

**CURRENT ISSUES IN  
TEACHER EDUCATION**

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# CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

History, Perspectives, and Implications

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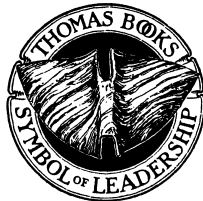
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*To my colleagues and students at SUNY College at Oneonta  
who shape who I am and who I am becoming as a teacher educator.*  
**C.L.**

*To Diann, Rob, Holly, Jenna, and Peter*  
**R.M.**

*To my daughter Whitney who keeps me youthful and inspired.*  
**J.R.W.**



## FOREWORD

The chapters in this book, written by college and university teacher educators in the United States and Canada, explore many of the most important issues teacher educators in North America need to address given the current demographic and policy contexts of education and the persistent gaps in learning for students from different backgrounds that continue to undermine the goals of public schooling in democratic societies. These issues include: (a) preparing teachers to work in the current high-stakes testing and accountability-driven environment of schooling where they respond to pressures to raise standardized test scores without losing sight of the broader purposes of public education in democratic societies and the moral and ethical aspects of teaching; (b) preparing teachers to successfully teach the increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse pupils who attend North American public schools in ways that contribute to the narrowing of the achievement gaps in schools; and (c) preparing teachers to incorporate online delivery models of teaching and new and continually emerging digital technologies into their work.

Several of the chapters in the book discuss areas of needed emphasis in preservice teacher education that have been neglected for many years, such as preparing teachers in relation to conducting and interpreting assessments, working with families, and educating English learners. Several other chapters call for a rethinking of some of the major elements of teacher education, such as the conduct of field experiences, partnerships between universities and schools, and accreditation methods in light of current and future needs. There are different ways to think about each of these elements of teacher education programs and the authors unpack and explore various ways to think about each of them as part of their presentation of their own specific recommendations. This more in-depth exploration of the multiple meanings of structures and practices in teacher education is important in counteracting the negative effects of the sloganeering that has characterized the field where certain structures (e.g., school-university partnerships) and practices (e.g., preparing reflective teachers) have been uncritically embraced and have

come to be defined in so many different ways that they lose meaning (e.g., Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

While the book focuses on teacher education in North America, there is an acknowledgment that the issues discussed in a North American context are international in scope and that countries all over the world are facing similar issues such as preparing enough qualified teachers to staff classrooms while maintaining reasonable standards of quality in the teaching force. There is a call in this book for a greater international perspective in North American teacher education. This is an important aspect in my view of how we can improve teacher education in North America. In adopting the kind of international perspective on teacher education advocated in this book, we can learn from others around the world, including countries in the global south, about how they are dealing with many of the same issues and tensions raised in this book. These interactions and exchanges with teacher educators around the world will mutually benefit both North American teacher education and that of the countries with whom we interact. This two-way flow of information about teacher education practices rather than the one-way importation of ideas from the global north to the global south that has been dominant historically is the kind of internationalization we should seek. This internationalization of teacher education, though, should not involve an uncritical acceptance of the agendas of agencies like the World Bank and other international development agencies that, while undoubtedly contributing some positive things to educational systems around the world, have also done much to undermine both teaching as a profession and educational quality in much of the world as they have sought to support a neo-liberal economic agenda (e.g., Carnoy, 1995; Robertson, 2000; Samoff, 1996).

Another feature of this book that is very important is the historical perspective taken by the authors toward each of the issues examined in the individual chapters. This attempt to look at particular issues as they have developed over time has been missing from much of the current discourse on teacher education, a gap that has prevented us from benefiting from what has been learned in the past.

There are two issues not discussed in this book that will affect the ability of teacher educators in North America to be able to act on the many good ideas that are proposed for improving the preparation of teachers. The first issue that is acknowledged but not really addressed is the current landscape for teacher education in the United States that involves multiple pathways into teaching including a growing number of non-college-university-based and for-profit programs (Baines, 2006; Feistritzer & Haar, 2008). In addition to colleges and universities, a variety of institutions have become providers of pre-service teacher education programs including school districts, regional professional development centers, private companies, and community col-

leges (Zeichner & Hutchinson, 2008). A growing number of teachers in the United States are being prepared by teacher education programs that do not involve or only minimally involve higher education institutions.

Feistritzer (2008) has traced the growth of alternative routes into teaching over the last two decades from 1983 when eight states had authorized 12 programs to 2006 when all fifty states and the District of Columbia had authorized 485 alternative programs. While many of these alternative programs are administered and/or staffed by college and university faculty and staff (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007), the fact is that a growing number of teachers especially in certain states like Texas, California, and Florida are completing their “pre-service” teacher education while they are on the job fully responsible for classrooms of students. For example, a survey of 2007 graduates of California teacher education programs conducted in May and June 2007 indicated that about 27 percent of the 2,585 respondents completed their student teaching or internship experiences as teachers of record in California classrooms (personal communication, October, 2007).<sup>1</sup> The meaning of improving teacher education field experiences and the other kinds of reforms discussed in this book is very different in this kind of situation as opposed to the standard student teaching or practicum experience in a college and university-based program.

The existence of alternative pathways to teaching outside of higher education is not a new phenomenon. As Fraser (2007) notes it is only for a very brief period of time since the inception of formal teacher education programs in the mid-nineteenth century (1960 through 1990) that colleges and universities had a virtual monopoly of initial teacher preparation in the United States. Today colleges and universities are still the major but not the only providers of preservice teacher education. All types of teacher education programs, not just those run by colleges and universities, need to address the important issues that are raised in this book. Because the “preservice” preparation of an increasing number of teachers is taking place on the job rather than before it, the ways in which the issues will be addressed will be different from how they are handled in traditional campus-based programs.

Also, within college and university-based teacher preparation, there are signs of movement toward delivery of more and more of the preparation of preservice teachers to school and community contexts and of a fundamental rethinking of how teacher education institutions, schools, and communities should relate to one another in the preparation of teachers (Zeichner, 2006). More attention is being given across North America to the idea of a teacher education continuum and to greater integration and connection among the different aspects of teacher education that take place at different stages in a

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1. These data were provided by David Wright of the California State University Chancellor’s Office.

teaching career (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The information provided in this book will be very useful to teacher educators who work at different stages in this continuum and in different institutional settings, not just to preservice teacher educators based in colleges and universities.

A second issue that is critical to whether or not the ideas that are proposed in this book will be enacted is to what extent we will begin to address long-standing problems in the preparation of teacher educators in our research universities. This issue has widespread implications for the future of teacher education in all kinds of higher education institutions. For many years, there has been clear documentation in the literature regarding the low status of teacher education in the research universities that prepare teacher educators in North America. In these universities, the reward systems for faculty and graduate students have led to low status for the work of teacher education and frequent neglect of the responsibility to carefully prepare, induct, and continually develop the teacher educators who will work with new teachers upon completion of their degrees (e.g., Labaree, 2004; Lanier & Little, 1986). Working in a teacher education program during one's graduate studies often serves primarily as a form of financial aid rather than as the basis for careful preparation and mentoring to be a teacher educator (Tom, 1997) and because of institutional priorities, the resources needed to maintain coherent programs with integrated and cumulative curricula are often not forthcoming (Featherstone, 2007).

It is absolutely essential that we begin to take more seriously the preparation of the next generation of teacher educators or the many excellent ideas set forth in this book will not be utilized. There are a number of examples of countries that have invested in careful preparation and continuous professional development of its teacher educators. We can learn much from these countries.<sup>2</sup> There have been recent calls for teacher education to become a central part of the mission of the education schools that prepare teacher educators (e.g., Ball, 2007), and the idea of P-12 teacher education as an important university responsibility has become a central component in several prominent teacher education reform networks such as the "Teachers for a New Era" project. These developments provide hope that the critical issue of teacher educator preparation will finally be addressed.

This book will enrich current debates about the future of teacher education in North America. Educators, policymakers, and citizens who care about the future of public education will benefit from studying it.

Ken Zeichner  
Madison, Wisconsin  
March 2008

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2. Namibia (Zeichner & Dalstrom, 1999) and Israel ([www.mofet.macam.ac.il/English/](http://www.mofet.macam.ac.il/English/)) are two examples.

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## PREFACE

In this edited volume by experts in the field of teacher education, *Current Issues in Teacher Education* combines forces from the United States and Canada to present and discuss positions on current topics and concerns in the field of teacher education. It provides an overview and multiple perspectives of issues rather than one author's position or viewpoint. This will allow the reader to reflect on multiple perspectives and to form his or her opinion and route for further action or discussion. Written in a reader-friendly style with accessible language, the book avoids the use of highly technical jargon-like language.

Divided into four parts, Part I looks at overarching issues, such as preparing for the realities of teaching imposed by state and federal mandates, curriculum delivery models, and worldwide issues. Part II explores issues related to the teacher education institution, such as preservice teacher placement, accreditation, and partnerships. Part III contains chapters on training teachers in multicultural education, technology, assessment, special needs, and family involvement. And, in Part IV, leaders from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education propose ideas for the future of teacher education.

Each chapter includes a section on the implications for teacher education and a look to the future. Review questions to prompt thinking or discussion complete each chapter. Teacher educators who work in the field and/or are involved with professional organizations related to the field will find the book to be useful at the college or university level. Policymakers, administrators, and other leaders in the field will also find the book to be an important addition to their library.



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–Carol Merz Frankel

I would like to thank the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, for providing me with a residency in 2005 that enabled me to study the philosophies that I described in the chapter.

–Dennis Shirley



## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Foreword by Kenneth M. Zeichner</i> . . . . .	xv
<i>Preface</i> . . . . .	xxi
Introduction: What Are the Current Issues in Teacher Education? . . . . .	5
<i>Robert J. Michael, Jerusalem Rivera-Wilson, and Cynthia A. Lassonde</i>	

### PART I: A BROAD PERSPECTIVE

1. NO PRESERVICE TEACHER LEFT BEHIND: PREPARING FOR THE HIGH-STAKES TESTING CLASSROOM. . . . .	13
<i>Hansel Burley and Barbara Morgan-Fleming</i>	
2. PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS FOR ONLINE DELIVERY MODELS: A NEW TEACHER EDUCATION? . . . . .	27
<i>Laurie Mullen and Roy Weaver</i>	
3. TEACHER EDUCATION ISSUES WORLDWIDE . . . . .	40
<i>Carol Merz Frankel</i>	

### PART II: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

4. GROOMING “BETTER-PREPARED” TEACHERS. . . . .	59
<i>Claudia Peralta Nash</i>	
5. THE MORAL CHARACTER OF LEARNING: A NEGLECTED DIMENSION IN THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS . . . . .	72
<i>Dennis Shirley and Randall Lahann</i>	
6. PLACING AND MENTORING STUDENT TEACHERS: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND NEW POSSIBILITIES . . . . .	88
<i>Finney Cherian</i>	

7. A QUEST FOR MUTUALISM: THE UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP APPROACH FOR TEACHER PREPARATION .....	104
<i>Barbara Fink Chorzempa and Aaron D. Isabelle</i>	
8. ACCREDITATION RECONSIDERED: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	120
<i>Susan R. Polirstok and Annette D. Digby</i>	
 <b>PART III: EDUCATING TOMORROW'S TEACHERS</b>	
9. PREPARING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT QUALITY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS.....	139
<i>Jerrell C. Cassady, Anne T. Henderson, Molly M. Jameson, and Jacqueline R. Garvey</i>	
10. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION .....	156
<i>H. Richard Milner, IV; Judson Laughter; and F. Blake Tenore</i>	
11. TEACHING WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.....	171
<i>Karen Swan, Lin Lin, and Mark van't Hooft</i>	
12. BEYOND GOOD VERSUS EVIL: WHAT PRESERVICE TEACHERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT ASSESSMENT .....	189
<i>Heidi Andrade</i>	
13. PREPARING SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW.....	204
<i>Elizabeth Whitten, Lisa Dieker, Chris O'Brien, and Sarah Summy</i>	
 <b>PART IV: THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION</b>	
14. PERSISTENT TENSIONS IN AMERICAN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION .....	223
<i>Allen D. Glenn, David Imig, and Dale G. Andersen</i>	
<i>Index</i> .....	241

# **CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION**



## INTRODUCTION: WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION?

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*Teacher education is the Dodge City of the education world. Like the fabled wild west town, it is unruly and chaotic.*

(Levine, 2006, p. 109)

There are numerous issues, controversies, and debates in teacher education today. The introductory quote comes as no surprise to those who work and teach in higher education. Many discussions about issues in teacher education exist in the current literature (Ravitch, 2007), thus creating the Dodge City image of chaos in which everyone is waving a gun and shouting to be heard. Among the perspectives mentioned in current literature include:

- teaching in urban schools (Hollins, 2006; Obidah & Howard, 2005; Watson et al., 2006);
- challenges in the first years of teaching and the implications for teacher education (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borku, 2006; Mandel, 2006);
- professional development (Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006);
- teacher evaluation (Goldstein & Noguera, 2006);
- traditional versus nontraditional teacher education programs (Good et al., 2006);
- teacher education program accreditation (Anderson, Spooner, Calhoun, & Spooner, 2007; Murray, 2005; Wise, 2005);
- gender issues (Sadker & Silber, 2007);
- teacher qualifications and quality (Kennedy, 2006; Lasley, Siedentop, & Yinger, 2006);

- politics of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2005b; Fraser, 2005; Gay, 2005; Hess, 2005; Michelli, 2005; Yinger, 2005; Zimpher & Howey, 2005);
- testing, accountability, and uses of data (Abrutyn, 2006; Asp, 2000; Berliner, 2005; Wineberg, 2006);
- diversity and teacher education (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Salend, 2005); and
- uses of professional development schools (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006).

As McLeskey and Ross (2004) noted, “. . . teacher education has become a ‘front burner’ political issue in Washington, DC and in most state houses” (p. 342). In a review of more than 300 research reports on teacher preparation, Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) noted there are major disagreements about what should constitute good teacher preparation. In addition to this issue, the authors made note of the questions concerning areas such as subject matter and pedagogical preparation, clinical training, policy influences, and alternative certification. The debate also continues on how best to prepare teachers for our schools. In light of time, expense, convenience, and incentives, alternative certification programs have attracted a great deal of attention as well (Johnson, Birkeland, & Peske, 2005).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has the educational community focused on its implications for schools and teacher education. However, as Sobol (2006) has noted, there are many other equally important educational issues that need our attention:

In short, we need to find ways to attract able and effective people into the profession of teaching, to educate teachers well in both the content and methods of their work, and to support practicing teachers with professional development linked to their daily work with standards and students. (p. 38)

Controversy and criticism surround NCLB. There are implications for teacher education drawn from this law, such as the definition of highly qualified teachers, annual yearly progress by students on tests, and accountability goals for subgroups of students (Cochran-Smith, 2005a).

As noted in the literature, “the multilingual, multicultural classroom is an American reality in the twenty-first century” (Costa, McPhail, Smith, & Brisk, 2005). There is a strong need for teachers to have

training in working with English language learners. Results of studies have challenged teacher educators to be critical and thoughtful about the use and interpretation of high-stakes testing data (Escamilla, Charez, & Vigil, 2005). Indeed, they found data did not support the idea that students with language differences created a school achievement gap.

There are serious concerns but, also, significant accomplishments in the field of teacher education. Cochran-Smith (2006) noted positive trends in teacher education but also called attention to major potential problems in the future that may undercut the advancements made. The author stated, “teaching does not simply involve transmitting bits of information, and learning does not simply consist of receiving information that can be tested” (p. 24). The use of test scores to define teacher quality and student learning is far too simplistic, according to the author. She also warns about the dangers of ignoring other variables, such as resources and leadership, that impact student learning. Lastly, there is a need to understand that the purpose of education is much more than creating workers for the labor force. Among other purposes, we need to remember the goal of preparing individuals to live and work in a democratic society.

In light of these reports, it comes as no surprise that there is a myriad of issues in teacher education. We need to address the issues in teacher education but, first, identification and greater exploration are needed. It is the intent of the co-editors that this book represents a step in that direction as we explore relevant issues in teacher education. This book is designed to provide teachers, teacher educators, and individuals involved in policy and reform with current research and practical guidelines.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK**

It is important and interesting to note how the parts of this volume evolved. Initially, the co-editors developed a list of potential issues to include. This list was based on the editors’ experience and interaction with educators from across the United States through their work and hands-on involvement in professional organizations and in editing the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education’s state journal. Next, the co-editors invited teacher education leaders to write