

Chapter 69

Preparing Teachers in the Age of Equity and Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Preparing high quality teachers for practice in P-12 schools has been an extensively debated and controversial topic for many years. Today, with the changing demographics of students in our public schools, topics such as teacher preparation and overall quality of teachers in the U.S. has gained even greater scrutiny from policymakers, private agencies, professional organizations, accreditation boards, and politicians. This chapter explores historical to more recent perspectives of teacher education and related issues surrounding the absence of a universally accepted profile of teacher quality. The chapter also includes illustrations of contemporary teacher preparation programs that have thoughtfully redesigned traditional models into integrated extensive clinical based approaches to preparing teachers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of exemplary teacher preparation practices that align with equitable and inclusive learning environments currently found in public schools.

INTRODUCTION

Many of us have at one time or another been faced with the arduous task of ‘cleaning out’ clutter from attics, closets, and other public and private spaces. It is a time-consuming task; determining what to keep, if anything, and what to let go of as its ‘quality or value’ may have diminished over the years. Cleaning out for most people is a result of excessive overflow and clutter or chaos. For closets, disorganization makes it difficult (in some instances impossible) to find important and valuable items when needed. Cleaning out requires carefully sifting through items, some with great value and meaning. Through the sifting and sorting, we often keep *treasures* rediscovered as invaluable reminders of our past and important aspects of our history. Other items are easier to discard as they may only have served a more temporary purpose during a period of time in our lives. This process of cleaning out although challenging, can also be extremely rewarding when keeping the end outcome in mind – space for new ideas and clarity. Much as there are times for personal clearing and revisiting space, it is time for education to undergo a

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cleaning out, a sifting through or making room for redefining important issues such as teacher quality as well as revisiting and changing the ways teachers are prepared for professional practice.

For decades, topics such as teacher ‘quality’ and ‘effectiveness’ and a need for increased accountability in schools have been at the forefront of many national debates and influential reports. Included in the discourse has been continuous and extensive scrutiny of teacher preparation (AACTE, 1976, 2010; Bullough, 2014; CAEP, 2013; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Duncan, 2009; ETS, 2007; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; NCQT, 2013, 2014). Disagreement surrounding teacher quality and teacher preparation has consistently held the attention of policy makers, private agencies, professional organizations, accreditation boards, and political influences for several decades. Among the criticisms is an overarching sentiment that education maintains low standards and teacher preparation programs are mediocre at best (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; NCATE, 2010; NCTQ, 2014). Discussion and analyses of each topic in isolation is abundant in the literature. This chapter is intended to sort through the issues surrounding three critical areas of teacher education: (1) teacher preparation, (2) teacher quality, and (3) examination of current innovative teacher preparation programs that align with a goal of equitable and inclusive classroom environments for all K-12 students. Through a synthesis that includes a review of issues from past to present, the chapter is intended to discern the valuable from the clutter; resulting in a conceptualization of the interconnectedness of these three topics and their significant impact on future efforts to move forward in teacher education. The content of this chapter responds to the following questions: Of the criticisms of teacher preparation both past and present, which warrant continuing attention or have value and application today? What does teacher quality mean in light of increasing diverse student populations, high-stakes accountability, and national standards? Which existing models of teacher preparation involve innovative practices that provide promise for authentic reform in teacher preparation? And finally, what might an ideal teacher preparation program look like in terms of equipping high quality teachers who possess knowledge of content and skills in the complexities of teaching uniquely diverse K-12 children and youth in equitable and inclusive learning environments?

The chapter begins by unpacking the most influential reports in educational reform specific to teacher preparation. Reports such as *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) to the more recent NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel in their report *Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers* (NCATE, 2010) and the *NCTQ Teacher Prep Review* by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ, 2013, 2014) have had significant impact on teacher education reform. Each of these documents have provided an important context that aids us in determining what is valuable and what is no longer applicable to teaching and learning today. Although not without controversy, each report deserves critical review to determine what is valuable and worthy of attention in our continuous efforts to reform teacher preparation practices.

Next, the chapter examines one aspect in which a great deal of consensus exists across various stakeholders: teacher quality matters. Many professionals argue that great teachers are the single, most significant factor impacting students’ learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Duncan, 2009; Goodwin, 2008; Hollins, 2011; Ingersoll, 2008; NCATE, 2010; Perkins-Gough, 2002; Rice, 2003; Zientek, 2007). In this section, the value of maintaining some of our established ideals of teacher quality as defined by experts such as Linda Darling-Hammond (2012) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2015) are discussed. Teacher quality as outlined by the NCATE Blue Ribbon Report (2010) and the NCTQ Teacher Prep Review (2013, 2014) are also examined for value and relevance in looking to the future of teacher preparation reform. The changing demographics of K-12 students across the United States (e.g., socioeconomic status, ethnicity, ability, cultural and linguistic diversity) as well

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