

Editorial:

Broadening our conversations about teacher learning and professional development

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you, the reader, to the inaugural issue of *Teacher Learning and Professional Development*. I founded this journal with the aim of providing a forum for increasing the scope with which we in the academy tend to talk about teacher learning, professional development, and teacher education. Although the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of K-12 teachers will always occupy a space near and dear to my heart, I have, in recent years, become increasingly interested in broadening conversations about teacher education to include those who teach outside of the K-12 environment.

To that end, the journal frames learning to teach as a lifelong process that includes formal pre-service and continuing education programs for teachers and a variety of informal experiences that contribute to teachers' professional knowledge. Although the term *teacher* is typically taken to refer those who work as elementary or secondary school teachers; we adopt an holistic definition of teacher learning and professional development that includes the learning and development activities of anyone who teaches or self-identifies as a teacher. This expanded definition thus includes, but is not limited to, K-12 teachers, post-secondary teachers, adult educators, museum educators, community-based educators, coaches, and performing arts teachers.

I am indeed indebted to the team of authors who responded positively to the initial call for papers. Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan provides a strong leadoff article that challenges those of us who teach teachers to consider the “necessity and complexity of revisiting the past with the aim of stimulating professional learning – especially in those contexts that bear legacies of prolonged, painful, and divisive political conflict and repression.” Writing from the perspective of a South African teacher educator who is exploring the use of found poetry in her teaching, Pithouse-Morgan's self-study provides us, in my view, a powerful piece of scholarship that may provide a way for Canadian teacher educators to consider seriously their pedagogies of teacher education in light of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2015).

Allan MacKinnon and Chris Moerman take us to the *heart* of teaching by providing us with unique insight into the importance of the relationship between a teacher educator and a teacher candidate. MacKinnon deftly uses Schön' (1987) coaching framework to unpack the ways in which he responded to Moerman's needs as a teacher candidate. The result, in part, is a beautiful story in which Moerman is encouraged to tap into his prior identity as a professional musician in order to make a connection with his students. They conclude, in part, “the relational aspects of teaching can be difficult, if not impossible, for a student teacher to learn to appreciate in a practicum situation.” I strongly encourage a consideration of this article in light of the recent rhetoric of “higher standards”—often translated as “more courses”—for teacher education.

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Sabre Cherkowski and Karen Ragoonaden pick up on the importance of relational approaches to education in their important discussion of the importance of intercultural competence for school leaders. In part, their article reminds school leaders of the importance of finding ways in which they can develop a capacity for interpreting the hidden curriculum of schools through reflective practice. A reflective educational leader is then more able to make “explicit the behaviours, policies, practices, norms and beliefs that characterize the culture of the school to notice how this perpetuates privilege for certain groups and marginalizes others.” A significant point in Cherkowski and Ragoonaden’s work is the connection they make between Byram and Zarate’s (1997) *four saviors* and professional development. I particularly appreciated the fact that they called for “time and space” for schools leaders to engage in the kinds of practices they advocate – professional development requires trust in said professionals and time to engage in the kinds of work Cherkowski and Ragoonaden advocate for.

Kevin O’Connor provides a rich overview of his participation in a significant teacher education reform effort at Mount Royal University. Few of us have the opportunity to participate in the imagining and enactment of a teacher education program from the ground up; fewer still secure a significant research grant to examine the process as it unfolds. O’Connor guides us through a thorough theoretical framework for teacher education before inviting us to consider comments made from teacher candidates in his program. The themes he reports on: realistic teacher education, reflection and identity, the significance of relationships, place as pedagogy, and integration through place provide a useful counterpoint to the prevailing popular narratives of teacher education as a hurdle to be overcome in pursuit of a job. O’Connor’s work reminded me of just how important the idea of *place* is for teachers and how sustained attention to place in science education might provoke many of the more holistic goals of environmental teacher education.

Finally, Theodore Christou provides a welcome critique of the increasingly troubling, often ahistorical, tone of professional development in the 21st-century. After reminding us of the rhetoric of progressive education last century, Christou provokes us to reconsider the use of technology as a metric for progress in schools. He troubles the popular idea that a tension between schools and vocational training via technology is a new development and challenges the rhetoric of several school boards for their unwarranted “Lamarckian” claims about how children have changed in the last two decades. He challenges educationists to consider their tacit assumptions: “Progressivists must be sufficiently critical of their own underlying principles. It does not suffice to say that the world has changed and that, as a consequence, educationists must reform schools.” One might easily make the same comments of teacher education.

The articles in this inaugural issue offer much to think about and discuss and, in this spirit, I wish to highlight a somewhat novel feature of this journal. In addition to the fully available, open-access articles, each author has been asked to contribute a one-page article summary that might be used to stimulate discussion among any group of people interested in education. I encourage the reader to share these one-page summaries with family members, friends, parents’ councils, teachers, principals, professors, community-based educators, and students with a view to discussing the challenges and opportunities offered by the process of learning to teach.

I wish to conclude this editorial on a personal note. First, I want to extend sincere thanks to my team of reviewers: Dr. Tim Fletcher, Dr. Theodore Christou, and Ms. Andrea Sator. The quality of this issue is due in large part to their prompt, thoughtful reviews. Second, I wish to extend sincere thanks to my former supervisor, Professor Tom Russell, who modeled what it means to be a scholar of teacher education in more ways than I can count.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the passing of two family members during the time that I worked to bring this journal from conception in January 2015 to fruition in April 2016. My uncle worked for decades as a school custodian in Ontario, Canada. Although he did not use the term *relational pedagogy*, I have several distinct memories of stories he told about how he related to the children in his elementary schools. From mediating arguments to retrieving lost playground equipment and from lending lunch money to helping children from war-torn nations who were new to Canada navigate what Tyack and Tobin (1991) would have called the *grammar of schools*, he undoubtedly played a pedagogical role in the lives of many elementary school children. When I first decided to become a K-12 teacher, he was quick to talk to me about the importance of what happens in schools, outside of classroom walls. I have carried his comments and stories with me in my career as schoolteacher and as an education professor.

My grandfather grew up and was educated in a country with complex, divisive histories that I only began to unpack with him later in his life. What always struck me about his stories were the diversity of people with whom he interacted and the ways in which he developed what academics might call a *pedagogy of solidarity*, perhaps most explicitly through his post-war career working for a large labour union after immigrating to Canada. I have thought a lot, recently, about the ways in which my way of being as an educator have been influenced by the stories he told of the people he worked with and the causes he took up. Paolo Freire's (2014) comment, "An important question, then, from which we cannot escape is the contradiction between authority and freedom" (p. 22) seems most appropriate to encapsulate his influence on me. I also think it is fair to say that he taught me, in a number of ways, how to stand up for the things I believe in. Teaching, as many have argued over the centuries, is a political act.

This issue of *Teacher Learning and Professional Development* is dedicated to the memories of Douglas Carruthers and Joseph James MacPherson.

Respectfully yours,

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Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada
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