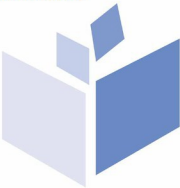


Making a Difference in Teacher Education Through Self-Study

Studies of Personal, Professional and Program Renewal

Edited by

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



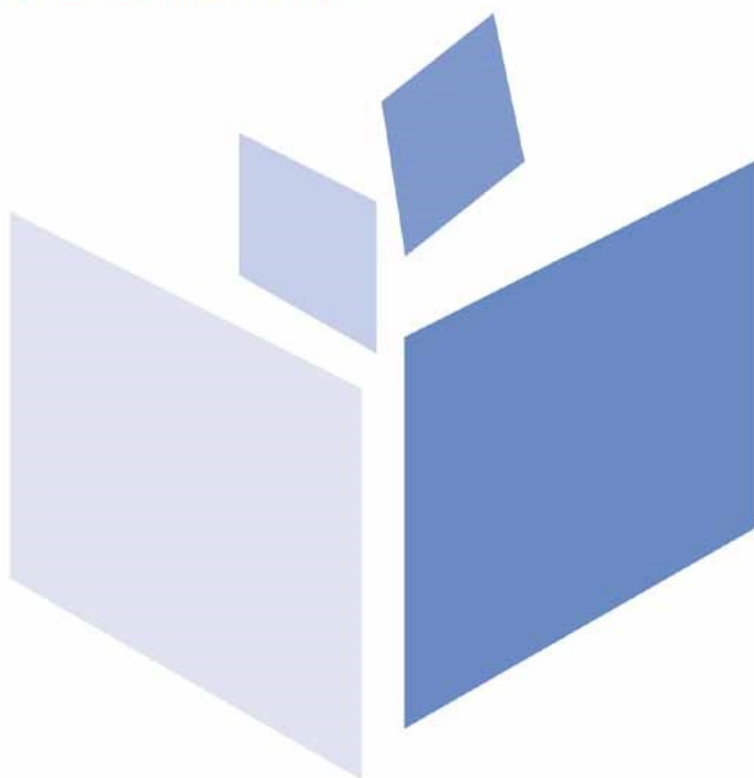
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION
THROUGH SELF-STUDY

Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices

Volume 2

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 Springer

A C.I.P. Catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN-10 1-4020-3527-6 (HB)
ISBN-10 1-4020-3528-4 (e-book)
ISBN-13 978-1-4020-3527-2 (HB)
ISBN-13 978-1-4020-3528-9 (e-book)

Published by Springer,
P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

www.springeronline.com

Cover design by Tina Goertz

Printed on acid-free paper

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Printed in the Netherlands.

Dedication

For our parents,
Georgina and Henry Madott,
Sylvia and Lawrence Beck,
Kathleen and Ken Reilley,
Magdalene and Savvas
Pantelides

Table of Contents

Series Editor Introduction - John Loughran	ix
Foreword - Ken Zeichner	xiii
Introduction	xvii
Acknowledgements	xxi
Contributing Authors	xxiii
Section One – Personal Renewal	
<i>Section Editors: Anne Freese and Clive Beck</i>	1
Chapter 1	
Tom Russell – <i>How 20 Years of Self-Study Changed My Teaching</i>	3
Chapter 2	
Lesley Coia and Monica Taylor – <i>From the Inside Out, and the Outside In: Co/Autoethnography as a Means of Professional Renewal</i>	19
Chapter 3	
Allan Feldman – <i>Using an Existential Form of Reflection to Understand My Transformation as a Teacher Educator</i>	35
Chapter 4	
The Arizona Group: Peggy Placier, Stefinee Pinnegar, Mary Lynn Hamilton, and Karen Guilfoyle – <i>Exploring the Concept of Dialogue in the Self-Study of Teaching Practices</i>	51
Chapter 5	
Anne R. Freese – <i>Transformation Through Self-Study: The Voices of Preservice Teachers</i>	65
Section Two – Professional Renewal	
<i>Section Editor: Anastasia P. Samaras</i>	81
Chapter 6	
Renee T. Clift, Patricia Brady, Raul A. Mora, Soo Joung Choi, and Jason Stegemoller – <i>From Self-Study to Collaborative Self-Study to Collaborative Self-Study of Collaboration: The evolution of a Research Team</i>	85
Chapter 7	
Vince Ham and Ronnie Davey – <i>Is Virtual Teaching, Real Teaching? Learnings from Two Self-Studies</i>	101
Chapter 8	
Claudia Mitchell – <i>In My Own Handwriting: Textual Evidence and Self-Study</i>	117

Chapter 9	
Peggy Placier, Karen S. Cockrell, Suzanne Burgoyne, Sharon Welch, Helen Neville, and Jite Eferakorho – <i>Theater of the Oppressed as an Instructional Practice</i>	131
Chapter 10	
Anastasia P. Samaras, Elizabeth K. DeMulder, Mary A. Kayler, Laura Newton, Leo C. Rigsby, Karen L. Weller, and Dawn Renee Wilcox – <i>Spheres of Learning in Teacher Collaboration</i>	147
Section Three – Program Renewal	
<i>Section Editor: Clare Kosnik</i>	165
Chapter 11	
Helen Freidus – <i>Through a Murky Mirror: Self Study of a Program in Reading and Literacy</i>	167
Chapter 12	
Judith McVarish and Frances Rust – <i>Unsquaring Teacher Education: Reshaping Teacher Education in the Context of a Research I University</i>	185
Chapter 13	
John Loughran, Amanda Berry, and Libby Tudball – <i>Learning about Teaching</i>	203
Chapter 14	
Vicky Kubler LaBoskey – <i>Course Assignments for Self and Program Renewal: Learning to Lesson Plan</i>	227
Chapter 15	
Clare Kosnik and Clive Beck – <i>The Impact of a Preservice Teacher Education Program on Language Arts Teaching Practices: A Study of Second-Year Teachers</i>	243

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

In these times, when educational policymakers and politicians in a number of countries including my own are seeking to transform teaching and teacher education into “scientifically-based” or “evidence-based” practices based only on the results of experimental trials and other forms of what is perceived to be “real science,” it is refreshing to read these thoughtful accounts of teacher educators’ inquiries into their own teaching practices in university-based teacher education programs. This collection of studies by practising teacher educators from a number of different countries exemplifies Shulman’s (2002) call for embedding programs of research in ongoing teacher education programs. These studies make two valuable contributions to research and practice in teacher education: (1) they serve as a source of professional development for the teacher educator researchers who conduct them and as stimuli to improving their programs; (2) they provide new insights about various aspects of teacher education that form an important part of the research literature on teacher education. There is clear evidence in these studies that teacher educators can come to see their practice differently during, and as a result of, careful examination of their work.

Amid all of the criticism of a perceived lack of commitment to teacher education in colleges and universities, this volume demonstrates the existence of innovative and committed faculty and staff who are working hard to offer high quality programs to their students, programs that model the reflective and analytic stance toward teaching practice that they encourage their students to take on. Reading these studies makes me optimistic about the future of teacher education in colleges and universities even when the attacks continue on university teacher educators from the

privatizers and deregulators who would dismantle all university and college-based teacher education programs if they could.

In this volume, there are studies that examine particular aspects of entire teacher education programs such as integrated curriculum and collaboration, specific instructional practices such as the use of Theater of the Oppressed techniques, co-autoethnography, and self-study, and the role of different strategies for the professional development of teacher educators such as professional dialogue and memory work. There is a lot of useful information in these chapters that teacher educators can use to help them rethink their practice. Most of the studies include careful attention to the impact of particular practices (programs, courses, instructional strategies) on teacher education students, and a few follow their students into their early years of teaching to examine if the impact of the practices lasts beyond the program.

Although teacher educators have been doing research about their own practices and programs for many years (Zeichner, in press), self-study as an explicit research orientation is a relatively recent entry into the field of teacher education research. Since the early 1990s with the founding of the self-study in teacher education special interest group within the American Educational Research Association (Loughran, 2004), there has been growing visibility of self-study research at major educational research conferences throughout the world and in the top professional journals. This past year there was even the emergence of a new peer-reviewed journal devoted exclusively to self-study research in teacher education (*Studying Teacher Education*).

There is currently a lot of debate internationally about the current status of teacher education research and the directions that it should take in the future. One point of view is that a relatively small group of researchers within elite research universities, if given more money to do research will produce the knowledge base that is needed to transform teacher education programs. This “theory- into-practice” view reflects the belief that it is mostly through the research of people who are not themselves directly involved in the practice of teacher education, that the field of teacher education will be improved. Over the years, teacher education research has been very much under funded in comparison with research in other areas and very little funding has been available to teacher educators to conduct research. In my view, this strategy will not take us very far in better connecting research about teacher education programs to teacher education programs. For this to happen, teacher educators need to be integrally involved themselves in conducting research, either in the kind of self-study work represented in this volume, or in research partnerships with non-teacher educators from inside and outside their own institutions.

During the last four years, I served as the co-chair of a panel of the American Educational Research Association that was charged with synthesizing what we know from the peer-reviewed research on preservice

teacher education in the U.S. (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). During this work, it quickly became apparent that for some of the topics we were examining such as research on instructional practices, methods courses and field experiences, self-study research was the modal form of research that has been done.

One of the major criticisms that we made of the research on preservice teacher education as a whole in our final report was the lack of attention to the contexts in which the research was carried out. The literature is filled with studies that examine the impact of various approaches to program structure and organization, curriculum, and instruction that include very little information about the settings in which the practices under study were used. One strength of self-study research in teacher education has been the rich contextual information that it has provided about the various settings in which teacher education take place. This contextual richness of self-study research enables a better understanding of why and under what conditions particular things happen in teacher education programs.

One major limitation of the self-study work though has been that the research has been carried out in many individual teacher education classrooms around the world with minimal effort to look across the research sites within coherent programs of research. A logical next step for this kind of work is for self-study teacher education researchers like those represented in this volume to develop collaborative investigations across institutions and programs that begin to provide data about the kind of practices investigated in this volume in multiple settings. Currently, teacher educators in a number of places in the U.S. are getting together across institutions and conducting research programs that include self-study work (e.g., Kirby et al. 2004; Ohio Partnership, 2005). The kind of self-study research contained in this volume provides a strong foundation for the examination of teacher education practices across institutions and cultures as well as within individual settings. While there is a place for the experimental trials and other “outside-inside” research on teacher education that is currently being advocated in some countries, it would be a mistake for policymakers and teacher educators to ignore the wisdom that is offered by the research like the inquires included in this volume.

KEN ZEICHNER
University of Wisconsin-Madison
March, 2005