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INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE OF JET ON INNOVATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

INNOVATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: TOWARD A CRITICAL RE-EXAMINATION

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Abstract:

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation, according to the writer Evgeny Mozorov, is a "buzzword", perhaps *the* buzzword of our times (Mozorov, 2014). All too often, it is associated with the rise of new technologies, economic rationalism and a phenomenon that literacy researcher Ilana Snyder (channelling Marx) described as the "fetishization of novelty" (Snyder, 1998, p. 125). As Mozorov points out, it is an unusual buzzword in that it is capable of uniting those on the political centre-left and centre-right in offering a synonym for change – in values as well as practices – that has some kind of relation to market principles. In teacher education, we often see innovation invoked as a proxy for change when new technological products (or "solutions") are advanced (e.g. the use of computer game-like simulations to prepare new teachers to manage young people's "behaviour") or when the provision of teacher education is marketized (encouraging competition between providers) and the market diversified (to allow private providers to compete with public organisations such as universities). Drawing on discourses of innovation in the tech sector, the notion of "disruptive innovation" (Christensen, 1997) becomes dominant, founded on the assumption that a new idea can challenge the way a market operates, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs to capitalise their ideas and increasing value for shareholders.

But other meanings of innovation are possible. In this issue, we present six papers that, together, point towards a different meaning for innovation in teacher education that begins with a critical re-examination of the purposes of innovation. Why is change needed in the ways that we prepare and support the continuing professional learning and development of teachers? Who should be the primary beneficiaries of this change? How do we achieve change and on the basis of what (and whose) values?

Towards a critical re-examination of innovation in teacher education

Teacher education as a field, especially when it is associated with universities, is often seen as resistant to change and slow to innovate, particularly by policy-makers (Berliner, 1984; Gibb, 2014; Hess & McShane, 2013; Saxton, 2015). Although, as we have said, the meaning of the word "innovation" is often inflected through economic and technological discourses, the purported aims of many recent, self-described innovations in the field (such as those by Teach for America and Teach First) are often centred, in effect, on a concept of "social mobility" associated with the greater participation of students from historically marginalized populations in higher education and also in the graduate job market and professions, within current conditions. New, de-regulated private providers of teacher development programmes in the U.S. (e.g. the Relay Graduate School of Education) and the U.K. (e.g. the Institute for Teaching) are founded on this mission and offer training to prospective teachers and school leaders on what many might call a "narrow" and "instrumental" model (Zeichner, 2016) but which could claim to be "innovative" nonetheless (c.f. Ellis, Steadman and Trippestad, 2018).

This special issue of the *Journal of Education for Teaching* focuses on innovation in teacher education (broadly construed to include both initial or pre-service teacher education and continuing professional learning and development) that grow out of alternative perspectives to "social mobility" within the *status quo*: the perspectives of social justice and equity. Rather than just seeking to allow a greater proportion of individuals from historically marginalized communities to "pass" barriers of race, gender, social class, sexuality, etc. in order to claim some measure of privilege previously denied to them, a lens of equity and (especially) justice instead requires us to examine the barriers themselves and to take a culturally sustaining/revitalising (McCarty & Lee, 2014)) and reparative stance (Pinar, 1996) on education as a human endeavour. As McDermott (1993) argued, it is vital that we acknowledge the de-humanizing effects of technical-rational solutions to educational and

societal challenges even when, like arguments for social mobility, they are articulated as having "moral purpose".

Rather, based on a range of international research and scholarship, the arguments put forward by the papers in this issue are founded on the premise that, currently, many "innovations" merely reproduce unequal and unjust situations, educationally and more socially. These outcomes are most evident through experiments in which the quality of student learning is defined solely through proxies, such as standardized test scores, derived from economistic metaphors grounded in dominant values which mask and/or uphold inequities in schooling and in society (Alexander, 2015; Lipman, 2011). While these approaches to innovation might be described as both technical-rational and neoliberal, characterised by commitments to the disruption of teaching as a public service profession as well as by claims for the benefits of markets, they nonetheless aim to *improve* the quality of state (i.e. public) education. The papers in this special issue therefore ask: how are universities now – and how could universities in the future – respond to the same need for change in teacher education whilst not simply reproducing unjust situations more efficiently through the use of new technologies or through the marketization or out-sourcing of provision. We focus on universities, particularly, both to acknowledge and to question the widely perceived problem that they are often slow and/or reluctant to change.

At a time when the contribution of all public institutions to society is under renewed examination (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Zeichner, 2006, 2010), this special issue is therefore distinctive in showing how collaborations between public sector organisations – including but not limited to community schools and universities - can address the ever-widening disconnect between the diversity of students in those schools and the "official" standardization and restriction of teaching as a profession (Genishi & Dyson, 2009), especially at a time in which, globally, schools

and societies are more racially, culturally, and linguistically pluralistic. Thus, together, the papers in this special issue contribute to a critical re-examination and re-definition of innovation in teacher development in regressive times (Geiselberger, 2017) by examining the purpose and rationale for change, centring on diversities - of practices, contexts, pedagogies, principles, and learners - and addressing the following questions:

- What does innovation in teacher education look like when it seeks to foster transformational change in education, where the values on which such change is predicated are not about increased productivity and lower cost – or even greater mobility within existing social structures - but social justice and equity instead?

- What does innovation in teacher education look like when it promotes professional learning and development within sustainable career structures for teachers; socially and politically engaged student learning; and a community-oriented view of schools as institutions and potential levers of positive social change?

- What does it mean to learn to teach and to improve your teaching – and to support teachers in these endeavours – from a critical perspective on teacher development centred on equity and social justice?

- What are ways in which we can promote innovation in teacher education that creates new ideas that have public value – for the whole of society but especially for those who have been poorly served historically, and continue to be so?

Addressing these questions from a range of perspectives and in a variety of international contexts, the analysis presented in the papers that follow coalesce around two imperatives: first, acknowledging and responding to the notion of a "teacher education debt", part of a wider "education debt" noted by Ladson-Billings (2006); second, working for the humanization of teaching and learning (and becoming a teacher) as relational practices and processes and resisting the

datafication (Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier, 2013) of learning and the intensification of teaching, however well-intentioned such moves may be within the frame of advancing "social mobility".

THE (TEACHER) EDUCATION DEBT

In her 2005 Presidential Address to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Ladson-Billings (2006) challenged the idea of a simple "achievement gap," urging education researchers to understand educational inequities through the lenses of what she titled "the education debt." She argued that focusing on a single measure "gap" only captured the surface layer of a much deeper historically-sedimented system of inequities that compounds injustice year-on-year. Thus, for Ladson-Billings, paying attention to the accumulation of layers of injustice over time (represented by the economic concept of debt) requires teachers, policy-makers and education researchers to focus on re-paying the accumulated debt owed to historically and intersectionally minoritized communities across the vectors of race and ethnicity, gender, age, social class, sexuality, religious faith and (dis)ability.

Whilst the role of schools in social reproduction has been long established and generally accepted (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976), the part that the institution of teacher education has played in this process has been less examined. Indeed, some teacher educators may be inclined to dismiss the significance of teacher education in the accumulation of the education debt simply because they play such a vitally important part in the maintenance of the school system as it is. Nonetheless, the concept of education debt is central to understanding teacher education's role in the reproduction of inequitable and unjust situations around the world – whether in relation to the growth of mass schooling as an instrument of colonialism by White settler populations (Horne, 2014) or within nation states as a tool of maintaining historical privilege on the basis of

social class and gender (Ellis, 2014). In terms of curriculum, for example, currently dominant forms of

mainstream teacher education centre on the knowledge, experiences, values, and voices of

dominant communities (Au et al., 2016; Milner et al., 2013; Sleeter, 2017) with occasional nods to

notions of "diversity" through the celebration of "multicultural" alternatives to a White

"mainstream" (Gebrial, 2018). Demographically, in the USA, UK, France and other countries with

histories of mass immigration and colonialism, teachers and teacher educators are still

overwhelmingly White, a reality re-produced over and over, by design, despite racial shifts in the

overall population of children and youth in schools (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Milner et al., 2013;

Sleeter, 2017; Zeichner, 2009).

Understanding the concept of an historically accumulated education debt helps teacher educators

reject the flawed yet common logic associated with an "ideology of pathology" (Gutiérrez et al.,

2009, p. 227) to explain the otherwise normalised failing of children and youth of colour in schools

and schooling, for example. Acknowledging that there is indeed an education debt and

understanding its historical and political conditions for its emergence and reproduction is the first

step in working for change and disrupting its reproduction. Disrupting the emergence of the

education debt through the institutions of teacher education is the kind of disruptive innovation the

articles in this special issue elaborate.

The "Teacher Education Debt" as an imperative for innovation

While we do not fully explore the nature of the teacher education debt here, we employ the

categories identified by Ladson-Billings (2006) as a way of explaining the teacher education debt,

which has interrelated "historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components" (p. 3). Each of

these categories becomes a focus for innovation in teacher education debt becomes an imperative for change:

- *Historical Component:* The legacies of inequities in teaching and teacher education have been well documented in many countries. For example, the discourse around the supposed disappearance of Black teachers from classrooms in the U.S., for example, blaming them for not wanting to go into teaching (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, 2016), is ahistorical and problematic. This response to the shortage of Black teachers dismisses, for example, how they were pushed out of schools in the name of desegregation (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2004), how Black epistemologies were tenaciously invisiblized (Au et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2000), and how schooling's democratic aims have been weakened. The concept of a teacher education debt helps us recognize that the extant demographic disproportionality in teaching and teacher education is an intended design feature, 'stamped from the beginning' (Kendi, 2016). How can this be, first, acknowledged, and then changed?

- *Economic Component:* The economic component of the debt owed by teacher education to intersectionally minoritized populations is a remnant of systems of enslavement and colonization (Ladson-Billings, 2006). When we talk about teacher education, we often envision it supporting the aims of education as a public good, but never as a public good itself or, indeed, as a means for reparation. The economic component of the teacher education debt is predicated on an understanding that teacher education is a public good and must commit to reparations (Muhammad, 2013). There is limited work on curriculum as reparation in teacher education (e.g. Pinar, 2006) and there is much scope to explore this curricular intent in our field in the current context.

- *Sociopolitical Component:* Intersectionally minoritized communities have long been excluded from decision-making processes pertaining to schooling and the preparation and development of teachers. Sociopolitically, teacher education has epistemologically privileged Whiteness and other dominant ways and systems of knowing, while invisibilizing

endarkened epistemologies (Hurtado, 2003). Addressing the sociopolitical component of the teacher education debt requires changing relations with such communities, collaborating with them to foment the transformation of existing conditions rather than seeking to 'partner' with them to deliver business-as-usual. The relations between communities and the institutions of teacher education is an another critically important locus for innovation in our field.

- *Moral Component:* Teacher education has understood morality as the assimilation of the dominated into the value-systems of domination. That is, it has consciously and unconsciously embraced the propagation of racist ideas through assimilationist practices (Kendi, 2016) and through discourses which claim Whiteness (and other dominant ways of being, behaving, and communicating) as "normal". In doing so, it has behaved in immoral and unethical ways toward intersectionally minoritized communities. Morally, then, innovation in teacher education must reposition such communities foundationally, in ways that prioritize equity.

Acknowledging the teacher education debt and, crucially, addressing it through the work of curriculum reparation and the enactment of culturally revitalising and sustaining pedagogies creates profoundly different starting points for innovation in teacher education than merely seeking to make the existing system more efficient.

HUMANIZING LEARNING, TEACHING AND BECOMING A TEACHER

Another strong imperative, emerging in global discussions of teacher education, is the need for future innovations in this field to position human agency and relations at the centre of efforts to counter the dehumanizing forces that are taking their toll on teachers' professional lives and work as well as poorly serving students and communities (Ellis, 2010; Zeichner, 2010; Berliner and Glass,

2014; Bullough, 2014; Cochran-Smith et. al, 2018; Phillip et. Al, 2018). Economistic systems of

accountability based upon a vision of global competitiveness in education, have proved to be sterile

and unsustainable ground for innovation, as Cochran-Smith et al (2018) summarise:

> Teacher education accountability is mired in market ideology, thin equity, externally
>
> controlled monitoring schemes, and narrow definitions of effectiveness. Based on deep
>
> mistrust of the profession and theories of change that are not supported by strong evidence,
>
> the teacher education accountability paradigm has constricted the curriculum, reduced the
>
> spaces for critical discussion and diminished the possibilities for teachers and teacher
>
> educators to work with others as agents of school and social change. (p. 153)

The irreducible and dynamic nature of human experience and development at the centre of

democratic education processes cannot be represented only by economistic measures nor the

processes themselves determined only by mathematical logic. Furthermore, attempts to render the

processes and practices of education as precise, machine-like algorithms that may be delivered, like

some kind of teacher toolkit, to the next generation of teachers, is intrinsically flawed. This "science"

of learning – often aligned with interests in "big data" - is antithetic to the intrinsically complex,

risky and relational nature of education as a process of human endeavour (Biesta, 2016). Indeed, as

Biesta (2012) reminds us, it is in this essentially human transaction between people that the *why* of

education is communicated, where learners begin to understand why knowledge, understanding and

skills matter to people and their communities, as a central precept of being human.

Increasingly, the diverse purposes, and complex relationships that constitute the humanizing means

of education, are becoming masked by the reification of the technical-rational. But this is not an

argument against evidence in education *per se*. We find similar debates in other professions. As

Greenhalgh, Thorne and Malterud (2018) argue, in the quest to exclude epidemiological bias in evidence-based medicine "the thoughtful, in-depth, critically reflective processes of engagement with ideas" (p. 3) is becoming marginalised or even absent. As effectiveness is focused on *post hoc* metrics there is increasingly less curiosity about whether the means are "an educationally desirable way to bring about" the desired ends; an interpretive process requiring the human judgement and wisdom of the teacher or education as humanized praxis (Biesta, 2012, 39).

Humanization as an imperative for innovation

This perspective also brings us to the second, but no less important argument, as to why innovation in teacher education must be framed with a humanizing imperative. In the vacuum left by the stalled market-driven ideology of education, we see a resurgence of the technological appropriation of innovation in teacher education with calls for more technologically-derived data to determine the contours of teachers' practices. For example, Cope and Kalantzis (2016) invoke a new era of technological innovation suggesting that:

> Everyone becomes to some extent a data analyst - learners using analytics to
>
> become increasingly self-aware of their own learning and teachers as they
>
> acquire a level of data literacy required to interpret a student's progress and
>
> calibrate their instruction. (Cope and Kalantzis, 2016, 8)

There have been several waves of technological advancements laying claim to the innovation narrative in education. Examples of this phenomenon have often been heralded by the introduction of new technologies such as the internet, interactive whiteboards and mobile technologies, with the latest being learning analytics. All too often, however, such developments are driven (as they often have been historically) by a technological determinism; the necessary pedagogical implications are slow to come to fruition if, indeed, they do at all. Thus, technology-based claims of innovation in

teacher education, like Cope and Kalantzis' (2016, 8) vision of teachers and learners cumulatively honing and calibrating their learning or teaching in response to ever more complex "dashboards" of data, must be viewed critically. Such developments have the dual potential to both erode or add to "meaningful understanding[s] of teaching and the teacher" (Biesta, 2012, 36). There is a mistaken assumption that increased data, as well as the speed of access to data, can only enrich learning and teaching whereas the evidence to date (such as it is) suggests that these de-humanizing approaches have eroded both the language of learning and of teaching (Biesta, 2012). The concern here is that in the absence of a humanising imperative for innovation in teacher education, a technologically-driven development such as learning analytics merely heralds a new hyper-economistic paradigm that further dehumanizes the practices of learning, teaching and becoming a teacher.

THE ORGANISATION OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The articles in this special issue have been organised in order to represent the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches the authors have taken in their research. Some of the articles may be categorised as conceptual or theoretical contributions but all of the papers draw in some way on data, whether specifically generated in the course of a discrete research project or in the form of representations of the authors' own practices as teacher educators on reflection. We make this point explicitly to counter any assertions derived from, we believe, some misleading interpretations of international research evaluation and funding systems such as the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) that suggest (or at least imply) that the analysis of teacher educators' practices is ineligible for inclusion in these sorts of exercises. The articles in this special issue stand as examples of original and distinctive research publications that can claim theoretical significance or that make a conceptual contribution to the field. (We would also like to note that the encouragement and publication of this sort of article has long been a feature of the *Journal of Education for Teaching* under the editorship of Peter Gilroy).

Introducing the articles

'Evidence-based' seems to have become the epithet of choice in education reform internationally. Keith Turvey's article opens the special issue by challenging some of the dominant narratives surrounding this phenomenon with particular reference to the implications for teacher education. Turvey argues that the way evidence is constructed, as well its relationship with teacher professionalism and the aims of their pedagogical practice, can be either dehumanising or humanising. The over-reliance on, and reification of econometrics in the problematic quest to 'evidence' the quality of teaching and education leads to the disenfranchisement of teachers and learners. Such evidence often lacks 'the subjectivity of events and the distinctiveness of cultural contexts' required for teachers to meaningfully bridge the gap between research and practice. Whilst the growing 'datafication' (Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier, 2013) of education is increasingly at risk of becoming meaningless, Turvey explores alternatives and provides an example from his own teacher education practice that demonstrates how narrative has the potential to create more humanising and culturally sustaining innovations teacher education. He explores how narratives add to the professional and pedagogical provenance of evidence concluding that such provenance is vital to teachers' meaningful participation in the dialogue between research and practice. It is this dialogue, Turvey argues, which 'will become increasingly critical in sustaining the human and meaningful relationships required to add to the cumulation of teachers' pedagogical and professional knowledge, and the progress of teacher education'.

In the article that follows, Burnett and Lampert focus on the National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) programme, an innovative pre-service teacher education programme in Australia. NETDS originated in response to dwindling commitments to equity and social justice in the teacher education curriculum in Australia and the reality that high-performing

teacher graduates were unlikely to teach in high-poverty schools. Working against reductionist notions of innovation, and pushing back against alternative pathways into the teaching profession such as *Teach for Australia*, NETDS sought to prepare teachers for the complexities inherent in Australian low-income schools in contextually sensitive and culturally sustaining and revitalising ways that prioritized the knowledges and practices of historically disadvantaged communities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Additionally, NETDS aimed to encourage graduates to begin their teaching careers working with students from historically vulnerable backgrounds in urban, regional, and remote Australian communities. Longitudinal research findings unveil the transformative impact of NETDS on teacher graduate destinations, the inclusion of social justice approaches in teacher education programmes, and the development of new forms of partnerships between universities, schools, and the philanthropic sector. Questions pertaining to the architecture of NETDS, including institutional leadership, resource needs, the prioritization of social justice within the contemporary neoliberal context of teacher education reform, and the challenge of "scaling up" potentially powerful innovations are addressed in ways that firmly reject technicist responses.

Michael Dominguez' article follows on from Burnett & Lampert by inviting teacher educators to innovate through "being decolonial in intention and practice." Necessarily, this is not a comfortable space as Dominguez lays out the case for challenging the epistemic and ontological structures on which teacher education is currently anchored. Seeking to challenge coloniality in teacher education, Dominguez asks: "Is equity and accounting for diversity really so elusive? Or is it that so many of our efforts have been premised on setting novice educators up to ask historically marginalized youth to be who they are not, never have been, and never will be?" Dominguez' article does not make a naïve attempt to try to rationalise "gaps" in educational outcomes. Instead, he takes the reader to the heart of the issue, requiring them to consider how equity and social justice can ever thrive in an

education system that defaults to mimicry of the dominant culture, as the main currency of accomplishment? However, he goes further. Dominguez reminds us that not only do we already possess potentially powerful pedagogic tools (drama, role play) for reinventing teacher education practice, but he also offers insight into how these tools can be used to create new "pedagogical imaginaries" where coloniality can be challenged in order for decolonial practices to emerge.

Responding to the attention given to the knowledge, skills and dispositions of teacher educators as an occupational group, Goodwin and Darity report on their examination of the teacher education research literature published between 2010 and 2016 to answer the question: "what kind of knowing is needed to prepare social justice teacher educators?" Using five knowledge domains for teaching – personal, contextual, pedagogical, sociological, social - as an analytic lens, the authors found that personal knowledge was predominantly identified as the key focus for the development of teachers with a social justice orientation. The authors suggest that "teachers' lack of knowledge about the lives and cultures of students who are increasingly diverse" means that this focus on the personal knowledge of prospective teachers is significant. Finally, the authors conclude from their analysis that formal preparation for teacher educators is necessary; that the predominantly small-scale studies that characterise the field need to be reconfigured in order to generate more significance and impact; and that social justice must not become compartmentalised as a marginal or "special" concern rather than a value that underpins all research in a professionally-oriented field such as teacher education. Goodwin and Darity's article therefore suggests a clear direction for innovation in our field that concerns a very significant and responsible group of workers - teacher educators.

In a thoughtfully written article, Jurow, Horn and Philip begin with an elegant prelude introducing the concepts of consequential learning and the social and material organisation of knowledge

infrastructures. Using these theoretical tools, they then present three cases of innovation in teacher education that focus on core concerns of school-university partnerships, programme design, and the "how" of in-classroom, school-based professional learning. From the authors' perspective, "teacher learning can be examined as changing forms of participation in response to specific configurations of social and material relations". Innovation in teacher education, therefore, may be seen as the re-mediation of these relations through the introduction of new tools/infrastructure to enable more socially just and equitable forms of teaching in schools. The three cases presented are each drawn from the research and practice of the authors, deeply grounded in the everyday work of teacher education as a field but pointing at future directions for transforming its work through a close engagement with theory. A critical contribution of Jurow, Horn and Philip's article is that, by entering into new social and material relations, "the roles of the teacher and community-based organization(s) were not limited, as is often the case, to supporting a university-based enterprise". In other words, new spaces and resources for designing teacher education programmes necessitate a radical reconfiguration of power and interests that make the meaning of the historical concept of "partnership'"(between universities and schools) increasingly problematic.

Finally, in a powerful article drawing on her own professional practice and theorising, Mariana Souto-Manning argues for the prioritisation of transformative innovations in teacher education by the profession itself rather than by self-styled education reformers and entrepreneurs. Souto-Manning takes on a key challenge in teacher education: interrupting the ways in which its practices are implicated in the social reproduction of racism – the teacher education debt. Starting with a survey, where US-based teacher educators used the lack of quality teacher education placements in schools serving students of colour as justification for the pervasive practice of placing pre-service students in mostly White schools under the guise of quality, Souto-Manning then undertakes change from within the profession, working to humanise schools predominantly serving students of colour

by (re)centring student teaching placements on these students' lives, knowledges and values. She

does so collaboratively, alongside elementary school teachers who critically read, interrupt, and

work to rewrite racist practices ingrained in teacher education. Within the context of Freirean

culture circles, Souto-Manning shows how the teachers and herself, as teacher educator, collectively

engage in developing a new kind of transformative practice as they interrogate the persistence of

racism in teacher education. Bound by firm commitments to racial justice, they negotiate an assets-

based approach (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Souto-Manning and Martell, 2019) to teacher education. In

doing so, Souto-Manning's paper concludes this special issue by offering important implications for

dialectically transforming racist practices in teacher education in praxically-just ways.

Final comments

The articles in this special issue were first developed as papers at an international symposium on the

theme of "Innovation in Teacher Education" organised by the Centre for Innovation in Teacher

Education and Development (CITED), a joint initiative between Teachers College, Columbia

University and King's College London (URL here). CITED will continue to develop research and

development opportunities on this theme in the years ahead, learning from, among others, the

contributions of the authors in this issue. Our hope as editors of this special issue, however, is that

these papers will encourage a shift in meaning for innovation in our field – a more socially

responsible and sustainable meaning for innovation that acknowledges the teacher education debt

in reproducing inequities and the humanization of learning, teaching and teacher education as

imperatives for necessary change in our field.

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