

Editor's Introduction: Research Strategies and Professional Development

This Spring 2008 issue opens with a special contribution by one of our International Advisory Board members, Ivor Goodson, and his colleague Pik Lin Choi, "Life History and Collective Memory as Methodological Strategies: Studying Teacher Professionalism," a follow up to his "The Rise of the Life Narrative" which was featured in the Fall 2006 issue. Here the authors frame methodological approaches to life history as a useful research tool when considering teacher professionalism and subsequent notions of educational quality. The study focused on twelve beginning teachers negotiating the challenges and practical problems associated with their learning to understand themselves within a dynamic profession.

Pauline Samashima follows with "Letters to a New Teacher: A Curriculum of Embodied Aesthetic Awareness." She draws from arts-informed life history inquiry methods in presenting a powerful and introspective account of what it means for teachers to process their learning experiences within a framework of relationality. Through the use of letters to a new teacher, she explores deep philosophical contexts associated with knowing and making meaning. The spaces between thought and text are examined through sensory connections to the arts.

In "Personality Characteristics and Teacher Beliefs among Pre-Service Teachers," authors Lauren Decker and Sara Rimm-Kaufman present the findings from a three-year study that accessed almost 400 pre-service teachers in trying to understand the relationship between prior beliefs and personality characteristics and the degree to which these predict future teaching practice.

Joyce Bainbridge and Leonora Macy present their study, "Voices: Student Teachers Link Teacher Education to Perceptions of Preparedness for Literacy Teaching," a compelling examination of how pre-service teachers wrestle with philosophical orientations to learning and teaching literacy. Suggestions for a critical analysis of teacher education programs aiming to enhance literacy instruction are offered.

Arthur Costigan follows with "Canaries in the Coal Mine: Urban Rookies Learning to Teach Language Arts in 'High Priority' Schools." In this study he reveals the thoughts, feelings, and understandings of a group of new teachers in language arts classrooms in urban "hard to staff" schools. Almost universal is the dilemma that

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teachers prepared in programs emphasizing constructivist, student-centered learning prove to be antithetic to the realities of high stakes testing environments most commonly found in schools today.

“Using Case Studies to Explore Teacher Candidates’ Intellectual, Cultural, and Moral Dispositions,” by Deborah Schussler, Lynne Bercaw, and Lisa Stooksberry, expands upon notions of teacher quality through the use of case studies aimed at understanding teacher quality. As INTASC and NCATE have begun to recognize the value of dispositions in learning to teach, the authors in this study examine carefully these aspects, oftentimes viewed as secondary to the presumed importance of the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Bruce Torff and David Sessions follow with “Factors Associated with Teachers’ Attitudes about Professional Development.” They present findings from their study of 214 practicing teachers in New York about attitudes toward professional development policies and opportunities. Implications for organizing and planning professional development based on years of experience are discussed.

Joel Colbert, Richard Brown, SunHee Choi, and Steven Thomas provide the results of their study in “An Investigation of the Impacts of Teacher-Driven Professional Development on Pedagogy and Student Learning.” The authors seek to understand the ways in which teachers who were provided funding for their own professional development activities operationalized those experiences to improve pedagogical decision making in their own classrooms.

In “Teaching Development: Experience and Philosophy (Using the Three R’s),” Peter Gossman continues the theme of professional development. He utilizes the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model to examine novice-to-expert progression through the learning-to-teach continuum. Gossman counters the prevailing top-down notion of professional development by stating that “. . . if an individual views teaching as the transfer of information, no amount of professional development about the practice of teaching will be beneficial.”

“Are Tomorrow’s Teachers Ready to Deal with Diverse Students? Teacher Candidates Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians” is presented by authors Tammy Jordan Wyatt, Sara Oswalt, Christopher White, and Fred Peterson. In this article they share findings from a study aimed at understanding teacher candidates’ attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Recommendations for the inclusion of sexual orientation curricula in teacher preparation programs are emphasized.

In concluding this Spring issue, authors Miranda Lin, Vickie Lake, and Diana Rice present “Teaching Anti-Bias Curriculum in Teacher Education Programs: What and How,” a critical analysis of issues and research in the areas of cultural diversity and anti-bias curriculum. The authors provide a set of strategies to be considered in teacher preparation programs aimed at fostering critical cultural consciousness.

We hope that you will find the collection of articles in this issue of value. I know we have.

—Thomas Nelson, Editor