

American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting

States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Designed to Improve the Achievement of Disadvantaged Students

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West Wind
EDUCATION POLICY



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Our overarching argument

- Since 2002, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have been fixated on NCLB to the detriment of serious study of capacity building initiatives at the state level.

We encourage...

- More study of joint development of state and federal education policy
- MUCH more study of state-level policies and practices—especially related to capacity building

Methodology

- Initially a historical study, we adopted a theoretical frame for analysis (Theories of Action), which provided a lens through which we studied the dynamic state and federal policymaking process.

Methodology

- We augmented our inquiry with a review of scholarly studies on the relationships between federal and state education policy, and
- notes and source documents starting in the early 1990s when one of the authors worked at CCSSO.



Methodology

- Our goal was to identify key subjects for study that would inform state policymaking and practice and federal ESEA reauthorization deliberations.

Research Suffers Two “Sins of Omission”

- We were compelled by Paul Manna’s research and wanted to address the limitations he found in recent scholarship.
- He claims that, though states and the federal government have a relatively fluid back-and-forth influence on one another, the majority of research on federal education policy suffers from two notable “sins of omission.”

(Manna, 2006)



The first “sin of omission”

- Scholars tend to overestimate the Washington machinery and, thus, underestimate states’ impact in shaping federal education policy.

(Manna 2006)

The first “sin of omission”

- Our study started as an attempt to remedy this.
- In the process, we became ever more convinced of the argument!

States Impact Federal Policy Several Ways

- **State as models**
- States as failures
- States as advocates
- Congressional initiatives
- State response to federal policy
- State-federal negotiation
- Personnel shifts

(New York State Archives, 2006)

States As Models

- In the 2001 ESEA reauthorization, the Texas accountability system was explicitly used as a model.
 - Disaggregation of student performance data
 - Labeling and public reporting of school and district performance

States As Models

- In our paper, we review several states that have been used as a models and that, we propose, should be studied further.
 - California
 - Kentucky
 - North Carolina

The second “sin of omission”

- Scholars tend to provide rich narratives without grounding their analysis in a theory of policy change.

(Manna, 2006)

The second “sin of omission”

- We attempt to avoid this problem by focusing our analysis on the **theories of action** that provided the grounding for state and federal policy entrepreneurship over the past 15 years.

(Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1985)

Theories of Action

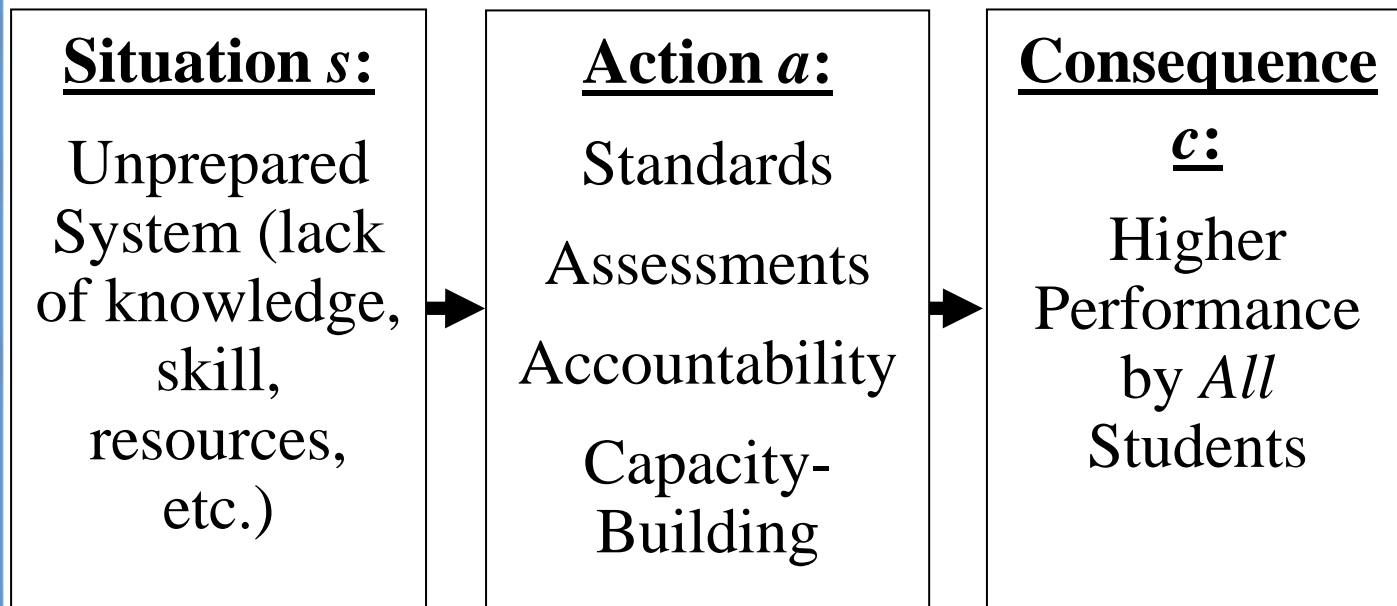
- *Espoused Theory*
 - When we articulate clearly the theory that we claim drives our actions
- *Theory-in-Use*
 - The theory of action that can be inferred by our actions

(Argyris et al, 2006)

Theories of Action

- We noted that as standards-based systemic reform began to take shape, several states enacted robust Theories of Action that included a significant focus on building the capacity of the system to better serve students.

State Theories of Action — Espoused and In Use



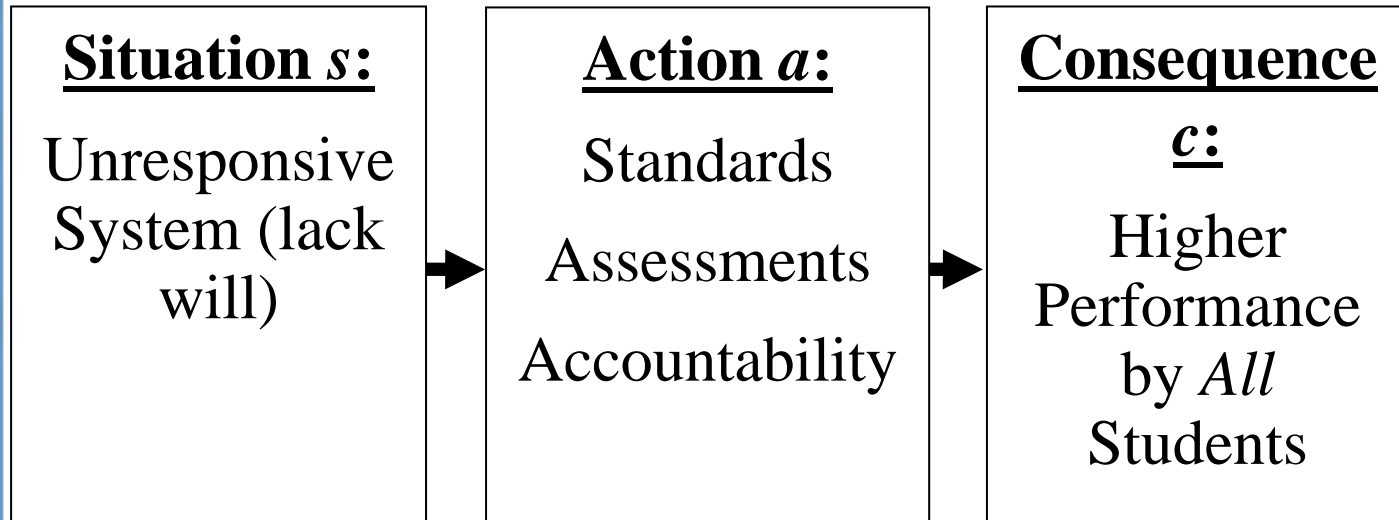
Texas Theory of Action 1993

- Standards (Curriculum frameworks)
- Assessments (TABS to TEAMS to TAAS (to TAKS))
- Accountability (Designations & Reporting)
- **Capacity Building (ESCs)**

Texas as a Model

- In the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, the Texas accountability was widely referred to as a design model.
- However, while the NCLB calls for capacity-building (state systems of support), it was not implemented that way.
 - Lack of funding
 - Lack of guidance

NCLB Theory of Action — In Use



Some movement toward a more robust NCLB theory of action *in use*

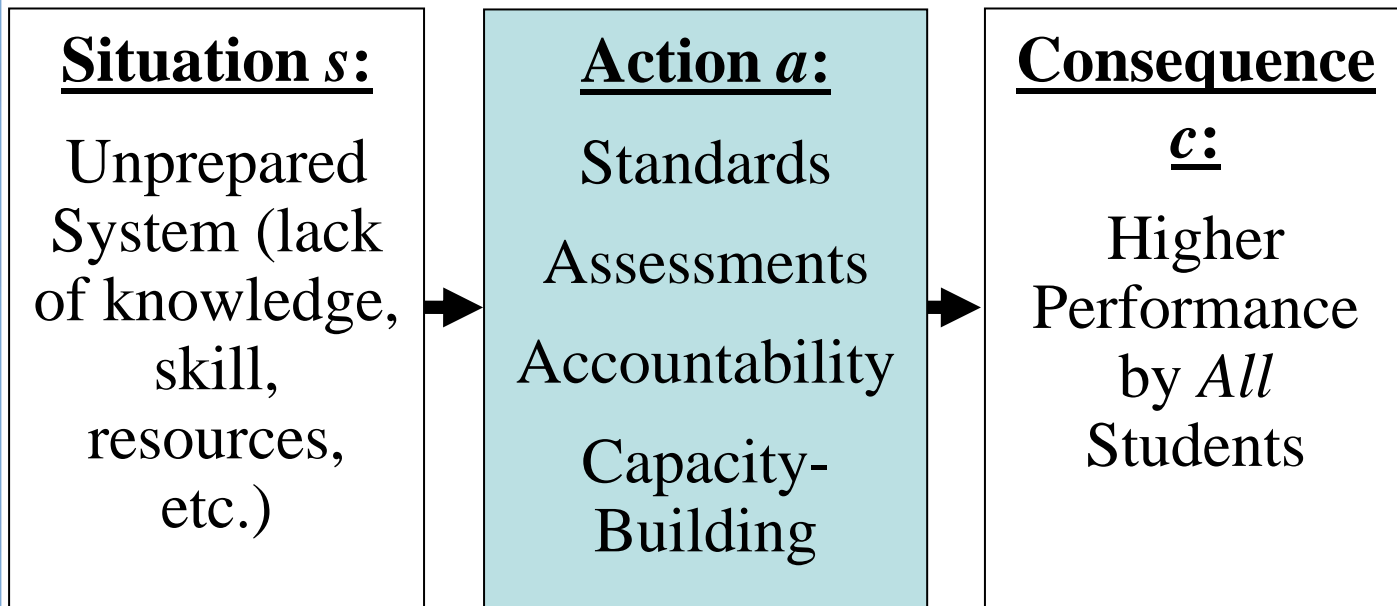
- Some recent attention paid by the administration to state capacity building
 - Increase in the set-aside for SEA administration in 2004-2005
 - Non-regulatory guidance July 2006
 - Center on Innovation and Improvement September 2007 conference and Statewide System of Support Technical Assistance

State Models to Study

- **Kentucky:** Distinguished Educators
- **North Carolina:** Assistance Teams
- **California:** Aligned Professional Development

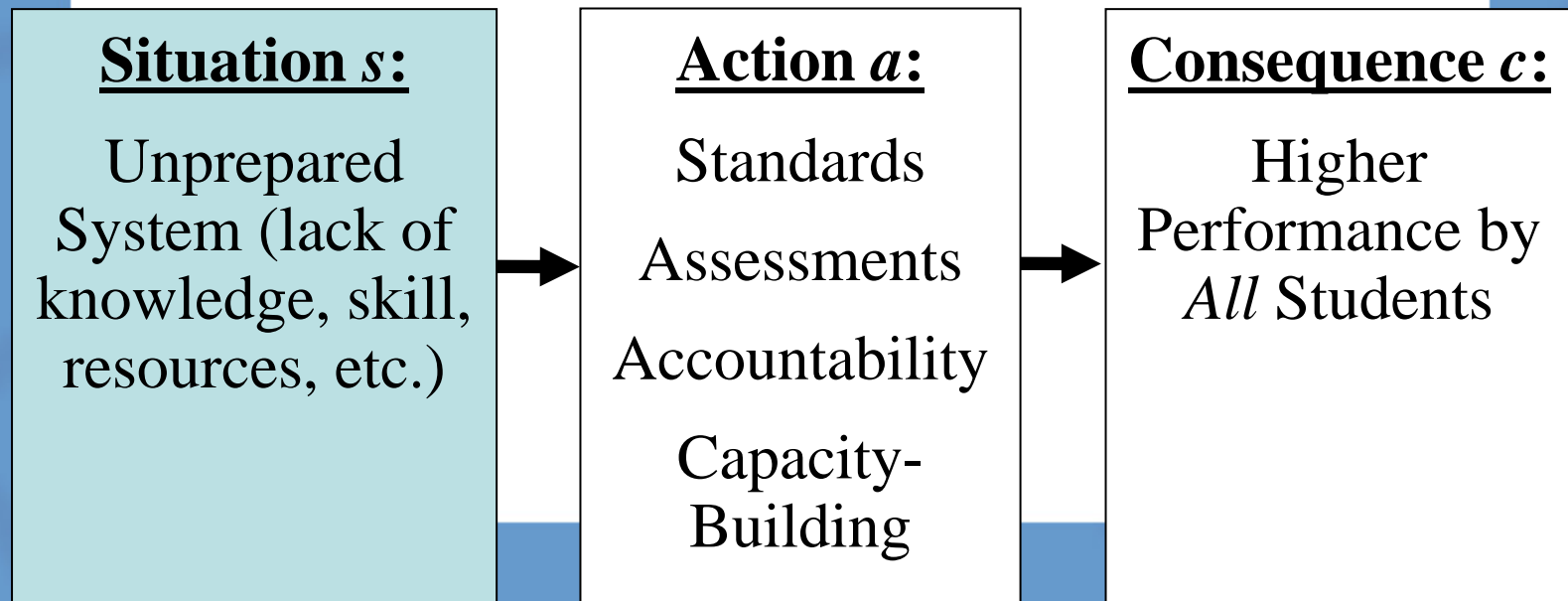
Limitations of this study

- This study focused on actions



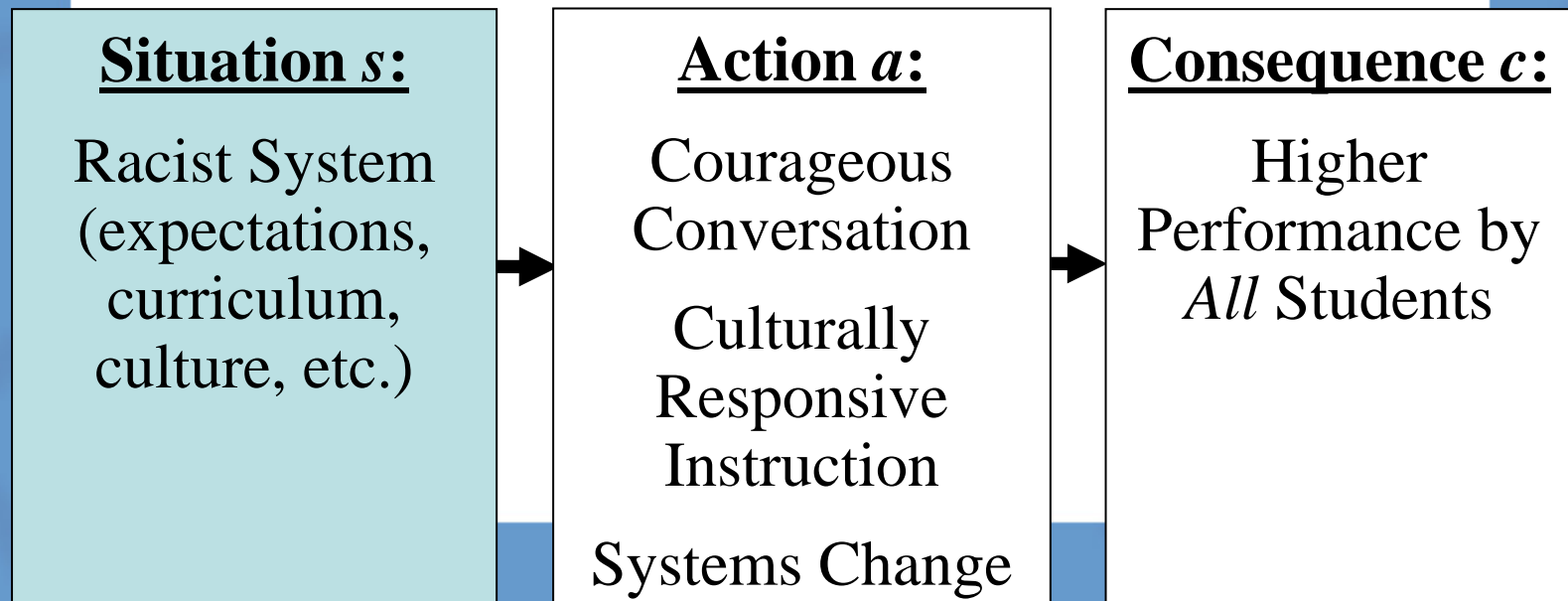
Limitations

- We also must problematize the situations that demand action.



Limitations

- For example, few states are defining the problem as systemic racism.



Limitations

- Yet, some states *are* tackling race head-on—and should be studied:
 - California
 - Connecticut
 - Ohio
 - Oregon
 - Indiana and Wisconsin are on their heels.

Conclusion

- While federal theories of action grew out of state theories of action around accountability, resultant federal policy neglected—ideologically and financially—critical components in which states invested heavily and to which a great deal of the states’ successes can reasonably be attached.

Conclusion

- Focused study should be directed toward states whose policies have been centered on capacity building—whether or not they are tied to an accountability system.

Conclusion

- Source documents may be available through the emerging work of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project

www.sifepp.nysed.gov/edindex.shtml

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