

Editor's Introduction: In Response to Increasing State and National Control over the Teacher Education Profession

This issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* includes a special collection of articles focused on responses to increasing state and national control over the teacher education profession. The authors contributing to this special collection were all part of a panel which presented its work under the session title, "Social Justice, Equity, and 2042: Individual and Programmatic Responses to Increasing State and National Control over Teacher Education in California" at the California Council on Teacher Education Fall 2002 Conference in San Diego, held this past October. Over the last decade there has been an increasing interest in preparing teachers to focus on issues related to, for example, social justice, democratic ideals, economic equity and multicultural inclusion, and in the use of performance-based and alternative assessment strategies. These efforts however, appear dwarfed by onerous and cumbersome legislation intended to further standardize the profession and view quality teaching as simplistic and something to be acquired through technical skill development for the purpose of preparing students to pass paper and pencil high-stakes tests. In California, the SB 2042 legislation is already having a dramatic impact on the ways in which teachers are prepared.

The teacher education profession is under siege. State and national legislation has mandated efforts to standardize both what takes place in our nations classrooms as well as the ways in which teachers are prepared to work in those classrooms. Not only is academic freedom under assault, those who profess to know best what knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of teachers are politicians and business men and women, people in power who are clearly not experts in the field of

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education. Yet, their control over what content is deemed appropriate and how that content is to be taught is threatening the entire public education system. To believe that all students should be learning the same material in the same way at the same time (as seen in teachers using formula-based curriculum scripts written by others), taught by teachers who are prepared under the same exact standards (which are minimal at best), is to believe in the end of a truly public education system. Schools, after all, exist in a social context. How can social contexts and intellectually rich content knowledge be standardized and implemented with a skill-based, technically trained teaching force? Where are the people in this equation? Where are their aspirations, ideas, passions, intellectual pursuits, individuality, social conscience, and cultural heritage in this equation?

One of the fundamental dilemmas we face in our profession is the conflict between preparing teachers to work in schools as they are and preparing teachers to work in schools as we envision them to be. Current educational reform efforts appear aimed at narrowly defining for us what schools are for, and how best to prepare teachers to work in these schools. Teacher educators are systematically being removed from the conversations and decisions associated with imagining and creating schools based upon a rich and informative knowledge base (see, in this issue Ann Berlak's commentary on the role, or lack thereof, of teacher educators in the design and development of the new Teacher Performance Expectations and Teacher Performance Assessments in California). It is curious that those held most responsible for the educational development of our children are perceived as the least responsible by those in political office and those in state credentialing agencies, who historically have used "school failure" and "teacher failure" as public leverage for promoting their own agendas.

A couple of months ago, the national teacher of the year, Chauncey Veatch, a former University of the Pacific graduate, returned for a speaking engagement with faculty and students. He spoke about his work with economically disadvantaged students who had previously been given little hope of achieving success. His story focused on his role as teacher in recognizing students as individuals with unique personalities, potentials, problems, and aspirations, and the accompanying problem-solving processes required to help each student reach academic and social success. He clearly represented those few teachers we all remember as having had a dramatic impact on our lives as students. While listening to his expressive and passionate beliefs about the roles of students and teachers, I wondered how legislative mandates intend to standardize this kind of powerful learning environment. Or do they? Obviously, they don't. I get the sense that what we are embroiled in is really a legislated attempt at aspiring to educational mediocrity, perceiving learning to teach as simply the acquisition of technical skills in the factory model mode for the purpose of manufacturing widgets on an ever more efficient scale.

Who would argue that every classroom should be lead by a skillful, competent, highly qualified teacher? One of the problems associated with the standardization

of the teaching profession, is that by its very nature, teaching cannot be standardized. Good teaching is a highly complex intellectual activity requiring keen insight into the world in which students live, understanding of the multiple ways of thinking about curriculum problems, having a strong grasp of developmentally responsive strategies, negotiating the myriad of perspectives associated with the relationship between content and context, all with a command of pedagogical content knowledge aimed at connecting students with the world of ideas in and across subject matter disciplines. How can good teaching be reduced to such simplistic language as appears in much of the standardization rhetoric? It simply cannot. The teacher education profession, I believe, embraces much higher expectations for its teacher credential candidates than those currently espoused by the standards movement. No one will argue that the teacher education profession ought to be held responsible and accountable for the preparation of a highly qualified teaching force. However, the accountability system associated with current legislative reform is directly related to student achievement on pencil and paper high stakes testing. This kind of accountability is simplistic and measures the test taking ability of students, rather than outcomes connected with much higher and more complex levels of learning. Good teaching just cannot be distilled into easily identifiable skills aimed at preparing students to successfully acquire forced-choice test taking competencies.

Susan Neumann, Assistant Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration, recently visited the University of the Pacific to speak on the virtues of the No Child Left Behind Act. Amazingly, she proudly stated that this federal act, if implemented right, would put an end to creative and experimental teaching across America. A nation of teacher and student automatons? Evidently, the federal definition of a quality teacher has been reduced to someone with a degree who can pass a paper and pencil test. These notions of education fly in the face of what we know in our profession about the nature of quality teaching and the development of meaningful learning environments. When thinking about my own teaching, I delight in the words of Maxine Greene, who stated that, "Teaching has to do with releasing people to learn how to learn. It has to do with possibilities and personal discoveries, making connections, opening doors." I don't think Maxine had in mind an educational system that makes the assumption that more testing will result in more and better learning.

How the teacher education profession responds to the current legislated climate will likely have long reaching effects not only for the teaching profession itself, but also on what will transpire in classrooms across America.

The collection of articles comprising the first section of this issue focuses on individual and programmatic responses to state and national control over teacher education. Kip Tellez opens this section with an excellent overview of the standards movement and its implications for professional practice. His piece, entitled, "Three Themes on Standards in Teacher Education: Legislative Expediency, the Role of External Review, and Test Bias in the Assessment of Pedagogical Knowledge," offers a thoughtful analysis on systems of accountability associated with the present

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reform mandates. Tellez states that “A growing segment of contemporary stakeholders in education are not interested in the content of learning goals, but rather in the idea that goals, whatever they are, are being measured and tracked.” One can only surmise for what purposes.

Christine Sleeter follows with “Reform and Control: An Analysis of SB 2042,” a close examination of state-adopted academic content standards viewed through the curriculum analysis lens of what knowledge and whose knowledge is of most worth. Sleeter argues that democratic ideals, and issues associated with social justice, multiculturalism, and culturally relevant curricula, are curiously absent in the Professional Teacher Preparation documents. She further argues that what we are witnessing is the intellectual de-skilling of the teaching profession.

“Whose In Charge Here? Teacher Education and 2042,” authored by Ann Berlak, focuses on a number of issues, including the role of big business, in influencing educational policy decisions. She describes the Business Roundtable and provides a compelling discussion about hidden agendas and market driven pressures involved in the political processes associated with the standards movement in general, and in the SB 2042 implementation specifically. Berlak argues that the business community is the primary customer of the products of the educational system. This leaves other purposes of public education, such as promoting democratic ideals and the pursuit of individual exploration of rich ideas as secondary to a more top-down, market-driven agenda aimed at standardizing educational outcomes. As Berlak states, “Children, their teachers, and teacher educators are now being subjected to an onerous, cumbersome, time-devouring anti-intellectual accountability system . . .”

In “Can Communities of Resistance and Transformation Be Born from the Social Context of School?,” author Rich Gibson attempts to situate the current standards movement within larger political, economic, historical, cultural, and social contexts. Gibson crafts his argument through Jean Anyon’s notion that school reform without social and economic reform is like “washing the air on one side of a screen door.” He calls for thoughtful resistance and opposition to educational decisions being made at great distance from classrooms.

Roberta Ahlquist follows with “Challenges to Academic Freedom: California Teacher Educators Mobilize To Resist State-Mandated Control of the Curriculum.” In this provocative article, Ahlquist suggests that legislation such as SB 2042 will simply “pressure teacher educators to prepare teachers to teach to the lowest common denominator, the standardized tests.” Of course, the problematic assumption is that more testing will result in better learning. She challenges the teacher education profession to closely examine the political agendas associated with the standardization legislation, and to do something about it.

This section closes with a piece by Jack L. Nelson, a professor emeritus from Rutgers University, entitled, “Academic Freedom, Institutional Integrity, and Teacher Education.” Nelson argues that academic freedom is fundamental to

preserving democracy, and yet during times of national stress, “it is among the most fragile and vulnerable of freedoms.” He suggests that preparing teachers to work in our nations schools “should be one of the most significant academic activities of any institution of higher learning.” Clearly, the assault on academic freedom within higher education and specifically the education of teachers is forefront on the current political agenda.

In the second section of this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*, four articles are presented that have been submitted, revised, and accepted through our normal editorial process. The following articles represent scholarly work on a variety of topics that will engage the reflective reader as well as make significant contributions to the knowledge base in teacher education.

Jocelyn A. Glazier, in her piece “Moving Closer To Speaking the Unspeakable: White Teachers Talking About Race,” addresses issues associated with a primarily white, monolingual, middle class women teaching force working in culturally and ethnically diverse schools. Glazier presents a study she conducted with her own students to help broaden their understandings of race and ways in which to open lines of communication about such issues.

“Increasing Preservice Teachers’ Capacity for Technology and Integration through the Use of Electronic Models” is authored by the team of Peggy Ertmer, Deborah Conklin, Judith Lewandowski, Elizabeth Osika, Margaret Selo, and Eric Wignall, all from Purdue University. In addressing the issue of teacher preparation in the use of technology in instructional settings, the authors conducted a study aimed at examining the effects of electronic models on preservice teachers’ perceived ideas and self-efficacy with regard to technology integration. Their findings suggest strategies important to helping preservice teachers learn and incorporate technology in meaningful ways.

Azita Manouchehri and Mary Enderson follow with their piece entitled “The Utility of Case Study Methodology in Mathematics Teacher Preparation.” The authors suggest that mathematics teaching is a highly complex intellectual activity requiring emphasis on inquiry supported by a strong understanding of the ways in which students negotiate meaning. Their study addresses the use of case studies in generating thoughtful analysis and recommends further “efforts to encourage, stimulate, and disseminate case materials with the intent to advance inquiry into learning and teaching.”

Concluding this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Judith Evans and Karen Nicholson present “Building a Community of Learners: Manhattan College Elementary Education Program,” a case study assessment of an elementary teacher education program focusing on humanistic and constructivist theoretical foundations. The authors speak to the issues embedded in the first section of this issue, and posit arguments supporting the critical nature of context in learning to teach.

I would hope that the collection of articles in this issue would help generate further dialogue and discourse around the critical nature of the standardization

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efforts facing all of us in the teacher education profession today. We cannot allow the avenues of dialogue and critique to be subsumed under heavy-handed political agendas and narrowly-crafted notions of what it means to be an educated person. Our academic freedom and professional expertise *are* under siege. How we respond will likely determine the future of our profession.

It should be noted that the opinions and positions held and expressed here by the editor do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board of *Teacher Education Quarterly* or the Board of Directors of the California Council on Teacher Education. However, we welcome your feedback.

Finally, I'm constantly reminded of Elliott Eisner's question, "is what you (we) are doing liberating or limiting?"

—**Thomas Nelson**
Editor