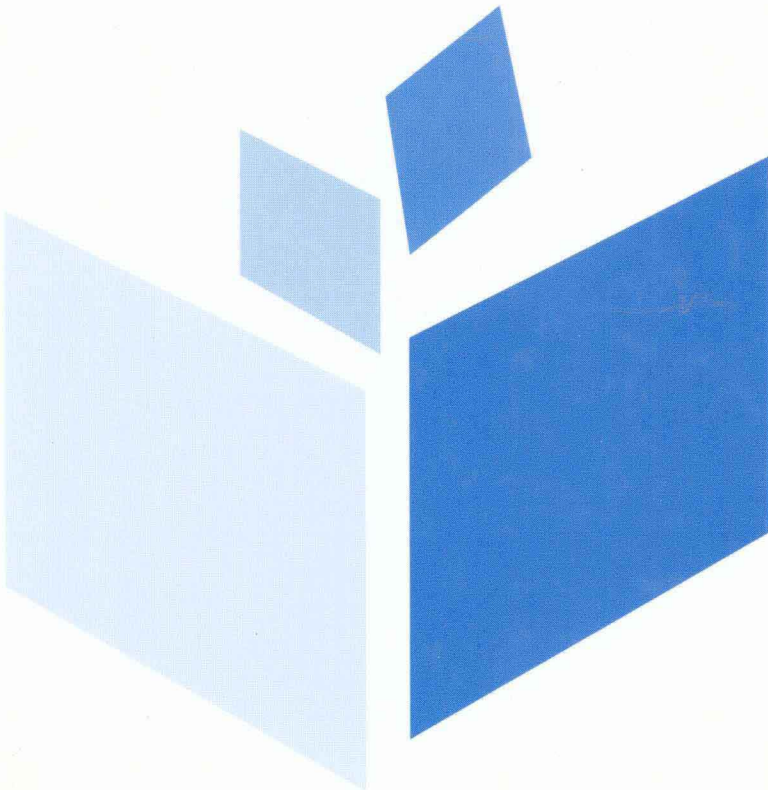


Making a Difference in Teacher Education Through Self-Study

Studies of Personal, Professional and Program Renewal

Edited by

Clare Kosnik, Clive Beck, Anne R. Freese
and Anastasia P. Samaras



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Studies of Personal, Professional
and Program Renewal

Edited by

Clare Kosnik

Stanford University, U.S.A.

Clive Beck

University of Toronto, Canada

Anne R. Freese

University of Hawaii, U.S.A.

and

Anastasia P. Samaras

George Mason University, U.S.A.



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**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION
THROUGH SELF-STUDY**

Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices

Volume 2

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Dedication

For our parents,

Georgina and Henry Madott,

Sylvia and Lawrence Beck,

Kathleen and Ken Reilley,

Magdalene and Savvas Pantelides

Series Editor Introduction

In teaching generally, and in teacher education particularly, there has been a long history of research that has had little influence on practice. One reason often cited by teachers themselves is that much of the research has little to say to them as the end users of such research. However, because self-study of teaching and teacher education practices is largely driven by participants' questions, issues, and concerns, self-study, it seems fair to suggest, offers the promise of research that is immediately applicable to practice.

For teaching and teacher education to become better equipped to respond to the growing expectations heaped upon them there is a realization that change in teachers and teacher educators themselves must occur if there is to be genuine educational change. Thus, it can be argued that through focusing on personal practice and experience, teacher educators' inquiries might lead to a better understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning – for themselves and their students.

The importance of the individual or the “self” in research on practice has long been highlighted. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) drew particular attention to the issue of “self” when they outlined the shift in the research focus from studying teaching at a distance to trying to understand how teachers actually viewed and defined their own work. This shift in focus, they contended, was important because the knowledge of teachers (which is largely untapped) is an important source of insights for the improvement of teaching. The same clearly applies to teacher educators and is particularly important in relation to the knowledge that might be made available through such a focus. Therefore, teachers and teacher educators alike, as they continually adapt, adjust, and alter their practice in response to the needs and

concerns of *their* students in *their* context seem naturally drawn to examine practice through self-study. The results of self-studies are then important in helping others utilize the knowledge gained in their own endeavors as they interpret, shape, and teach about that knowledge in ways that seek to make it meaningful and valuable in learning experiences with their students.

As self-study has dramatically expanded from its original roots in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has become a field of interest and concern building on the work in areas such as action research, reflective practice, practitioner inquiry, and teacher research. The growing interest in self-study appears to focus largely on practitioners' desire to teach for understanding in ways that genuinely impact students' learning. The allure of self-study appears to relate to the desire to better understand the nature of teaching and learning about teaching and to develop a genuine sense of professional satisfaction in that work. Put another way, self-study offers participants a way of being liberated in their practice in a system that is often far too restrictive. Thus self-study creates opportunities to develop the relationships and understandings in teaching and learning that tend to characterize much of the work of teachers and teacher educators but have largely been ignored in the past by academia.

In his 1998 Division K Vice-Presidential address, Zeichner traced the development of teacher education research in the U.S. over a twenty-year period. The subsequent paper, *The New Scholarship in Teacher Education* (Zeichner, 1999), explored the major research strands that have emerged in teacher education.

Researchers in the self-study movement in teacher education have employed a wide variety of qualitative methodologies and have focused on many different kinds of substantive issues. ... A whole group of self-studies focuses on the tensions and contradictions involved in being a teacher educator in institutions that do not value this work. ... Much of this work has provided a deep and critical look at practices and structures in teacher education. (Zeichner, 1999, p. 11)

Self-study allows (and encourages) a focus on teaching and students' learning. Both are high priorities in teaching and teacher education and thus self-study complements and informs the work of teaching and learning about teaching. As a result, a most valuable aspect of self-study is apparent in the development of ways of knowing, or the professional knowledge of teaching and learning about teaching. Kosnik, Beck, Freese, and Samaras have developed this book as one tangible example of such development and, as such, it is an important foundation for this series in *Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices*.

This book as part of the series complements the *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, and Russell, 2004) and offers powerful examples of cutting edge work in self-study, extending this field in new and exciting ways. Kosnik, Beck, Freese, and Samaras have worked closely with their chapter authors bringing together a range of scholars through a process that has led to the structure around which this inviting text has been created. Their attention to detail and concern to illustrate how self-study impacts teaching and teacher education is readily apparent and highlights the importance of teacher educators teaching, researching, and building on their knowledge of practice in personally meaningful ways.

It has been a pleasure to work with the editors; I trust your reading of this book is equally rewarding.

J. John Loughran
Series Editor

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Foreword – Ken Zeichner

INTRODUCTION

Education continues to be criticized from both the left and right. Teacher education, in particular, is under threat in many parts of the world. Movements to reform teacher education are underway in many parts of the world, including Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S. These attempts at reform are motivated by various forces, but appear to reflect international convergence towards uniformity, conformity, and compliance (Delandshere and Petrosky, 2004).

For example, Australia has moved to generic teaching standards, New Zealand is raising standards and moving to a national curriculum, and Europe is standardizing teacher education through the development of common experiences and a course credit transfer system (Delandshere and Petrosky, 2004). In Canada, education is a provincial matter, with the federal government having very limited jurisdiction over it. However, there have been attempts in the last ten years by the Ontario government and its “arm’s length” body, the Ontario College of Teachers, to determine program content and structure for teacher education.

The challenges we are now facing as teacher educators are perhaps of a different nature from those of the past few decades. They have taken on an urgency and a magnitude not witnessed before. Strict government control of education is increasing, the social problems in schools are more severe, the budget restrictions we face in the university are greater, the number of alternative certification programs is increasing, the negative consequences of the No Child Left Behind policy are reverberating through the entire education system, and the public disillusionment with education, in general,

is more than just a passing malaise. This period will be crucial for the future of teacher education; we need to rally together to support our colleagues, collaborate with others, and offer examples of programs that do make a difference.

Those of us with a long history in teacher education have witnessed the ineffectiveness of many large-scale reform efforts. In this text we profile individuals and small teams who have found ways to meet the challenges in their specific contexts: those who have renewed their programs, adapted to changing requirements, found innovative solutions, and thought differently about their work. Although there have been broad developments in teacher education, many teacher educators are turning their attention more and more to self-study as they begin to "walk their talk" and examine their own efforts to improve student learning.

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, renewal of teacher education is not easy. We often face institutional barriers, resistance from colleagues, and opposition from governments. Ironically, our efforts are often not appreciated and at times firmly rejected by the very group we are trying to help, the student teachers. Developing innovative programs and courses can be lonely and at times disheartening. However, when we collaborate we often receive much needed support from other committed teacher educators. Many of the chapters in this book are co-authored and some are written by large teams. We suspect that as a group of researchers move forward together, they often develop a momentum that sustains them through the difficult periods. As we share our work through both formal and informal networks we provide examples of renewal, offer support, and share our lessons learned.

Yet "good work" in our specific settings is not sufficient to withstand the sheer force of the challenges we are facing. We need to come together with a strong voice and documentation of our work. As Cochran-Smith (2004) notes, "in many of the major 21st century debates about teacher quality and teacher preparation, the central focus, at least on the surface, is research itself, particularly on whether there is a research base for teacher education" (p.111). With data to support our claims we will have the evidence to show that teacher education makes a difference, and that the types of programs we are proposing and offering help teachers personally and professionally.

The subtitle of the book – *Studies of Personal, Professional, and Program Renewal* – identifies the three broad areas that contribute to making a difference in teacher education. It also summarizes the complexity of the work of a teacher educator. From our work in the Self-Study of Teacher

Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group of AERA, we have grown in appreciation of the need to consider the personal, professional, and programmatic. We cannot have strong programs unless we support our teacher educators in being effective and healthy. When teacher educators feel a connection between their personal and professional lives, they come to the education enterprise with wholeness. The teacher educator's self has a strong influence on the program. Hence, the personal, professional, and program dimensions form a unity. We have organized our text under these headings, but recognize that the three domains are interconnected. The personal cannot be attended to without consideration of the program or the professional components.

As you read the chapters the authors' passions can be felt, along with their belief that their innovations helped their student teachers become better teachers. Authors from many countries – Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.S., and South Africa – are represented, and interestingly the challenges faced cut across national boundaries. This text presents stories of teachers reflecting and systematically examining their work from a personal, professional, and/or programmatic stance. It describes the accomplishments of individuals (and in part the programs in which they work) that have resulted in overcoming many of the hurdles typically faced in teacher education. These authors have made a difference in the lives of their students, their colleagues, the pupils in elementary and secondary schools, and many classroom teachers. We applaud and appreciate their efforts.

Clare, Clive, Anne & Anastasia

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Contributing Authors

Beck, Clive. Clive Beck is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto where he teaches in both the graduate and preservice programs. He is past-president of the Philosophy of Education Society of North America. His main areas of research and writing are teaching and teacher education. His books include *Better Schools* (Falmer, 1990) and *Learning to Live the Good Life* (OISE Press, 1993).

Berry, Amanda. Amanda Berry is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Monash University where she works mainly in the areas of preservice and inservice science teacher education. Amanda's research focus is the self-study of teaching practice, an interest that began during her career as a high school science teacher, before joining Monash University. She has a keen interest in the collaborative learning about teaching that can take place between teacher education colleagues and in the power of modelling in teaching about teaching.

Brady, Patricia. Patricia Brady is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She formerly taught English in urban and suburban high schools. Her research interests focus on preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse students.

Burgoyne, Suzanne. Suzanne Burgoyne is Professor of Theatre at the University of Missouri Columbia. She is a former Kellogg National Fellow (leadership training and interdisciplinary studies) and a 2000/2001 Carnegie Scholar (scholarship of teaching and learning). In 2003 she was named

Outstanding Teacher of the year by the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. She is co-author of *Teaching and Performing: Ideas for Energizing Your Classes*.

Choi, Soo Jung. Soo Jung Choi is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She formerly taught English as a second/foreign language both in EFL and ESL contexts. Her research interests focus on language planning and policy, teacher education for nonnative English speaking teachers, and second language literacy.

Clift, Renee T. Renee T. Clift is professor of education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She received her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teacher Education from Stanford University and was on faculty at the University of Houston before moving to the University of Illinois. She is the author of numerous articles on the uses of technology in teacher education and on factors that enhance or inhibit learning to teach. Her current research involves: 1. The use of technology in mentoring and induction programs and 2. Longitudinal case studies of graduates of an English teacher education program.

Cockrell, Karen Sunday. Karen Sunday Cockrell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her research interests focus on American Indian education and teacher licensure and professional development policies. Her teaching focuses on developing theories of ethical practice and critical perspectives on education politics and policy and among teacher education and graduate students.

Coia, Lesley. Lesley Coia is the Director of Teacher Education Programs at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, Georgia. As well as chairing the department, she teaches a variety of of courses in the elementary and secondary teacher education programs. She read philosophy as an undergradutate at University College London, and received her M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy of education from the University of London Institute of Education. She is interested in gender and education, feminist pedagogies, narrative conceptions of self, and improving her own practice through self-study.

Davey, Ronnie. Ronnie Davey is a Principal Lecturer in English Education and Professional Studies at Christchurch College of Education, New Zealand. Her research interests include English and literacy education and teacher education. She is President of the New Zealand English Teachers Association and has co-authored High School texts on Janet Frame's *To The Is-Land* and Keri Hume's *The Bone People*. Ronnie's current doctoral study is an investigation of New Zealand teacher educator's professional identities and conceptions of teacher education.

DeMulder, Elizabeth. Elizabeth DeMulder is an Associate Professor of Initiatives in Educational Transformation in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University. Her research concerns the study of interpersonal relationships in educational contexts, risk and protective conditions in children's development and early education, and teacher professional development. Dr. DeMulder co-edited a book entitled *Transforming Teacher Education: Lessons in Professional Development* (Bergin and Garvey, 2001) and has published her research in a variety of professional journals.

Eferakorho, Jite. Jite Eferakorho is a UCEA Post Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His current research interests focus on teacher education policy, and multicultural reform efforts in the preparation of teachers and educational leaders.

Feldman, Allan. Allan Feldman is Professor of Science Education and Teacher Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His research is focused on what it means to teach and to be a teacher. This is tied to his study of action research, self-study of teacher education practices, and existential conceptions of teaching. He has recent publications in the *Journal of Research on Science Teaching*, *Educational Action Research*, and *Science Education*. Professor Feldman taught middle and high school science and math for 17 years in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania before obtaining his doctorate at Stanford University.

Freese, Anne R. Anne R. Freese has been a teacher educator in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Hawaii since 1992. She teaches graduate courses on teacher action research, qualitative research methods, and curriculum theory. She received the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Hawaii in 2000. Her research

interests are primarily in the areas of self-study of teacher education practices, critically reflective teaching, and school-university partnerships. Her recent publications include a chapter in the forthcoming book, *The Missing Links in Teacher Education Design: Developing a Multi-linked Conceptual Framework*, Gary Hoban, (Ed.), and a chapter (with Clive Beck and Clare Kosnik) in *The International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices*.

Freidus, Helen. Helen Freidus is a member of the graduate faculty at Bank Street College of Education in New York City. Her research and teaching focus includes literacy development, the knowledge development of pre-service and in-service teachers, and contextualization of teaching and learning. Recent publications include: *Guiding School Change: The Role and Work of Change Agents* (coedited with Frances Rust) (2001), Teachers College Press, 2001, *Narrative Research in Teacher Education: New Questions, New Practices* in Lyons and LaBoskey *Narrative Inquiry in Practice*, Teachers College Press (2002), and *The Reflective Portfolio in Self-Study* (with Nona Lyons) in Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, Russell, *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, (2004).

Guilfoyle, Karen. Karen Guilfoyle is an Associate Professor in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at the University of Idaho. She has been involved in teaching and teacher education with a focus on social justice and equity from a critical feminist perspective for many years. Her areas of research are teacher education, diversity in the classroom, and Native American juvenile justice, and her teaching includes literacy development, qualitative and emancipatory research, and environmental studies with freshman, preservice teachers, and graduate students.

Ham, Vince. Vince Ham is a Director of Ultralab South, an independent research centre focussed on research into e-learning and new educational technologies. His research interests are in technology in education, e-learning, research methods and teacher professional development. He leads a research team conducting longitudinal evaluations of a number of national initiatives in teacher professional development in the ICT area. Vince is a member of the International Editorial Board of the journal *Teaching and Teacher Education*, and co-authored a chapter on self-study as research in the *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (2004).