

What Goes Around...

By Joseph W. Beard

Alan H. Jones raises some interesting points in his introductory article to this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*. His invitation to respond in this anniversary issue has prompted many memories of events and activities that have occurred during the past 25 years. I want to share several of them that relate to his theme of the debate in teacher education, looking for answers, and anticipating the future. Underlying all of these memories is my major point that we have been here before, yet it is a spiral development, not a linear one. We do make progress, even though it seems that we are doomed to duplicate the efforts of the past in order to solve the same problems that we have always talked about.

Joseph W. Beard, a recent adjunct member of the education faculty at American University and the linguistics faculty at Georgetown University who resides in Edgewater, Maryland, was the founding publisher of Teacher Education Quarterly, first issued as the California Journal of Teacher Education, while serving as chair of the Education Department at St. Mary's College of California 25 years ago.

The first memory that came to my mind was sitting in an auditorium, just before the seeds of this journal were planted, reviewing my thoughts for a presentation I was to make to teachers on the opening day of their pre-school activities for the year. The superintendent was giving a "state-of-the-profession and teacher peptalk" speech when something he said raised my consciousness to a level that remains in my memory to this day. He was talking, just as we do today, about the significant changes he saw happening in education and teaching. His point that caught

What Goes Around...

my attention was that, "change was good for its own sake," that each of us in our own generation needs to experience the frustration of something that is not right and to cope with working out ways to resolve that problem.

Each of the ten issues Jones raises are ones we talked about and struggled to resolve 25 years ago, as we built programs and encouraged young people to become teachers. How could we create quality while responding to the institutional need for large numbers of tuition-paying students? How could we assure that the teachers and students represented the community, whether we worried about males in primary schools or the color and language of teacher education candidates? We did these things by challenging our institution and creating change just as our predecessors had done and just as people are doing today. We thought we were unique and different, that no one had done these things before. We were excited and young and capable of expending the energy necessary to tilt at our windmills because they were ours. What time has shown me is that we can learn from others and that we do stand on the shoulders of those who came before. We do make contributions to the spiral of good change "for its own sake," while recognizing the thread of continuity.

Continuity for me came when I was chairing an education program at a small college. As one who had graduated from an intern teaching credential program, I was approached by the previous administrator of that program. His university program at that time was less able to respond to the current needs of two school districts and he wondered if my program, new and in a smaller institution, could provide an intern-type umbrella that would get experienced bilingual and minority people into the districts' classrooms. The issues of preservice versus inservice education and campus versus school site programs were of no import to our naiveté—we just did it. We went into the schools, included change-of-career and experienced people, who looked different and spoke other languages, in our candidate mix. We said, "You can teach, now let's give you the tools to do it better!" We created change because there was no one to tell us we couldn't and we did not know any better.

This opportunity to develop a program came while I was at an institution which, in the previous four years, had tried and not succeeded at teacher education. When I was interviewed for the job of administrator of this small college's program, I was asked how I thought I could succeed in light of the previous failure and the perceived view that there was a teacher surplus. I remembered the words of a mentor who had shared his experience of previous job shortages and teacher shortages and his view that there would always be opportunities for good teachers. I expressed my optimism for the future, reflected on my belief that young people, even from that institution, did want the opportunity to become teachers. In the four years I served that institution as a change agent we built a solid program which continues to this day. We were generalists who specialized in teaching—our own teaching as we modeled it and in the practice of teaching that we encouraged our students to pursue. We had more time than money to build a learning community that truly saw teaching

and its associated activities as a calling. Our theory was practiced and our practice was based on theory. We opened the door for our students to explore schools and teaching and to decide for themselves what and how they could contribute to education and public schools.

As I reflect on that program and my many adventures in teaching since then, I think of a day in high school when an admired teacher asked me what I wanted to do in the future. Her reaction to my desire to teach was, "WHAT, YOU want to teach?" She implied that I could do anything else I wanted, so why go into teaching. Students I have worked with recently have also been discouraged, by counselors and parents, in their consideration of teaching. This issue of the value seen in teaching is one that Jones doesn't specifically raise. It lies at the base of all the other issues, including whether the public, through its public institutions, or the private sector, with its exclusive responses to the needs of its own, should be responsible for the education of our youth and the teachers who teach them. I am glad I became a teacher and have felt renewed in my return to teaching from administration during these past few years.

Another memory I have reflects on the impact of technology. In my first years of teaching I had a principal who put a television set in every classroom, with the belief that these new tools would make our classrooms better places for our students. I'll never forget what happened when a new superintendent came to the district and saw a television set in every classroom of our school and none in the other three middle schools. He required that "our" sets (garnered through the same processes available to the other schools—parent participation and judicious budget planing) be evenly divided between the four schools. His argument was one of equity and access—they should be equal for all the students in all the middle schools of the district! And today we argue the same issues, as computers and access to the Internet become the new tools for solving all our problems. An issue Jones alludes to but does not develop is that of the increasing disparity between those who have and those who have not. How can we assure equal access and opportunity in the face of unequal distribution of the tools of learning? In the words of a colleague in bilingual education, "There is nothing as unequal as equal education." If those who come to our schools do not have the experience to profit from the technologies that seem to offer short-range solutions without consideration of the long-range effects of what we do today, we will have increased problems in our society.

My final memory, to be shared here, goes to the reason for the existence of this journal and the opportunity to continue to address issues pertinent to teacher education. A colleague and fellow member of the California Council on the Education of Teachers wished, in my presence, that the Council had a publication for the exchange and sharing of ideas. I shared the wish with Bob Terrell, the first editor of our fledgling journal, and we began to make the wish come true. In the first issues, which were mimeographed 8-1/2 by 11 inch folios, we raised questions not unlike those that Jones has raised in this fourth issue of the 25th volume. When the

What Goes Around...

Council took over publication of the *California Journal of Teacher Education*, we continued to ask and debate the same questions. And if the *Teacher Education Quarterly*, which evolved from that earlier effort, continues for another 25 years, we will probably still be exploring the same issues. To do so will be for the better, as that district superintendent described earlier suggested in his comments on change. But it is not a linear process of back and forth, rather a spiral one (like the slinky on the stairs) that sometimes expands and sometimes contracts but goes around to reflect on the past and anticipate the future. Yes, what goes around does come around—thank goodness!