives for institutions to reward good teaching rather than just good research.'

The discourse of accountability has led to the following conclusion: *only what is measurable is valuable*. The issue is not whether accountability is needed. For many, a new emphasis on accountability has sharpened procedures where public monies are concerned and provided new visibility for areas of work that may have previously been undervalued.

We concur with O'Neill's (2002) suggestion: replace accountability with a richer conception of *intelligent* accountability. This newer, richer conception should emerge from a serious discussion with numerous 'stakeholders', not just economists or the

corporate sector. Moreover, this discussion must focus on the aims of schooling as well as the procedures involved. In our view, significant and lasting institutional improvements and public trust in schooling will be more likely to grow out of a process of thoughtful deliberation among relevant stake holders than from a set of externally imposed 'standards'. In this way, a serious conversation can begin about education and not one that merely suits the purposes of those who would reduce education to an instrument of economic competitiveness.

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