



Full Length Article

Making transparent the challenges of developing a practice-based pedagogy of teacher education

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H I G H L I G H T S

- Enacting practice-based teacher education requires a change in pedagogy.
- More transparency is needed in the identification of core practices.
- Teacher educators' conceptual and practical knowledge inform one another.

A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Much of the recent scholarship in teacher education relays the importance of preparing teachers to enact practice. However, scholars working in the fields of self-study and core practices have questioned the capacity of teacher educators to engage novice teachers in meaningful practice-based work. We use collaborative self-study to examine the first author's experiences of using core practices as a guiding framework with novice teachers of English language learners. Findings illuminate a developmental journey that many teacher educators will experience as they undertake this work to make both conceptual and practical shifts in their pedagogy of teacher education.

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1. Introduction

Situated within an international dialogue that has called for more clinical experience in the preparation of novice teachers (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2006; Davies et al., 2015; NCATE, 2010; 2013; Zeichner, 2010), recent scholarship in teacher education asserts the importance of providing novice teachers with “experiences of teaching,” (Berry & Loughran, 2002, p. 15). This focus on practice is in contrast to previous approaches that have armed teachers with specialized theoretical knowledge *about* teaching and learning but have not done as much to prepare them to *enact* practice (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Kessels & Korthagen, 2001). Scholarship about the importance of sustained opportunities for practice in novice

teacher preparation has arisen as a way to provide more meaningful preparation to new teachers (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009), in ways that more explicitly link university and field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2012). This shift to more extended and embedded opportunities to engage in practice has emerged in contradistinction to traditional teacher education program designs that engage novices in “taking batches of front-loaded coursework in isolation from practice and then adding a short dollop of student teaching to the end of the program” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 307). These traditional approaches have been criticized by many for not preparing novices to do the complex work of teaching (e.g., Berry, 2007; Forzani, 2014; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; Russell, 1997), thus leaving novices to figure out how to teach on the job. While these criticisms might be partially addressed through more exposure of novices to

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the work of classrooms,¹ recently scholars have argued that time spent in and around classrooms is not sufficient (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Forzani, 2014). Instead, they argue, it is more critical for novice teachers to be engaged in systematic opportunities to examine and enact practice. However, enacting a practice-based focus in the pedagogy of teacher education means that teacher education programs and teacher educators must make massive epistemological and practical shifts. Despite a growing body of literature that focuses on the work of teacher educators, we know little about how they experience the growing demands to make practice more central to the work of teacher education (for exceptions see Berry & Loughran, 2002; Loughran & Berry, 2005). It is within teacher educators' work of engaging in a sustained focus on practice and developing new epistemological and practical ways of being that this study is situated.

Our aim in this collaborative self-study is to examine how the first author (FA), working with the second author (SA) as a critical friend, began to use the scholarship in core practices (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009; Lampert et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2013) as a foundation for developing a practice-based pedagogy of teacher education for novice teachers of English language learners (ELLs).² Given the burgeoning ELL population worldwide (e.g., British Council, 2013; Graddol, 2006; NCELA, 2015), the lack of preparation of teachers to engage these students in ways that build upon their existing content and linguistic resources (Bunch, 2013; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2015), and the need to more clearly identify a knowledge base for language teacher education (e.g., Crandall, 2000; Freeman & Johnson, 1998) in an era of globalization and shifting demands (Kibler, Valdés, & Walqui, 2014; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014), a focus on the practice-based preparation of novice teachers of ELLs is an area in which there is great need but thus far limited investigation (Dubetz & Coffey, 2015; Dubetz & Collett, 2016; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Peercy, 2014, 2015; Thompson et al., 2016; Troyan & Peercy, in press). Furthermore, though the scholarship in core practices has recognized that doing practice-based work will require new pedagogies of teacher education (e.g., McDonald et al., 2013), there is limited research that explores the learning and development required of teacher educators engaged in these new pedagogical directions (see Kazemi Ghouseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016; Peercy, 2014).

In this study, we respond to calls to better understand the work of teacher educators (Conklin, 2015; Kazemi, Ghouseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016; Knight et al., 2014), and in particular, their work in practice-based pedagogies. We do so by illuminating what the FA experienced in her attempts to design a practice-based pedagogy for teaching ELLs (a discipline that is only beginning to specify core practices for teaching), using scholarship in core practices as her guiding framework. We believe that examining the experiences of a teacher educator who was beginning to use a practice-based approach within a nascent area of core practices scholarship provides especially salient insights about teacher educators' learning trajectories as they attempt to refocus teacher education in more practice-based ways. Our investigation of the FA's epistemological and practical shifts when seeking to make practice the center of her

work is important for understanding the behind-the-scenes work for teacher educators (TEs) as they aim to bridge the so-called "theory-practice gap" (e.g., Anderson & Herr, 1999; Korthagen, 2010; Wubbels, Korthagen, & Brekelmans, 1997) by using practice-based pedagogy as the foundation for their work. As we describe below, in a core practices approach, an understanding of the theory that undergirds practice is developed through engaging in practice. This dialectic, or "reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic [relationship] of scholarship and practice" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 219; see also; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, 2004; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2007) occurs when practitioners hold "theorizing and doing" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 219) in tension with one another, allowing one to inform the other. We argue that this dialectic is enabled through a core practices framework when novice teachers and the teacher educator reflect on practice through a cycle of examining instances of particular kinds of practice, jointly deconstructing them, then attempting the same kinds of instructional moves. However, engaging novices with practice in these ways is deeply demanding work for teacher educators, and the processes and learning involved in doing so are not yet well-understood. Although we agree with Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2004) that "when university-based faculty intentionally work the dialectic of research and practice, it makes possible a genre of scholarship in which rich new ways to 'theorize practice' and, at the same time 'practicize theory' are developed" (p. 636), the complex nature of this work in developing core practices has yet to be illuminated.

We explore the following research question, using collaborative self-study methodology to examine the experiences of the FA as a "telling case" (Mitchell, 1984): What challenges were part of the FA's experience of developing a practice-based pedagogy of teacher education for teaching ELLs? We argue that our findings provide insight regarding the development of teacher educators (TEs) as they participate in and contribute to the evolving field of practice-based pedagogies of teacher education.

2. Background literature: practice-based approaches

The field's current turn to a focus on practice is not historically unique (Forzani, 2014; Zeichner, 2012). However, some scholars argue that the current shift to practice-based teacher education represents a change because it relies less on practice as the length of time spent "in the field" and more on "acquiring skill at... particular, well-specified practices" (Forzani, 2014, p. 358). This call to a deeper focus on practice in teacher education is evident in at least two current areas of inquiry in teacher education: the research on core practices for teaching, and the scholarship in self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP).

2.1. Core practices

One area of teacher education research that has emphasized deeper attention to practice is the recent and growing body of work in core practices (also identified in the literature as high leverage or ambitious teaching practices). Researchers working in core practices, drawing on what Kennedy (1999) has called the "problem of enactment" (p. 70), have argued that novice teachers must have regular, systematic opportunities to practice essential aspects of teaching, so that they may gain the necessary repertoire to teach students in ways that support their learning. Although many questions remain about how to define, identify, and teach novice teachers how to enact core practices, they have been defined in the literature as those practices that are essential to successful classroom teaching and student learning, and are possible for novices to learn and enact in their teaching (Grossman et al., 2009; McDonald et al., 2013). Cross-cutting core practices, or practices that

¹ Many such shifts have occurred through greater exposure to clinical practice, such as site-based teacher education programs, teacher residency programs, and other partnerships between school districts and university teacher education programs (e.g., Forzani, 2014) to increase novices' exposure to field-based interactions.

² We use the term ELLs because it is commonly used in US contexts to identify students who speak a language(s) other than English and are learning both English and grade-level content while in school. Many other descriptors are used in US and international contexts, and include EAL (English as additional language), LOTE (languages other than English), and EB (emergent bilinguals).

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