

Editor's Introduction: Expanding Traditional Notions of Practice in Teacher Development

This Summer 2004 issue of Teacher Education Quarterly contains a collection of articles accepted through the normal open submission process, and represents the high quality of scholarship our readers have come to expect. I want to thank all of the authors whose work appears in this issue for their commitment to excellence and their responsiveness to the critical analyses and suggested revisions provided by members of our Panel of Readers. I also want to thank my two associate editors, Jerry Brunetti and Barbara Levin, for their professional insights and editing skills, and for their dedication to helping make Teacher Education Quarterly one of the finest journals in the field today.

A peculiar and most troubling set of events appears to be playing out in the long-standing tradition of the public education of our nation's children. On one front, within the business and political arena attempts to discredit the professional nature of educators are clearly evident in policies and legislation intended to both narrowly define the work of teachers, including the curricula presented in classrooms, as well as creating a public perception that teachers and schools cannot be trusted with providing the most meaningful and effective educational experiences for our children. On the other hand, rarely have there been times when such intellectual, creative, and meaningful responses to educational problems have been so deftly addressed. Clearly, a chasm is being dredged between those who are publicly perceived as being qualified educational experts. Business leaders and politicians are eager to establish their expertise by claiming, first, that schools

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(students, teachers, administrators) are failing, and second, that they themselves know what's best for society and all the individuals living and working in communities across the nation. There seems to be an overtly-stated mission that standardization of educational experiences for teachers as well as students is something to which to aspire. We are beginning to realize what we only once imagined, everyone (administrators, teachers, and students) learning the same content (becoming ever more narrowly defined) at the same time, for what is presumably the purpose of attaining a perfect efficiency production model. One must wonder who is to gain from such a systematically-organized schooling experience?

Educational researchers have been called on to produce verifiable analyses of research data that will support the current reform agenda intent on quantifying systematic practices. However, this reform agenda refuses to recognize the complexities and/or the situated contexts that support human learning. Nor does it recognize the inherent challenges associated with, for example, educating English Language learners, students identified with special needs, let alone promoting democratic ideals, citizenship, and issues of social justice and equity. Whereas, for example, the physical conditions of school facilities, as well as standardized test scores, are inextricably linked to socioeconomic status (i.e., zip code), little attention in the current reform agenda is placed on providing students with equitable access to resources required to support high quality learning. As our attention to responding to legislated mandates is being co-opted, we must face the challenge of choosing to either stand up for what we know constitutes good educational practice, or to simply comply in obedient fashion to the political dictates of those currently in power. The work represented in this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* highlights attempts of those who perceive educational problem-solving as being highly complex, requiring a great deal of creativity and thoughtfully designed research methodologies, as well as a situated understanding of classroom environments in order to facilitate educational improvement.

Issues related to increasing the number of teachers of color is the focus of Aram Ayalon's opening article, "A Model for Recruitment and Retention of Minority Students to Teaching: Lessons from a School-University Partnership."

Richard H. Chant, Tina L. Heafner, and Kristin R. Bennett follow with "Connecting Personal Theorizing and Action Research in Preservice Teacher Development," a study about helping teacher candidates develop personal practical theories in conjunction with action research skills with the purpose of improving student learning.

In "The Opposite Intended Effect: A Case Study of How Over-Standardization Can Reduce Efficacy of Teacher Education," Bob Hughes explores how the standardization movement is narrowing the ways in which students are educated in classrooms. Hughes highlights this dilemma through a critical analysis of the California State Technology Content Standards.

"Caring Communities as Tools for Learner-Centered Supervision," by Brian P.

Yusko, examines through case study methodology the thinking processes and practices of university supervisors and supervisees in learner-centered environments.

Icy Lee addresses the ways in which teachers and students engage in reflective practice in "Using Dialogue Journals as a Multi-Purpose Tool for Preservice Teacher Preparation: How Effective Is It?" Lee suggests this most powerful tool for increasing reflective inquiry in teacher development has important implications for second language teacher education programs.

In "Prospective Teachers as Tutors: Measuring the Impact of a Service-Learning Program on Upper Elementary Students," Brett D. Jones, D. T. Stallings, and David Malone examine the role of a service-learning volunteer tutoring program on the professional development of prospective teachers.

In the final article, Nancy S. Lewis explores the relationship between teachers' belief systems and their curriculum decision making process through her study entitled, "The Intersection of Post-Modernity and Classroom Practice."

From recruiting and retaining minority teacher candidates to promoting development of practical theories and actions research; from critical analysis of state content standards to supervisor mentoring processes associated with teacher development; from reflective dialogue journaling to service learning to the influence of teachers' beliefs on curriculum decision-making; the research embedded in this issue of Teacher Education Quarterly speaks directly to the issue of expert knowledge. One must return to Michael Apples poignant question, whose knowledge is of most worth?

As always, we look forward to your feedback. You can find Teacher Education Quarterly online at www.teqjournal.org. Also, please look for the upcoming Fall 2004 special guest-edited issue by Rob Fried of Northeastern University on the theme "Passionate Teaching and Learning in an Era of Test-Based Accountability."

—Thomas Nelson
Editor