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Changing Teacher Education: Challenging Assumptions and Moving Forward

F. Todd Goodson

We are pleased to offer the first issue of *Educational Considerations* published through partnership with New Prairie Press, a venue for open access publishing provided by Kansas State University Libraries. The entire catalog of back issues of the journal from 1973 forward is now available on this site, and we express our appreciation to Charlene Simser and the staff of the Center for the Advancement of Digital Scholarship for their assistance in this project that now makes available 45 years of published manuscripts.

Longtime readers of *Educational Considerations* understand well the high standards set for the journal by David C. Thompson, the Department of Educational Leadership and Adult Education at Kansas State University, and the many distinguished scholars who have served the journal over the years as guest editors and editorial board members. With this issue, responsibility for the journal transitions to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University, and we express our appreciation for the broad shoulders on which we stand. It is indeed humbling to assume responsibility for a publication with such a rich history of important contributions to our professional conversation. We extend our gratitude to Professor Thompson for his tireless advocacy for and stewardship of the journal through recent years, and we express our appreciation to Dean Debbie Mercer for her continuing support for hosting this important venue for scholarship in the College of Education at Kansas State University.

The incoming team of co-editors—Lotta Larson, Kay Ann Taylor, and Lori Goodson (KSU Department of Curriculum and Instruction) and Shannon Ralph (Dodge City High School, Dodge City, KS) are pleased to welcome a distinguished editorial board reflecting many years of excellence in teaching, research, and teacher education.

Appropriately, this current issue takes up a timely theme—changing teacher education. Teacher education enjoys a symbiotic relationship with K-12 education. Changes in teacher education filter into the K-12 system through newly prepared teachers, just as teacher education reacts to changes in the K-12 world, altering its systems in response to the needs from practitioners in the field.

In many ways, then, the history of university-based teacher education can be better understood through the metaphor of the moving target. We have striven to prepare teachers for K-12 schools, even as those schools undergo profound change driven by policy makers and interest groups from outside the systems and from ever-changing demographics and community pressures from within. And while teacher educators attempt to keep pace with the shifting sands of K-12 education, our accreditation systems have taken seriously their mandate to foster continuous improvement by systematically raising the bar of expectations for our programs and our units.

Given that change is a constant factor playing in the background of all of our systems of education, it is important to examine the assumptions underlying the drive to change our practice. Any attempt at change, from the micro level of a classroom teacher reconsidering the structure of a single lesson to the macro level of sweeping legislation mandating new practices, is, as Weiss (1995) notes, based on assumptions about how the actions set in motion through the drive to change will lead to positive outcomes, and while these assumptions underpin the entire enterprise, they are often hidden from view.

It is possible, through close examination, to make explicit the hidden theories of change supporting most reform efforts (e.g., Connolly and Seymour, 2015). When those previously hidden assumptions about the change process are subjected to critical examination, they often contain serious flaws (e.g., Fullan, 2006). As much as we might attempt to base our decisions on the best available dispassionate data, education remains an industry whose reforms are still routinely based on common sense, popular lore, and simplistic slogans. Our responsibility to the generations of teachers and scholars who will follow us is to hold our policies up to critical analysis and challenge our profession and ourselves to supply the implicit assumptions we would sometimes prefer to leave unstated.

With this issue of *Educational Considerations*, the contributing authors examine various propositions concerning the value of change. Heather Young and Chris Goering present research examining the assumption of the Common Core Literacy Standards that primary grade students' early reading experiences should move away from the literary texts that have long served as the basis for early reading and toward much more engagement with informational texts. This assumption has driven a dramatic, even radical, change in instructional materials and practices, and this cannot be without consequences. Heather and Chris offer research that begins to map that territory.

Melia Fritch suggests a theoretical foundation upon which change in instruction through academic libraries might be constructed. Her manuscript provides both a justification and a blueprint for the continued relevance of the library as an agent of social justice.

Brad Burenheide offers perhaps the most radical assumption of all of our authors with his contention that university-based teacher educators should maintain their practitioner status as K-12 teachers. His description of his work as a university faculty member concurrently teaching high school social studies classes challenges us all to reconsider the strength of our connections to the classrooms we prepare teachers to enter.

Vicki Sherbert reports an element of a larger research project in which she examines the unique needs and strengths of K-12 students who are part of military families as well as the manner in which teacher educators prepare classroom professionals to serve those students. The military-dependent student represents an emerging category in our demographic profile of student populations, and the need for educators to change their practices to accommodate the needs of this unique group is becoming more apparent as an inevitable byproduct of continuing global military interventions. Vicki's research provides insight into this ongoing process of changing teacher education practice to prepare teachers to meet the unique needs of military-connected students.

Deepak Subramony presents the results of an evaluation study assessing the impact of a group of university faculty members who, with support from their institution, replaced commercial textbooks with Open Source alternatives. Since the printers of the Colonial Period identified a source of revenue through the production of copies of the *New England Primer* for teachers and students, the influence of the commercial textbook industry has become an amazingly large, lucrative enterprise through the assumption that teaching and learning require the assistance of products that generate profits for private companies. The Open Source movement represents a threat to that business model, and advocates for Open Source should be willing to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the products they put before students. Deepak's research represents one such effort.

Lotta Larson and Tom Vontz describe an innovative elementary teacher licensure program at the graduate level through distance instruction, as well as remote supervision of all field experiences. Although this program is only two years old at the time of this publication, it has already prompted competing institutions to attempt to copy the model, and it has demonstrated that in a time of declining enrollments in teacher education programs, innovative delivery systems reaching previously underserved populations of potential students can see robust student demand. University-based teacher education has the model of late adolescent undergraduates in resident study on college campuses built into its DNA, but the continuing viability of that model as the only pathway into the teaching profession is in serious doubt. Lotta and Tom provide an introduction to one promising program that keeps the university central to the teacher education process while re-imagining how that training is delivered.

Finally, we offer a new feature for *Educational Considerations*, Key Conversations. In this issue, Lori Goodson presents an interview with Karen Symms Gallagher, Dean of the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education and Chair of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As institutions transition to the CAEP standards and system for review, Dean Gallagher's comments provide invaluable context and direction.

Taken as a whole, we believe this issue offers a rich portrait of an intricate and interrelated set of questions:

Should beginning readers be immersed in folktales and poems and stories, or should their early experiences with text begin preparing them for exposition? Following that, how does the education of teachers of early reading need to change to adapt to this new reality?

How can traditional institutions such as academic libraries move beyond supporting learning to advancing social change?

How important is it for teacher educators to maintain their currency as classroom teachers? Does current K-12 practitioner status enhance our effectiveness as teacher educators?

As we identify groups of students and families with unique experiences and educational needs, how do we adapt our systems to respond?

Can we build alternative licensure programs to expand the reach of our teacher education programs and provide access to the teaching profession to previously underserved populations?

How can our accreditation processes adapt to continue to set high standards for performance while maintaining relevancy?

We believe these are critically important educational issues ripe for consideration. Thank you for exploring these issue with us, as we look forward to continuing the tradition of excellence that began with the first volume in 1973.

References

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