Introduction:
Teaching in Politically, Socially-Situated Contexts

The notion that teaching is inherently political, and it happens in socially situated contexts may be a platitude that hardly bears spelling out to some of our readers. However, I think it deserves renewed attention due to the proliferation of alternative teacher education programs coupled with the steady onslaught on university-based teacher education. Make no mistake, there are forces in the neo-liberal world itching to privatize teacher education, to snatch would-be teachers from universities and plant them in fast-track, theory-light programs that purposefully eschew issues of racism, poverty, LGBT, bilingualism, and biliteracy, that downplay foundations of public education, and have little interest in helping teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge and all its components, teach dual language learners, or learn ways to interact with and support minority communities and families. Prepare teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy and LGBT issues? Prepare teachers to teach literacy in a language other than English? Prepare teachers to teach language to English learners in academic contexts? Prepare teachers in project-based learning? Prepare teachers to inquire about their practices? These are areas of teaching and learning that are outside the interests of those with a streamlined business model for teacher education.

The collection of articles in this issue of *Teacher Eduction Quarterly* shows that teacher education is inherently nested in political and socially-situated contexts ranging from institutional policies to local communities. This is not to say that within the field of teacher education, we cannot debate how to prepare teachers, what they need to know and be able to do, and what counts as teaching qualities

that are valued in research, policy, and local knowledge. In this issue, we feature eight articles that situate teacher education in political and social contexts. The opening article by Randall Lahann and Emilie Mitescu Reagan examines Teach for America as tool of a neoliberal agenda with respect to reform in teacher education. For Lahann and Reagan, four components—privatization, fragmentation, use of standardized assessments, and weakening teacher union—drive the neoliberal agenda. While they show how Teach for America represents these components, they go on to argue that Teach for America also include a progressive component that makes it attractive to new college graduates: that social inequities in society are a result of public education which has failed to meet the learning needs of those who have been least successful in schools. Clothed in the discourse of equitable education, Teach for America, Lahann and Reagan point out, espouses a vision of improving educational opportunities for marginalized students, but does so using neoliberal structures and minimal teacher preparation.

Jason K. Ritter, Dave Powell, Todd S. Hawley, and Jessica Blasik used content analysis of a series of reports written about student teachers over a three-year period to understand the extent to which their writings may have conveyed to students the reified ontology of a White European conceptualization of individualism over one that characterizes citizenship in a democracy as having multiple voices. They found that much of what was written about student teachers reflected characteristics of what might be called the White European ideal of an independent individual needing to make decisions without reference to the larger social contexts present in the school or in society. This reflective work is important because, like the hidden curriculum work that precedes it, the authors show how the feedback they provided their students in effect worked against democratic ideals in teaching and especially against fostering the value of cultural diversity.

The article that follows by Incho Lee offers a glimpse into the Korean education system and how students are taught about globalization in the state-mandated English-as-a-foreign-language textbook for high school students. Lee found that the textbook tends to mirror Korean cultural models that value economically affluent and politically dominant Western countries. Overall, the content analyses reveal that the U.S. was portrayed as the most developed country in the world, and Lee presents a trenchant argument for why Koreans have come to hold these beliefs about the the Western and non-Western worlds.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an off-shoot of earlier models of teaching and learning that attempt to connect schools with the communities, particularly when those communities are non-White and working class. Shelly Brown-Jeffy and Jewell E. Cooper provide a historical review of culturally relevant pedagogy and then link it to critical race theory, showing how critical race theory can add to culturally relevant pedagogy if it is explicitly taught and modeled in schools by teacher educators. For readers who are unfamiliar with critical race theory, this article offers a nice introduction.

Next, Tomás Galguera's article examines how participant structures used in a teacher education class that focuses on teaching English learners promote pedagogical language knowledge. This important piece adds to the research literature on pedagogical content knowledge with which so many readers will already be familiar. This is a self-study of one teacher educator who wrestled with how students come to learn about teaching for language development in academic contexts, and how he improved his own teaching abilities in the process.

In the study by Shannon Pella, teachers joined a professional learning community to engage in lesson study about writing pedagogy, with an eye toward improving writing instruction and making writing a means for more equitable schooling. Pella makes a strong case for understanding teacher education from a situative perspective on learning. That is, teacher learning is a social event that draws on multiple voices and perspectives; in this case through lesson study, the teachers in Pella's study found new ways of improving teaching and learning through writing.

Mary Louise Gómez and Terri L. Rodríguez follow with a compelling case for what a Latina teacher brings to schools and classrooms, and thus, a call for renewed efforts to recruit and retain Latina teachers in particular and underrepresented minority teachers in general. Gómez and Rodríguez asked three White teachers to describe Patricia Morales, a Latina teacher, and explain what makes her a successful teacher. Through the description, we learn that each teacher sees Patricia Morales through his or her own lens, and ultimately how teachers like Patricia Morales contribute to the landscape of teaching and learning.

In the final article, Encarna Rodríguez offers astute reflections on what American teacher education students learned from an immersion experience in Bolivia, where they participated in Bolivian schools and society, in both rural and urban settings. Rodríguez sought to provide experiences to her students in ways that would help them understand the struggles of poor Bolivian communities as the voices of those communities are heard and understood from their own perspectives.

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—Christian Faltis, Editor