Advancing Teacher Education
Through Faculty Development

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Abstract

In light of a growing body of knowledge on effective teacher education practices and programs, more attention needs to be given to faculty development as a means of reforming teacher education. After identifying key themes in the North American teacher education reform literature since the 1980’s, the author identifies some of the challenges to the professionalization of both clinical faculty and professors of education. The paper concludes with the identification of four possible components of a pan-Canadian program of professional development for teacher educators: initial teacher educator preparation; ongoing professional development; practitioner research by teacher educators; and disseminating teacher education research and reforms.

Key words: teacher education, faculty development, higher education

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Advancing Teacher Education through Faculty Development

While teacher education in North America has long been recognized as being in need of reform, little attention has been given to the faculty development as a means of improving teacher education practices in Canada. There is now a specialized body of knowledge about teacher education which needs to be understood and applied by teacher educators, yet significant challenges limit the dissemination and application of this knowledge in education faculties. Faculty development can improve understanding and contribute to the improvement of teacher education practices and programs in Canada.

Education faculties in Canada, like many other professional schools, stand “betwixt tower and field” (Heap, 2006). Heap (2006) defines the “tower” as “a place of employment committed to the values, traditions and practices of the academy” and the “field of education” as a place of paid employment and volunteer activity which encompasses teaching and learning.” This location is fraught with tension as teacher educators are collectively accountable to both masters. Historically, teacher educators in “normal schools” and “teacher colleges” were oriented primarily towards the field. Since teacher colleges merged with universities, discipline-oriented professors are more likely to face the tower. Heap argues that these tension can be resolved by focusing less on traditional scholarly objectives and more on “scholarly impact objectives” that recognize the importance of provoking discussion in the field; practitioner utilization of theories, practices and materials; and the improvement of education.

The positioning of education faculties as professional schools within universities has significant implications for the scholarship and practices of teacher educators. If teacher education is a specialized field in which scholarship and practice are integrated meaningfully, then the work of teacher educators needs to be defined, supported and assessed in ways that recognize their Janus-like positioning on the educational landscape.

Grimmett (1998) stressed the importance of reconfiguring the work of teacher educators in order to better serve the community:

[T]eacher educators need to reconceptualize their mission as enculturating teachers into the practice of teaching with a sense of hope and purpose, now, in collaboration with other colleagues in higher education and the field. (p. 264)

Grimmett proposed “building a culture of inquiry” that is “reconfigured around team-teaching and facilitation of practitioner inquiry” (p. 262).

Teacher educators in faculties of education are a highly diverse group. They range from academics with little practical knowledge of schools to experienced teachers with little theoretical knowledge of education. In between, there are many individuals with experiences in and loyalties to both tower and field. Regardless of where individual teacher educators are located on this continuum, they experience tension as they attempt to serve both masters.

If teacher education is to be regarded as a specialized field of scholarship and practice, both clinical faculty and tenure-track professors are in need of effective professional development in this area. The experiences and positioning of each group, however, makes the development of teacher education specialists very challenging.

Teacher Education as a Specialized Field

Teacher education in North America has been under scrutiny since the 1980’s. In the United States, criticisms by the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a
Profession (1986) led to significant reform efforts. Canadian teacher education programs also faced calls for reform. As Cole (2000) notes, “In Canada, since the late 1980’s, nearly every education reform document...has included a call for changes to teacher education” (p. 139). These calls for change prompted many reform efforts by teacher educators and teacher education faculties. Howey and Zimpher (1989), for example, identified fourteen attributes necessary for program coherence, while Goodlad (1990) identified the problems arising from the low-status of teacher education in academia. Many teacher education specialists advocated more authentic approaches to teacher education. Grimmett (1995) promoted the “craft knowledge” of teachers, while Munby and Russell (1994) stressed the “authority of experience”. Russell, McPherson and Martin (2000) articulate one of the central understandings that emerged from teacher education reform efforts during this era:

The inability of traditional programs to prepare beginning teachers with more than an imitative understanding of their role emerges, in large part, from the lack of explicit connections between the actions of teachers and the pedagogical theories that inform practice. (p. 42)


Although the 1980’s and 1990’s were often frustrating for teacher education reformers, much was learned about effective teacher education practices and the challenges of developing coherent and collaborative teacher education programs. The first years of the new millennium have been significant for the efforts to develop a consensus on key elements of teacher education, identify the characteristics of exemplary programs, and build a consensus on the preparation of teachers in the United States.

In Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), the National Academy of Education’s Committee on Teacher Education argued, “Over the last two decades, the teaching profession has begun to codify the knowledge base of professional practice and standards for the work of practitioners” (p. vii). This volume “outlines core concepts and strategies that should inform initial teacher preparation” (p. vii) in the United States, with a particular emphasis on how we know about student learning and teacher learning should inform teaching and teacher education. The central argument is that teacher education programs need to focus on the development of teachers with adaptive expertise. In order to adapt to changing social and professional circumstances, adaptive experts continuously add to their knowledge of learners, their social context, subject matter, teaching skills, assessment etc. To become adaptive experts, teacher candidates need opportunities to draw on their knowledge, skills and dispositions in authentic classroom situations.

Powerful Teacher Education: Lessons from Exemplary Programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006), written “in collaboration with” multiple authors, offers examples of exemplary teacher education programs. It is one thing to identify, for example, the need to conceptualize an understanding of student cognition, but quite another to develop a program that effectively achieves this goal. The examples in this book illustrate how the many different aspects of effective teacher education can be brought together in complex, coherent and collaborative programs. Darling-Hammond begins by challenging two “damaging myths” about education.

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The first is that “good teachers are born not made,” which has resulted in too few “sustained initiatives to ensure that all teachers have the opportunity to become well prepared” (p. ix). The second is that “good teacher education programs are virtually non-existent and perhaps even impossible to construct” (p. ix). This myth causes practitioners and policymakers to act as if “teaching is mostly telling others what you know and therefore requires little more than subject knowledge” (p. ix). In order to counter these myths, Darling-Hammond’s team studied exemplary programs. The exemplars described and studied have “long track records of developing teachers who are strongly committed to all students’ learning—and to ensuring especially that student who struggle to learn can succeed” (p. 5). These common components, illustrated through descriptions of exemplary programs, touch on many of the suggestions made by change advocates in the 1990’s.

While there have been many papers on various facets of teacher education since Wideen and Holborn (1986) identified the need for a better understanding of the context of teacher education in Canada, there remains a need for more research on teacher education practices and programs. Beck and Kosnik (2006) offers insights into the characteristics of exemplary teacher education programs in Canada, the United States and beyond. Russell, McPherson & Martin (2001) highlight patterns of change taking place in Canadian teacher education programs, with a particular focus on coherence among program elements and collaboration with outside partners. Russell & McPherson (2001) emphasize the importance of making explicit what teachers actually do and think, helping teacher candidates study their emerging practices, and developing collaborative cohorts of students.

The Association of Canadian Deans of Education highlighted the importance of teacher education in their “Accord on Initial Teacher Education” (2006). In the preamble, they recognized that “initial teacher education should involve the development of situated, practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and academic content knowledge, as well as an introduction to research and scholarship in education” (p. 2). The actual principles listed in the accord include the importance of school-university partnerships, collaboration, interweaving theory with research and practice, and the development of a research disposition. While principles signed by academic deans cannot transform teacher education, they help establish a context in which teacher education reform by dedicated teacher educators can transform practices and programs. This pan-Canadian accord may offer opportunities to develop a pan-Canadian teacher education agenda.

**Enacting a Pedagogy of Teacher Education**

While teacher educators are highly educated scholars and/or very experienced educators, their knowledge and experiences are generally not in the field of teacher education. Teacher educators, like teachers, begin as novices who “focus on surface features or particular objects” (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001, p. 889). Teacher educators who emerge from scholarship may be inclined to emphasize what Korthagen (2001) term *episteme*: traditional and scientifically-derived propositional knowledge. This knowledge is sometimes criticized for being too theoretical and general to be applied in to specific situations and problems. Educators who emerge from practice in schools, on the other hand, may be inclined towards *phronesis*: practical wisdom based on concrete experiences in specific situations (Korthagen, 2001). This wisdom, sometimes derided as ‘war stories’, may not be grounded in scholarship and or be easily transferred to the teacher education context. Neither the theoretical knowledge of scholars nor
the practical experience of practitioners is sufficient. Even teacher educators with both scholarly and practical backgrounds may not have integrated them into a pedagogy of teacher education.

In order to develop a pedagogy of teacher education, teacher educators need to grapple with the challenges of teaching about teaching and teaching about learning. Like the teachers they teach, they need to go through a novice stage of survival before advancing their pedagogy (Huberman, 1993). Novice practices, however, will perpetuate themselves (Britzman, 1991) unless reflection on practice is combined with knowledge about expert practices. While they can learn from the tacit knowledge of experts, this “does not easily translate into direct instruction and formalization” (Munby et. al., 2001, p. 889). In particular, there is value in turning to the “authority of experience” (Munby & Russell, 1994) of teacher educators who have reflected deeply on their teacher education practices and have shared their stories of practice in scholarly publications. They can learn much about exemplary practices and programs by the read works such as those cited above.

Loughran (2006) draws on the authority of his experiences to convey a complex understanding of effective teacher education practice. In defining pedagogy, he emphasizes the importance of the “relationship between teaching and learning and understanding through meaningful practice” (p. 2). Given the complexities of learning about teaching and teaching about learning, as well as the “competing cognitive and affective tensions that influence learning and growth through experiences in practice settings” (p. 3), teacher education is a highly complex and specialized field of practice. Developing a pedagogy of teacher education entails an examination of this complex interplay in order to effectively prepare beginning teachers. In particular, as there is a vast difference between telling and teaching, teacher educators need to devote as much attention to how they teach as to what they teach (Russell, 1997).

The complex dynamics of effective teacher education practices are nicely expressed by Loughran (2006):

Teaching about teaching therefore hinges on: supporting students of teaching as they learn to be comfortable about progressively relinquishing control in order to learn to better manage the many competing aspects of teaching through engaging with the problematic; while at the same time responding similarly to the very same situation in one’s own practice. In many ways, seeing anew what one already sees is one way of managing the complexity of teaching about teaching as it requires a familiarity with practice in concert with maintaining a distance from practice in order to see what is happening while it is happening. (p. 35)

This body of knowledge has the potential to inform and, perhaps, transform teacher education in Canada. Its impact will not be significant, however, unless major impediments to reform are addressed.

Grounded Clinical Faculty

Experienced teachers have long played an important role as clinical faculty in teacher education programs. Cornbleth and Ellsworth (1994) identified three major roles for “clinical faculty”: enhanced practice teaching roles, teaching university courses, and engagement in teacher education program teaching, planning and decision-making. In this section I refer to three groups who play a large role in the delivery of teacher education courses and programs: teachers (active or retired) who serve as part-time instructors; teachers who are seconded from the classroom for fixed terms; and retired teachers who work as full-time teacher educators.
Clinical faculty grounded in the practical realities of teaching in schools have long been identified as playing a potentially important role in bridging the perceived gap between the field and the academy (e.g. The Holmes Group, 1995). In Canadian universities, instructors with recent field experiences as teachers and administrators play a prominent yet largely unexamined role in the delivery of teacher education courses and programs. Part-time and retired instructors on sessional contracts provide teacher education programs with experience at a modest cost. While such an approach may lead to the hiring of effective and, at times, exemplary teachers it is “hit and miss” and the results are likely to be “uneven at best” (Maynes, McIntosh, & Wimmer, 1998). New clinical faculty may have difficulty extending beyond their insider knowledge, and often feel overwhelmed by the demands of course planning and the need to adapt to working with adult learners.

In “Teachers’ Secondment Experiences”, Badali and Housego (2000), offers an interesting glimpse into the experiences of clinical faculty seconded from school boards:

Although seconded teachers are given responsibility for many of the practical dimensions of teacher education, they remain on the periphery, never gaining entry to the mainstream university culture. In summary, seconded teachers took the initiative to organize their own support, the faculty neither suggested nor designed it to any degree beyond the orientation phase, and departments had mixed success in welcoming and including them. (p.336)

Dawson (1996) revealed that clinical faculty place a higher value on practical, experiential knowledge than on theoretical knowledge. While this is understandable given their experiences, a greater awareness of the specialized field of teacher education would help them be more effective as teacher educators. Badali and Housego (2000) noted that “teachers expected to build similar collaborative relationships with full-time faculty” (p. 341), yet often felt out of touch with them. Part-time faculty, particularly retired teachers, may be less willing to commit to additional professional development, given the duration and uncertainty of their contracts.

As clinical faculty without doctorates play a significant and growing role in teacher education, their professional development is critical to advancing teacher education practices and programs. In addition to better screening clinical faculty for their suitability as teacher educators, more can be done to prepare them as teacher education programs and to provide them with stronger professional communities with education faculties.

Is it possible to offer a balanced teacher education program when most of the instructors are clinical faculty? According to Beck and Kosnik (2003), a balanced and effective teacher education program needs both clinical faculty and professors of education working collaboratively in a program in which theory and practice are integrated. Although clinical faculty have an important role to play, it is essential that professors of education be appointed “who have a solid commitment to linking theory and practice and, in particular, to engaging in preservice education and forming partnerships with practicum schools” (Beck & Kosnik, 2003).

The Aspiring Professoriate

While there is a mix of practice-oriented clinical faculty and theory-oriented professors in education faculties, the presence of both does not automatically mean that teacher candidates benefit from the best of both orientations. Bridging this theory-practice divide will entail an increased commitment to teacher education by professors and the institutions in which they are
employed. Yet, the gap may be widening as “all signals point to a direction of research intensification in the work of the education professoriate” (Wimmer & da Costa, 2007, p. 85).

Ducharme (1993) observed that professors of education enjoy “a new life of self-direction, of autonomy” (p. 48) very different from what they may have experienced as teachers. The “mystique” of this “special way of life with implied responsibilities” (Ducharme, p. 48-49) often causes teacher educators to focus increasingly on scholarship and graduate courses, as these are viewed as being higher priorities in the academy.

“Education programs lack the intellectual traditions of the liberal arts but have tried valiantly to conform to university norms,” according to Kennedy (2001, p. 29). Measuring themselves against the academic standards of the core university disciplines within the university leads professors to reduced commitment their commitment to improving teaching, which drew them to educational studies in the first place.

Beck and Kosnik (2001) suggest that teacher education will continue to be low status and poorly rewarded in terms of tenure, promotion, and merit pay until there is increased institutional support. On a more hopeful note, they write:

The problem of heavy workload and lack of rewards can be overcome to some extent by doing research on one’s own teacher education practice, as we have done in this and other studies…Such research has the added advantages of helping us improve the program and making our work more satisfying. It also enables us to make a stronger case at an institutional level for support for this kind of program, something we plan to do in a more systematic way in the future. (p. 947).

If professors of education are to engage in teacher education instruction, teaching, program development and field supervision, it is vital that recognition and reward structures acknowledge to this work.

The Accord on Initial Teacher Education (2006) signed by members of the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) could be a crucial step in this direction:

It is ACDE’s view that programs of initial teacher education should involve the development of situated practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and academic content knowledge, as well as an introduction to research and scholarship in education. (p. 2)

Absence of a Professional Development Culture

One of the most consistent findings of school improvement research is that “school improvement cannot occur apart from a closely connected culture of professional development” (Hawley & Valli, 1999, p. 127). While education professors have written extensively on this symbiotic relationship (Hawley & Valli, 1999), there has been little systematic effort to link faculty development to the improvement of teacher education programs. Indeed the individualistic culture of the academy makes this particularly challenging. Clinical faculty with experience in schools are often receptive to professional development opportunities yet few are afforded them due to the short-term nature of their contracts. Education professors, who must divide their time between scholarship and teaching, often lack the time or commitment to be part of the kinds of collaborative faculty development activities that have been demonstrated to be effective. This makes systematic professional development, which is difficult in schools, seem doubly challenging in education faculties.
Individual teacher educators can play an important role in improving their own practices and developing a professional development culture. Encouragement and support from deans of education and the university administration are critical to the long-term success of faculty development. In turn, faculty development is critical to comprehensive teacher education improvement efforts. The internal obstacles to teacher education reform identified by Nolan (1985), and linked to the Canadian context by Cole (2000)—lack of time, varying degrees of commitment, lack of rewards, isolationist university culture and inadequate discussion of program development issues—can best be addressed through faculty development.

**Reasons for Hope: A Foot in Both Camps**

There are many teacher educators who have both a firm grounding in teaching practice and solid scholarly credentials. Professors of education are often experienced teachers who have engaged in graduate studies as a natural extension of their commitment to improving education (Arients, Murphy, & Christenden, 1986; Cole, 1999; Ducharme, 1993). Although the norms of the university may draw them to scholarship, they are likely to be receptive to practitioner inquiry, partnerships with the field, and collaborative professional development.

Cole’s (1999) life history study of the experiences of seven pre-tenure professors of teacher education demonstrates that many new professors are receptive to both teacher education reform and to faculty development approaches that would contribute to partnerships with the field, practitioner research and a culture of inquiry (Grimmett, 1998). Cole (1999) writes:

Given that many contemporary teacher educators come to their roles and positions after a long career in classrooms and schools, it is not surprising that pedagogical reform is a high priority for them. They bring to their university classrooms values, belief, and knowledge of “good” teaching that usually contrast starkly with the traditions and expectations of the teacher education classroom...As they see it, their job is not to “deliver the curriculum” but to engage in and demonstrate “good” pedagogy. This goal is a constant source of tension, frustration, and challenge and one they relentlessly pursue because, as one participant said, “We have to model what we believe in...”. (p. 284)

These teacher educators were frustrated by the lack of coherence in the program and alienated by the university culture of competition and self-promotion. They preferred to cling to the “norms of collaboration and community” (p. 290) they brought with them from schools. The good news, according to Cole (1999), is that these “highly competent, committed and caring” professors have the potential to “shape and mould teacher education” (p. 294). The bad news, she continues, is that the culture of education faculties and, particularly, the rewards system are barriers to reform.

Education professors such as these, with deep field experiences, solid scholarship and receptivity to collaborative faculty development, are powerful potential agents of reform. Faculty development has a critical role to play in harnessing their potential to enhance teacher education practices and programs.

**Enhancing Faculty Development for Teacher Educators**

It is ACDE’s view that programs of initial teacher education should involve the development of situated practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and academic content knowledge, as well as an introduction to research and scholarship in education.
In the Accord on Initial Teacher Education, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) recognized the complexity of teacher education as a specialized field of higher education in which “[t]here is both an intellectual and a practical component” (ACDE, 2006, p. 2). Teacher education must be situated in the university context, they argued, “in order to allow the meaningful interaction of student-teachers with research-oriented faculty and to promote the awareness of the interconnected nature of theory, research and practice in the profession” (p. 2). In order to enhance the profile of teacher education, they seek to make the public aware of the “complexities and merits of teacher preparation programs” (p. 2) and promote greater understanding of program components, such as field experiences. The final principle in the Accord on Initial Teacher Education states, “An effective initial teacher education program supports thoughtful, considered, and deliberate innovation to improve and strengthen the preparation of educators” (p. 5).

The professional development of teacher educators has a crucial role to play in enhancing the profile of teacher preparation programs. Effective professional development can both improve teacher education practices and programs, and provide evidence of the effectiveness of programs and their components.

In order to increase the effectiveness of teacher education programs, professional development processes for teacher educators should be sensitive to the unique challenges facing teacher educators and based on the emerging consensus in this teacher education as a specialized field. In this section, I identify four possible components of a pan-Canadian program of professional development for teacher educators:

1) Initial Teacher Educator Preparation;
2) Ongoing Professional Development;
3) Practitioner Research by Teacher Educators;
4) Disseminating Teacher Education Research and Reforms.

**Initial Teacher Educator Preparation**

If teacher education is a specialized field of practice and research, then it is essential that teacher educators be appropriately prepared for their roles. This is particularly important given the short duration of teacher education programs in much of the country. Unfortunately, there seems to be little in the way of systematic preparation of teacher educators. Below are some ways in which the initial preparation of teacher educators might be enhanced.

Many graduates of masters and doctoral programs in education become involved in the teaching of initial or in-service teacher education courses, yet there are few courses offered in the study of teacher education practices or programs. Some universities offer an elective course on teacher education. Others offer open-ended courses in which graduate students could elect to study an aspect of teacher education. Most education faculties, or departments within faculties, require graduate students to complete core courses in the discipline and/or research methods. None, as far as I can tell, has a compulsory course in teacher education. Even in universities with specialists in teacher education, the course offerings are limited. In other universities they seem largely non-existent. More specialists in teacher education research are needed, both to conduct research and to disseminate such research through graduate courses. It would also be interesting to learn more about the graduate courses on teacher education that currently exist, including the
assigned readings, assignments and pedagogical practices. If enhancing teacher education practices and programs is to become a priority, more courses need to be available. Indeed, given the likelihood that many doctoral students and graduates of programs will serve as teaching assistants and/or instructors in teacher education courses, consideration should be given to making teacher education a core requirement for graduation.

Although there are few graduate courses in teacher education, many graduate education students seem to receive mentoring and experience in this area. In many universities, graduate students are hired as teaching assistants and/or sessional instructors in preservice teacher education courses. While some graduate students are ably prepared and mentored by experienced and reflective teacher educators, others are simply assigned courses to teach with little understanding of teacher education as a specialized field or an awareness of the importance of developing a pedagogy of teacher education. Unless these teaching experiences are framed as opportunities for meaningful learning about teacher education, practice will make practice (Britzman, 1991) and will do little to enhance teacher education. Teacher education can be improved when graduate students—as instructors or teaching assistants—explicitly study their practices as part of their program of studies. Grierson (2007), who studied her teaching a preservice literacy course over three terms, engaged in a continuous cycle of reflection on teaching and learning in her class. This process helped her to shift away from providing ‘tips and tricks’ and towards making her practices explicit and placing a greater emphasis on ensuring that teacher candidates are able to reflect consciously and critically on their practice. Now, as a professor of education, she is well prepared to enact her pedagogy of teaching and to share with peers her understanding of the complexities of teacher education.

The mentoring of graduate students in teacher education merits greater research and the dissemination of findings. While graduate students generally observe professors of education and often teach preservice course, there is little research on the impact these experiences have on their future practice. Todd Dinkelman of the University of Georgia has engaged in interesting work with graduate students teaching teacher education courses. Two recent papers highlight the insights two graduate students developed as they made the transition from classroom teachers to university-based teacher educators offer guidance to professors interested in explicitly improving teacher education by mentoring future professors (Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006a; 2006b).

In most institutions, there is little preparation offered to new clinical faculty (e.g. Badali & Housego, 2000). Given the specialized knowledge needed for teacher education and the challenges of transitioning from teaching to teacher education, the initial preparation of all clinical faculty should also be a priority for education faculties. Also, a pan-Canadian priority should be the dissemination of information about approaches to the preparation of clinical faculty across the country.

Ongoing Professional Development

Clinical and tenure-track instructors in education faculties are committed to developing professionally. Clinical faculties are generally very active in a range of professional activities with organizations such as subject associations, local school boards and ministries of education. Professional development in the form of research, writing and conferencing are at the heart of the work of most professors. As teacher educators, they both need to be knowledgeable about
scholarship and practice. Although professors have plenty of autonomy, they are also highly accountable.

Professors generally complete annual academic plans in which they list their professional activities: courses, thesis supervision, research grants, attendance at conferences, conference presentations, scholarly publications etc. While the professional practices of professors are carefully scrutinized during tenure and promotion, the emphasis is generally on scholarly dissemination. The focus on scholarship reflects a significant status differential between the scholarly and teaching dimensions of professorial work.

Many universities now have centres for instructional support which offer university instructors practical workshops and one-on-one sessions on effective presentation skills and instructional design. While the supports provided by these centres are invaluable to professors in other faculties, most teacher educators already possess these basic skills. In order to become more effective, teacher educators need to develop a pedagogy that addresses the unique nature of teaching teachers. This might include workshops, study groups, and other approaches to informing teacher educators about the specialized knowledge base of and best practices in teacher education. Also, it is important that teacher educators learn to model effective pedagogy and make implicit their decision-making processes as educators. Equally important is finding ways to integrate theory and practice within courses and across the program. This requires an institutional commitment to developing a culture of collaboration among all teacher education instructors. In order for this to happen, according to Beck and Kosnik (2003), “the theoretical insights and commitments of permanent staff and the continuity they provide are essential” (p. 198). Beck and Kosnik (2003) used a “faculty team approach” in order to integrate theory, practice, and research in the cohort instructional team.

**Practitioner Research by Teacher Educators**

Grimmett’s (1998) reconceptualization of teacher education emphasized the importance of building a culture of inquiry in which practitioner research is supported and facilitated.

Practitioner researchers combine understanding educational practices with changing their educational practices and their understanding of themselves as teachers. Through this process, they “become producers, as well as mediators and consumers, of knowledge” (Ziechner & Noffke, 2001, p. 306). The knowledge acquired through practitioner research, however, has long been discounted by academic researchers. As Somekh (1993) writes, “In this way, the operation of power in the social system works to neutralize the voice and influence of practitioners and promote the hegemony of traditional academic researchers” (p. 28).

Practitioner research such as action research and self-study of teacher education practices, however, has assumed a greater status in recent years. Zeichner (1999) identified the emergence of practitioner inquiry and self-study as one of the promising directions of the “new scholarship” of teacher education. He praised the “deep and critical look at practices and structures” in much of the practitioner research he reviewed. Action research engages practitioners in the collection of data on practice and reflection on that data for the purpose of enhancing student learning and improving professional practice (e.g., Kitchen & Stevens, 2008). Self-study of teacher education practices, a methodology characterized by examination of the role of the self in the research project and “the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15), is another way in which teacher educators can research their own practices in order to improve the learning of preservice teachers. While self-study research has “used various
qualitative methodologies and has focused on a wide range of substantive issues” (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001, p. 305), the primary emphasis is on reflection on practice. As Bullough & Pinnegar (2001) state, it is through written reflection and teacher conversations that we negotiate the tensions between ourselves and our contexts, between biography and history.

Practitioner research is a powerful faculty development approach to improving teacher education practices. It has the added value of giving scholarly currency to the fine work of teacher educators who combine teaching and program development with research and scholarship.

**Disseminating Canadian Teacher Education Research and Reforms**

In Canada, the *Constitution Act, 1867* made public education the responsibility of the individual provinces rather than the federal government. This arrangement, which helps make education more responsive to local needs, makes it difficult to promote national dialogue, let alone national educational agreements. In the absence of a federal regulatory framework, a pan-Canadian approach to teacher education is unlikely. The dissemination of information about teacher education research and reforms in Canada, however, can play an important role in the development of faculty engaged in teacher education. In addition to contributing to knowledge, best practices and program development, the publication of research on practices and programs confers academic recognition and reward to teacher educators who engage in improving teacher education.

The annual conference of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) brings together many teacher educators to share their research and practices. A quick perusal of the conference program reveals that there are many teacher education paper presentations across the constituent associations of CSSE. The Canadian Association of Teacher Educators and its special interest groups, such as the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices SIG, have played important roles in recognizing and disseminating research by teacher educators. These papers have the potential to inform faculty development across Canada. Conference presentations, while important, are only a first stage in the development and dissemination of research and scholarship. Too often conference papers are not followed up with contributions in scholarly journals or books. This means that important work on improving teacher education practices and programs is not widely accessible to other teacher educators, and the work of professors of education receives less recognition and reward from their own universities.

More teacher educators need to submit their work for publication and more journals need to become receptive to practitioner inquiry by teacher educators. Internationally, there are a growing number of journals that accept practitioner-oriented articles by teacher educators; for example, *Teaching Education* and *Studying Teacher Education*. In Canada there are many journals willing to accept work by teacher educators; for example, the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, a major journal which has published many thoughtful, small-scale research articles by teacher educators. It is important that information and research on Canadian teacher education practices and programs be disseminated more widely. Teacher educators, who too often lack the time or resources for research on practice, should be encouraged to develop their practitioner research into forms suitable for submission. Education journals in Canada may wish to extend invitations to teacher educators to submit more work. This could include special issues on teacher education or regular journal sections devoted to teacher education.
Finally, there would be great value in creating Canadian equivalents to the National Academy of Education report highlighted in the first section of this paper. What is the consensus of leading Canadian experts in teacher education? What can we learn from exemplary Canadian teacher education programs? What should the research agenda be for Canadian teacher educators?

**Conclusion**

Teacher education is a specialized field of scholarship and practice in which there is both a core body of knowledge and ongoing research and innovative practice. Within the culture of universities, the highly-skilled and time-consuming work of teacher educators is often regarded as low-status in comparison to higher education, research and scholarship. These challenges often make professors of education reluctant to engage significantly in the process of developing innovative practices and programs.

Faculty development has an important role to play in deepening understanding of teacher education among clinical faculty and professors of education in Canada. Education faculties can improve programs and practices by making the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of teacher educators a priority. More important than courses and workshops, however, is developing within education faculties a culture of collaboration and practitioner inquiry that values teacher education practices, program development, research and scholarship. The dissemination of teacher education research and scholarship is key to expanding the body of knowledge and best practices among Canadian teacher educators. More importantly, by conferring academic recognition and reward to teacher educators who engage in improving teacher education practices programs and scholarship, it can help raise the status of teacher education in the academy.

Teacher education reform is a very complex process. The failure of North American reform efforts over the past quarter century serves as a warning that there are many hurdles to be overcome in order to enhance teacher education practices and programs. Through these reform efforts, however, there is a growing body of knowledge on effective teacher education and ways to bring about meaningful change. Faculty development has a crucial role to play in surmounting obstacles to the advancement of teacher education practices, programs and scholarship. Individual teacher educators can make a difference by improving their knowledge of teacher education practices, building a culture of collaboration, and engaging in practitioner inquiry. Progress will continue to be limited and piecemeal unless faculty development is a high priority of professors of education, as they are critical to establishing continuity and building bridges between tower and field. Professors of education, however, are unlikely to embrace this role in large numbers unless deans of education demonstrate leadership in promoting faculty development and overcoming the challenges facing teacher education in the academy.
References


