

Introduction: The Roles of Teacher Educators, Supervisors, and Mentors in Professionalizing Teacher Education

Becoming a teacher, or joining the profession of teaching, involves a complex process in which there are numerous contributors and contributing contexts. University students who intend to become teachers in K-12 public schools have numerous routes available to them. Some routes to becoming a teacher are simple and short in duration, with minimal attention paid to the components that contribute high quality teacher preparation; others are rigorous and engage students in university coursework focused on educational foundations, literacy and content area methods, formative assessment, adapted instruction for bilingual youth and children with special needs, learning theories in practice, deep reflections on student learning, extensive classroom experiences under the tutelage of experienced teachers, and apprenticed student teaching. In this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*, the focus is on the later approach to becoming a professional teacher, and what it takes to enter and grow in the profession. Thematically, the message is that many people with specialized knowledge, abilities, and dispositions toward teaching and learning are involved in helping students learn about and gain experience in teaching prior to entering a classroom.

Each of the articles contributes to the knowledge base in teacher education, beginning with a study by Ilana Margolin which examine the preparation of teacher educators. What is fascinating about this study is that it is one of the very few that looks at the professional development of teacher educators, asking questions about what kinds of transformations participants experience as they move from a traditional to an new teacher education program, and the contexts in which the changes

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occurred. As teacher education programs in many places change, Margolin's study provides some clues about what is involved in transformation so that when students enter the newly developed programs they will experience a seamless shift to a new way of preparing for teaching.

One voice that is often overlooked in teacher education research is that of the pre-service students who enroll in teacher education programs. Judith Haymore Sandholtz provides a look into what pre-service teachers think about effective and ineffective teaching practices, and the results from this study are encouraging. The pre-service students in her program, a strong program with all of the elements of high quality teacher education preparation, showed that they were able to critically examine their practices and shape their teaching based on student learning. This article also discusses implications for teacher education programs and recommends ways to help pre-service teachers by enhancing a focus on student learning in ways that integrate classroom management with teaching and ethical concerns.

The next three articles address two critical components of teacher education: working with cooperating teachers/mentors, and teacher supervision. Patricia J. Norman discusses her research of a teacher study group focused on ways to support pre-service teachers learning to teach while working with a classroom mentor and a university faculty member. The centerpiece of the study involves what constitutes good planning for creating and sustaining an engaging lesson as viewed from different experiences and knowledge bases. Alisa J. Bates, Dina Drits, and Laurie A. Ramirez investigate multiple case studies of university supervisors and their work with student teachers, offering insights from both supervisions and the student teachers with whom they interacted. Hillary S. Hertzog and Nancy O'Rode focus on the relationship between university supervisors and student teachers, particularly with regard to the role of reflective practices for improving mathematical knowledge for teaching. All three of these articles provide grist for thinking more deeply about the important roles supervision plays in teacher education.

David Slavitt, Anne Kennedy, Zacu Lean, Tamara Holmlund Nelson, and Angie Deuel discuss the merits of a middle school professional development collaborative that endeavored to refocus mathematics teachers' understandings and pedagogical practices on student learning. This five-year effort yielded changes that the teachers themselves believed in and ultimately worked toward implementing into their daily teaching practices.

The next two articles emphasize the power of case study and self-study for preparing teachers for the profession. Karen J. Kindle and Cynthia M. Schmidt were interested in looking deeply into the dispositions that reflect pre-service teachers' life experiences about reading, and how these dispositions figure into the knowledge and practice around reading instruction that students need to learn from the outside in. Nelson Graff investigates *backwards design* as a process to help pre-service teachers learn about curriculum planning in a way that integrates content knowledge with pedagogical knowledge. This begins with the question

“What do students in my classroom need to develop in order to successfully show their learning?” In this manner, *backwards design* starts with desired learning and asks pre-service teachers to work on what has to happen to get their students to that point. Graff’s research probes into how pre-service teachers learn to use this approach to lesson planning and design.

While the number of alternatively licensed teachers is on the rise nationwide, the research on teacher education of alternatively licensed teacher lags behind. Lasisi Ajayi provides readers with a look inside one such program through self-study, where a group of teachers who were teaching full-time while they were completing their credentials reflected on and critiqued their own practices around the teaching of literacy. In this article, we learn about the value of self-study for improving teaching practices.

In the final article in this issue, Jana Hunzicker follows three teachers’ learning experiences as they engage in the National Board Certification process. Hunzicker introduces and expands on the notion of *learning leverage*, the gains made by the three teachers when they engaged in uncomfortable experiences that demanded rigor, reaped rewards, and involved taking a risk. These three dynamics created different pressures on each of the teachers, and together the dynamics leveraged teacher learning in distinct ways.

This Summer 2011 issue has much to ponder and offers readers a host of ideas about the professionalization of teachers. For me, this issue represents a research-based counter-narrative to the current anecdotal narrative that portrays teacher educators as professionally inadequate and the teaching profession as unsophisticated and more concerned about unions and job security than student learning. The authors in this issue demonstrate that learning about teaching and becoming a professional teacher are complex, intertwined processes, and that teaching is a profession that requires the support and contribution of numerous dedicated, knowledgeable, talented people who are committed to improving teaching and learning in America’s public schools. All of the articles in this issue were accepted until the editorship of Thomas Nelson.

Sincerely,

—Christian J. Faltis, Editor