

# *The Curriculum Theorizing of Teacher Education*

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*It is now widely agreed that teachers are among the most, if not the most, significant factors in children's learning and the linchpins in educational reforms of all kinds. Despite the growing consensus that teachers matter, however, there are many debates about why and how they matter or how they should be recruited, prepared, and retained in teaching.*

*—Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009, p. 1*

In this Special Issue of JCACS, curriculum scholars and teacher educators elucidate the intersections between curricular theories and the practice of educating teachers. In our Call for Papers, we asserted that few collections have explicitly examined this intersection. While previous studies have used curricular frameworks to make sense of teacher

learning within preparatory programs, through this issue, JCACS provides a site for the explicit use of curriculum thinking and modes of inquiry to conceptualize, analyze, or provoke teacher education programs and their learning experiences.

As both curriculum scholars and teacher educators ourselves, we feel particularly passionate about this issue. We see, on a daily basis, the way curriculum theories come to life within our classrooms, and in the classrooms of our teacher candidates as we observe them in public schools. We see the aiding value of curriculum theory in designing and delivering effective courses of study for our candidates, and more importantly, the explanatory power of these theories as we make sense of the immense learning—shifts in thinking and practice—that occur in relatively short programmatic periods. Perhaps it is this ephemeral quality of teacher education which makes it such an important and interesting site for the application and expression of curriculum theory.

Within a short period, the aim of teacher education is to transform teacher candidates from students of subject disciplines into students of education into professional educators with the capacity to animate their subject teachings through deep knowledge of pedagogy, curriculum, and students. From a curricular stance, teacher education programs present a tall order. We assert that students must *experience* curriculum theory whilst theorizing about curriculum. In their final year before entering the teaching profession, which is for some their final year of formal schooling, it is even more critical that the experiences we cultivate for our candidates are theoretically rooted and conceptually rigorous. As

Pinar (2012) notes, the bringing of a curriculum theory perspective to teacher education involves “the professionalization of intellectual freedom, forefronting teachers’ and students’ individuality, that is to say their originality, their creativity, protecting their opportunities to dissent, engaged in ongoing if complicated conversations informed by a self-reflexive, interdisciplinary erudition” (p. 183). Teacher education is an intellectual experience, yet always connected to a practice of self as learner, self as teacher, and self as professional.

To inspire teacher education in this way brings forward new possibilities of experience that hold promise for teacher education as a site of deep curricular learning and the preparation of thoughtful teaching professionals. The articles in this Special Issue of JCACS provide evidence that this can be done within the constraints of existing pre-service teacher education programs. They are strong examples of curriculum theory at work to shape the learning of our future teachers.

## References

- Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (Eds.) (2009). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.