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1-2007

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### Recommended Citation

Brown, M. Christopher II (2007) "Teacher Preparation in an Era of Accountability: Introducing the Context and Content," *Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice*: Vol. 21: Iss. 2, Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/tl-nirp-journal/vol21/iss2/1>

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## **Teacher Preparation in an Era of Accountability: Introducing the Context and Content**

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The data is clear and the fact is undisputed that no one forgets a good teacher. Conversely, the data is clear and the fact is undisputed that no one forgets a bad teacher. There are two questions that face schools, colleges, and departments devoted to the preparation of educational professionals. First, "Are the teacher candidates that we produce unforgettable?" And, more importantly, "Why is that the case?"

The national quiescence about curricular pedagogy and the moratorium on vilification of teachers have both been lifted. The national corpus has entered the classroom with reckless abandon. To be fair, some of the recent scrutiny is warranted. Indeed, in spite of some genuinely valiant, even heroic, efforts, American education continues to sink into a bog where accreditation is confused with competency. Inadequate babysitting is often mistaken for learning. Likewise, many of our classrooms have come to be considered a dumping ground for the underprepared and uninterested. Conversely, many of the recently prescribed panaceas for the academic diagnosis are practices that many educators have already been employing in their pedagogical practice.

Schools and universities have engaged in a series of reform efforts over the past 15 years that have been well-documented in educational literature (e.g., Book, 1996; Cuban, 1990; Sarason, 1990). The recent emphasis on simultaneously restructuring schools and colleges of education includes the recognition by educators that this task requires the cooperation of all participants affected by the reform, including key participants in schools, communities, and colleges of education (Goodlad, 1988; Sarason, 1990). In particular, the focus on dually restructuring the places where teachers are prepared and where they practice requires the development of school-university partnerships

that go beyond merely symbolic or sequential linkages designed to coordinate requirements for licensing of teachers (Dorsch, 1998; Lewison, 1999; Little, 1993).

Both the promise and the potential conflict in school-university collaboration lie in the recognition that schools and universities are very different entities (Cuban, 1992). They differ, as Goodlad maintains, in “purpose, function, structure, clientele, reward systems, rules and regulations, ambiance, ethos” (Goodlad, 1988, p. 14). Drawing on experience with school-university collaboration since 1947, Goodlad proposed three conditions that must exist for symbiotic relationships to develop. First, potential collaborators must be different enough to stimulate change in each other. Second, the self-interests of each should be satisfied as a result of the collaboration. Third, each of the partners must actively commit to the satisfaction of the self-interests of the other partner.

Education at large must begin receiving and getting the evidence on what works—and that is the pairing of school-site practitioners with university faculty and researchers who best know what is happening on the multiple front lines (Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Hargreaves, 1998). There are some instructional strategies from all three contexts that we know work, and it is very important that we share them with those who need to put the techniques into practice. To many education reform “junkies” who ride the high of the latest trend, the reasons for building school-university partnerships might seem obvious. Public schools provide universities with at least some of their future students, and colleges and universities prepare and train the vast majority of future teachers. Both institutions are devoted, to some degree, to the pursuit of learning and intellectual development, and both play a major role in socializing and preparing American youth for future roles in society. There are too many initiatives that fail to yield any benefits for children and too much research in which the key findings are never translated into practitioner use (even when the research is investigating teacher/principal practice).

Many of the difficult realities grown in school settings emerge from a deep, dark soil—mixed and mired with social problems, economic influences, and community realities (Brown & Land, 2005; Robinson & Brown, 2007). The children who arrive at the schoolhouse doors across our nation are not true “tabula rasa” as philosophy would

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suggest. They are not unscripted tablets or blank slates, but rather they are complex and complicated mysteries, epic novels, and cryptic haiku. In this glib and grim context, the only good research is relevant research—research that has use and purpose. Hence we should not do research “on” children, we must do research “for” children (Brown, 2005). The purpose of school-university partnerships must focus on improving the quality and aspiration of school, life, community, and society. Absent this, we have squandered precious dollars doing little and misused a great opportunity to do good for our children, our nation, and our world.

I am a former fifth and second grade teacher from semi-rural South Carolina who left the classroom to research and train educational professionals at the collegiate level. Presently, I spend my days working as a member of the nation’s only voluntary organization of colleges and universities that prepares the nation’s educational personnel. From this central location, efforts are made to gather and disseminate data, propose and analyze public policy initiatives, support professional advancement and networking, and represent the education community before state and national governments. This work is timely and important given the transition of teacher preparation into the era of accountability.

Over the years, the education profession has “gotten by” by using intuition, folk wisdom, parenting skills, and some pedagogical craft (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Cuban, 1984). This is not completely bad. For thousands of years, intuition and almanacs worked in farming, but the science of agriculture did not achieve eminence until large-scale research was conducted in collaboration with land-grant universities through their extension offices, which worked with real farmers. The National Research Council has said that education—unlike defense, unlike healthcare, and unlike industrial production—does not rest on a strong research base. It claims instead that our teacher practice is largely based on personal anecdotal knowledge—that our “so-called” training materials amount primarily to collections of conversations; the result of people talking to each other. The challenge is not for the profession to change the practice of teacher education, but rather, the education industry must document, evaluate, and assess the pedagogical impact of what we have been practicing. Teacher educators must seize this opportunity to “show and



tell” the complex and critical nature of our work. These special issues on “The Changing Landscape in Teacher Education” seek to demonstrate some of the work of the education profession.

The aims of these issues are multiple. The articles in these issues focus on four broad areas. First, each article endeavors to assist the profession in the ongoing challenge of unifying around the issues of professional standards, assessment, accountability, and curricular content. Second, each article revisits the question of who can provide teacher education and in what manner. Third, each article is girded with the chief purpose of improving the quality of professional preparation programs and their ability to scale capacity in response to changing priorities and demands. Finally, each of the articles in these issues is sensitive to the need to serve an increasingly diverse constituency of learners.

The emergent conversations on the complex, correlated, and interwoven nexus between school-university partnerships and the national call for evidence-based pedagogy require the profession to look seriously at our standards, programs, and the issue of content knowledge in a host of contexts (Brown, Dancy, & Norfles, 2006). Popular and professional media both report regularly on the challenges of accreditation, the need for rubrics, the public mandate for rigorous content, the social realities of pedagogical practice, and the importance of accommodating various learning styles. These special issues of *Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice* offers state-of-the art examples of institutional programs and initiatives focused on preparing a national corpus of highly-qualified teachers committed to leaving no child behind.

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