



In Defense of Foundations: An Open Letter to Deans

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I was honored to be invited to contribute to this special issue, but as the deadline approached I wondered what I could add to the conversation that has not already been said. The role of social foundations in teacher education has been a hotly debated issue since the founding of the first social foundations course, 200F at Teachers College and the founding of the field there in the 1930s and has remained contested ground in colleges of education. Over the past decades many social foundations scholars have argued the value of social foundations of education courses and perspectives in educator preparation programs.¹ The original standards of the field, The Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies, are essentially an argument for the role of social foundations in the preparation of educators. First written in 1977-78, republished in 1986, revised in 1996, and again in 2012, they establish boundaries for the field of social foundations through a definition of the field, a discussion of the role of foundations in educator preparation, as well as a description of the content of graduate programs in foundations and how faculty in social foundations should be prepared. They go so far as to state what is not considered coursework in social foundations, in an attempt to defend the field against courses that look like foundations but are not, “Studies in Social Foundations of Education shall *not* be equated with “Introduction to Education” coursework unless such study clearly addresses the three perspectives indicated in this

1. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais, Sally Oran, & Jamie Lewis, “Social Foundations as a Foundation for Literacy Instruction: An Effort in Collaboration,” in *Handbook of Instructional Practices for Literacy Teacher-Educators: Examples and Reflections from the Teaching Lives of Literacy Scholars*, ed. Joyce E. Many (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001): 21-30. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais, Jamie Lewis, & Sally Oran, “Educating Teachers for an Urban/Multicultural Context: Growing through Diversity,” in *Ground Level Reform in Teacher Education: Changing Schools of Education*, ed. Marvin Wideen & Paulette Lemma (Calgary, Canada: Temeron Books, 1999): 49-76. Dan Butin, *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Context, Theories, and Issues* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005). Roselle Chartrock, *Educational Foundations: An Anthology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000). Alan R. Sadovnik, Peter Cookson Jr., & Susan Semel, *Exploring Education: An Introduction to the Foundations of Education*, 2nd edition (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2001). Robert Crocker & David Dibbon, *Teacher Education in Canada* (Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2008). Kathleen deMarrais, “Reflections on a Social Foundations Approach to Teacher Education,” in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005): 167-190. James Heibert & Ann K. Morris, “Teaching, Rather Than Teaches, as a Path Toward Improving,” *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63, no. 2 (2012): 92-102. Erwin V. Johanningmeier, “Through the Disarray of Social Foundations: Some Notes Toward a New Social Foundations,” *Educational Foundations*, 6, no. 1 (1991): 5-39. Donald Kerr, David Mandzuk & Helen Raptis, “The Role of the Social Foundations of Education in Programs of Teacher Preparation in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34, no. 4 (2011): 118-134. Mary Rose McCarthy, “The Rise and Fall of ED200F,” *Educational Studies* 39, no. 2 (2003): 134-145. Richard Neumann, “Highly Qualified Teachers and the Social Foundations of Education,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91, no. 3 (2009): 81-85. Michael A. Rebell & Molly A. Hunter, “‘Highly Qualified’ Teachers: Pretense of Legal Requirement?,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 9 (2004): 690-696. Steve Tozer, “Forward,” in *Unsettling Beliefs: Teaching Theory to Teachers*, ed. Josh Diem & Robert Helfenbein (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2008): xi-xvi. Steve Tozer & Debra Miretzky, “Social Foundations, Teaching Standards, and the Future of Teacher Preparation,” in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Context, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005): 3-27. Donald Warren, “The Dean of Education and the Looking Glass Self,” in *Occasional Papers, #11, Society of Professors of Education*, ed. James Merritt (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, 1979): 1-21.

Standard and is taught by individuals specifically educated in the Social Foundations of Education.”²

Other foundations scholars defend the field by contesting critiques leveled at social foundations courses within teacher education programs as being either too “ideological” or “irrelevant” to students in educator preparation programs.³ In a carefully researched history of the original Teachers College social foundations course, 200F, McCarthy detailed both its development and controversial history at Teachers College, reflecting these continuing critiques of social foundations courses.⁴ Still other scholars chronicle the disappearance of social foundations courses and programs.⁵ Kerr et al. are worth quoting at length here:

Despite the value claimed for them by the American Council of Learned Societies and others, the social foundations have been seriously marginalized in teacher education programs throughout North America (Christou, 2010)... The reasons for this marginalization are complex. Many researchers attribute the decline of history in education programs to the nature of teacher preparation. Teacher education has been described as “long on classroom practice and analysis,” but “short on philosophical and historical analysis” (Liston, Witcomb, & Borko, 2009, p. 108). This is perhaps partly due to the fact that students consistently rank their history courses as less useful than their methods courses in preparing them to become teachers (Howey, 1988; Simoes, 1992). In fact, in Crocker and Dibbon’s 2008 study of initial teacher education programs in Canada, program graduates perceived the historical and philosophical foundations of education to be the *least* useful among 18 program content areas typically covered in initial teacher education programs. Dippo (1991) attributes this to pre-service teachers’ inability to translate foundational knowledge into classroom practice.⁶

Given this already extensive scholarship “in defense of foundations,” and finding little not already said, I perseverated on the title of this special issue: *In Defense of Foundations*. Merriam’s online dictionary provides the following definitions: “the act or action of defending; capability of resisting attack, a means or methods of defending or protecting oneself, one’s team, or an argument in support.”⁷ I suspect the editors of this issue would see several of these definitions relevant as well as the very reason for this special issue. The field continues to be under attack with a need to defend and protect itself, in this case, perhaps from extinction. Still, I’m left without an audience for my essay in defense. Shall I defend the field against other faculty who provide the methods courses for our teacher candidates? School administrators who are interested in staffing their schools with “highly qualified” teachers? Politicians who rail against colleges of education more generally? Wealthy venture philanthropists who generously fund profitable non-profit organizations like Teach for America? I believe the best audience for this work is the current cadre of deans of colleges of education. They are the individuals within colleges who incent and build some programs while withholding resources from others. They ultimately make deci-

2. American Educational Studies Association. *Draft Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies* (2012): 5. http://www.educationalstudies.org/PDF/SFE_Standards_Call_for_%20Comment1.pdf.

3. Crocker & Dibbon, *Teacher Education in Canada*.

4. McCarthy, “The Rise and Fall.”

5. Kerr, Mandzuk, & Raptis, “The Role of Foundations.”

6. *Ibid.*, 121-122.

7. Merriam Webster Dictionary. “*Defense*,” (2013). <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/defense>.

sions about the fate of programs within colleges. If social foundations programs and courses are being marginalized and/or eliminated in educator preparation programs, it is under the watch of these current deans. To this group, I offer an open letter in defense of foundations in the hope they may take a few minutes to reflect on the social foundations faculty, courses, and programs in their own colleges.

An Open Letter to College of Education Deans

In these difficult economic times when states are cutting funding to higher education, you are unique among university deans in that you are under additional pressure from policymakers, corporate leaders, and a coterie of wealthy philanthropists all who believe they understand what is wrong with public schools, the teaching profession, teacher education, and colleges of education. At the local level, you are pressured by school district administration to prepare teachers, leaders, and other school personnel to work in demanding environments, often with diverse student populations and with children living in poverty. Your central university administration calls on you not only to respond to these critiques but also to build online programs, streamline or restructure administrative units within the college, and increase credit production, since your budgeting formula may be guided by the extent to which your credit hour production rises and falls. It may be tempting to assess educator preparation programs within your colleges privileging those high credit hour production programs clearly identified with content areas such as mathematics, science, literacy, special education, and elementary education and graduate programs tied to certification areas—leadership, school psychology, and counselor preparation. Social Foundations faculty with their small programs or few course offerings may be easy targets for reduction and elimination. This letter is an invitation to pause briefly to consider the value of social foundations, as well as contributions social foundations faculty can make to your college as a whole.

What is Social Foundations and How Does It Contribute to Educator Preparation?

If you were not trained in the field of social foundations, you may not have a deep understanding of the scope of the field, particularly given the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline. Foundations scholars are trained across a broad range of social science disciplines, bringing the knowledge and tools of those disciplines to the study of education and schooling. Within a multidisciplinary group at Teachers College in the late 1920s and 1930s, early founders of the field including Harold Rugg, George Counts, and R. Freeman Butts, believed:

that all teachers should become students of the issues of contemporary society and culture and of the relations of these issues to questions of educational aims, methods, and programs. They also believe that a cross-disciplinary approach was conducive to adequate treatment of these issues. In keeping with this thinking, they brought the psychological, sociological, economic, historical, and philosophical professors together into a division of educational foundations.⁸

In keeping with these early roots of the field, social foundations scholars today examine the sociocultural, political, historical, and philosophic contexts of schooling. We use interpretive, norma-

8. Benne, Kenneth D., personal correspondence to Steve Tozer (January 10, 1984), cited in Tozer & Miretzky, “Social Foundations, Teaching Standards”: 7.

tive, and critical perspectives to examine the contexts in which educators work. We examine how educational policies and practices impact teaching and learning. We look at inequities in schooling based on race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities. Many of us use historical, philosophical, or qualitative research methods to examine the complex contexts of schooling. In our classes we engage students in looking at school organizations and contexts, the communities from which their P-12 students come, and the values and beliefs embedded in educational policies, curriculum, and assessment. The 2012 revision of the *Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies*, articulates a concise list of belief statements for the work we do with pre-service and in-service educators as follows:

1. As Social Foundations faculty, we believe that education is a public good and essential to the cultivation of a democratic civil society. We believe that the system of schooling should be based on principles of equitable access and that every individual has a right to educational opportunities which are just, fair and democratic. We believe our work should foster the exploration of diverse epistemological frameworks, the interrogation of dominant assumptions, and the critical and systematic analysis of power structures.
2. As Social Foundations faculty, we believe we must work against narrow conceptions of education and schooling, which marginalize or otherwise minimize the knowledge, culture, and experiences of some populations within our society while privileging others.
3. As Social Foundations faculty, we have a responsibility to the field, to pre- and in-service educators, and to the students and communities in which they work. We believe in cultivating knowledge and skills for building ecologically sustainable societies at local and global levels. We believe we have a responsibility to provide our teacher and other school personnel candidates with the conceptual and practical tools to advocate for their own students and communities, and assist them in understanding how their work is influenced by social and structural forces, school and community contexts, and their own life histories and belief systems.⁹

You might ask, what you can do with this set of idealistic beliefs? How could they possibly assist you in responding to external pressures to downsize, restructure, become more nimble to compete with profit and non-profit online educational entities, and at the same time, increase credit hour production? How, you ask, can social foundations as a field contribute pragmatically to the educator preparation programs in my college, especially with the pressure to produce teachers with high content knowledge as measured by scores on state licensure tests? You are required to report these pass rates to the state and accrediting agencies, and will no doubt be compared to sister institutions. In addition, you are required to report teacher retention up to the fifth year after graduation. While you must rely on your liberal arts and pedagogical methods faculty to ensure high quality content and pedagogical content knowledge, the preparation provided by social foundations faculty can contribute to retention of teachers in the field, if they are able to work with teacher candidates beyond an introductory stand alone course offered prior to entry into the program.

Teacher candidates are primarily concerned with survival as new professionals. They want the tools and techniques of the craft. They are focused on classroom management and les-

9. American Educational Studies Association. *Draft Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies* (2012).

son planning. However, as they are increasingly exposed in classroom practice in the later stages of your programs and experience their own classrooms upon graduation, they are challenged by schools, communities, and children outside their own experiences and who may look nothing like them. In 2010 44% of all children in the U.S. lived in low-income families; another 21% lived in poor families. Of these, Black, American Indian, and Hispanic children represent more than one-half of low-income children. By contrast, as you know from looking at the students in your college, the teaching force is predominantly female (84%) and white (84%, a drop over previous years due to alternative preparation routes).¹⁰

How can social foundations faculty and courses address the retention issue? The expertise of foundations faculty whether they specialize in history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, or work across these fields as many today do, they have a depth of understanding of schooling and education more broadly within social, cultural, political, historical, and philosophical contexts. They have much to offer education candidates as they move into field placements, student teaching, and first year teaching positions to further a more realistic view not only the profession of teaching and organization of schooling, but what to expect in daily interactions with students, families, and communities, thus feeling more prepared for these complexities. Yet, in most colleges today, the foundations courses are offered as introduction to education in the first and second years of college life. Foundations faculty often engage their students in community-based efforts, but these do not take the place of looking at the contexts of schools and communities throughout their preparation programs.

More innovative models have social foundations courses placed at the capstone end of teacher education programs when students are faced with challenges of understanding diversity, impoverished communities, the teaching profession, the social organization of schools, politics of education, issues of school law, etc. They are asked to prepare professional portfolios containing teaching philosophy statements. What better place to have social foundations faculty work with these new professionals assisting them to bring together their content knowledge, pedagogical practices with children and other teachers in school settings. The Standards¹¹ cited above provide specific guidance on ways social foundations can contribute to educator preparation particularly as candidates go into the field as follows:

1. Understand and apply disciplinary knowledge from the humanities and social sciences to interpret the meanings of education and schooling in diverse cultural contexts.
2. Understand and apply normative perspectives on education and schooling.
3. Understand and apply critical perspectives on education and schooling.
4. Understand how moral principles related to democratic institutions can inform and direct schooling practice, leadership, and governance.
5. Understand the full significance of diversity in a democratic society and how that bears on instruction, school leadership, and governance.
6. Understand how philosophical and moral commitments affect the process of evaluation at all levels of schooling practice, leadership, and governance.
7. Critically analyze current educational policies and practices at national, state, and local levels and their impacts on teaching, learning, and the assessment of P-16 students.¹²

10. C. Emily Feistritz, *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information, 2011).

11. American Educational Studies Association. *Draft Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies* (2012).

12. *Ibid.*, 4.

With a richer, more fully developed understanding of the complexity of how schools work and the roles of educators in those schools, pre-service teachers can develop and hone the tools to successfully navigate their way into the profession as well as stay in it.

Finding Social Foundations in Colleges of Education, the Challenge of Credit Hour Production, and Programmatic Possibilities

With the typical requirements of just one introductory social foundations course, undergraduate students have limited opportunities to engage with or take courses from social foundations faculty. As a result these students are not often exposed to social foundations as a field of study for graduate work. It is small wonder these programs are under enrolled. In thinking back to my own experiences a teacher with degrees in elementary education and special education, I was unaware of the field of social foundations until a colleague suggested I apply for a doctoral program at the University of Cincinnati. I had previously found intellectual stimulation in sociology and anthropology courses in my undergraduate education while majoring in elementary education. The doctoral program enabled me to revisit those disciplines and social foundations of education more broadly as I developed a greater depth to my understanding of the schooling. My colleagues in the field tell similar stories.

As a dean, you might encourage and support faculty across the college to develop ways for students to become engaged with social foundations faculty. In addition to the previously mentioned notion of flipping the required social foundations courses to the end of teacher education, I offer the suggestions below to serve the purpose not only of recruiting potential students to graduate programs in foundations but to meet your pressing need to increase the college's credit hour production. At the same time, courses and programs can be built collaboratively across disciplines and colleges in the university to demonstrate your college's campus leadership. A few course suggestions:

- Undergraduate and honors courses offered to count as required social science or diversity courses in the general core curriculum.
- Seminars for freshman or honors students focused on current issues in education for non-majors. Not only would such a course engage students in a deeper understanding of education in the U.S. as potential parents and voters, it may recruit them to the profession.
- Courses in comparative education as study abroad courses.

At the programmatic level, Tozer and Miretzky argued for integration of social foundations throughout preparation programs:

First, if social-context perspectives are vitally important to practice, to practical theorizing, and to performance assessment, then teachers would benefit if social foundations (like psychological foundations) learning were to permeate the entire professional preparation program. Social foundations faculty would need to work together with their colleagues in a genuine learning community to make this happen optimally for all.¹³

Over the past two decades, numerous examples of teacher education programs have been developed that reflect this view and go further to model programs in which social foundations per-

13. Tozer & Miretzky, "Social Foundations, Teaching Standards": 23-24.

spectives are central to their development and implementation. Models of teacher education programs built with social foundations as the central focus include such as the Urban Multicultural Teacher Education Program at the University of Tennessee and the XCED program developed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks as an educational anthropology based program offered in remote sites for indigenous communities.¹⁴ In addition, Butin's volume offers numerous accounts of educator preparation programs where social foundations plays a central role in the content as foundations faculty work in collaboration with pedagogy faculty to integrate the content across the program.¹⁵ While such a program may not be feasible in your college, less comprehensive programs may be possible, such as the following:

- A minor in social foundations of education for either teacher education or students from other fields with the possibility of recruiting students to your teacher education programs.
- An interdisciplinary certificate program in diversity or multicultural education to appeal to a campus wide audience at either undergraduate or graduate levels.

I turn next to the contributions of social foundations faculty to leadership positions within colleges of education.

Social Foundations and NCATE Accreditation

As a dean, national accreditation pressures are a continual concern. You have either just finished an accreditation visit or are preparing for the next one. Increasing levels of accountability require more and more of your college resources, possibly in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, not only in the form of financial support for accreditation and assessment staff, but to support release time for faculty engaged in their large college wide efforts.

In the 1980s, the American Educational Studies Association, a primary national organization for the field of social foundations of education, recognized the need to become involved with and support NCATE accreditation efforts nationally. AESA became a member organization. Its members were deeply involved not only in the creation of the NCATE standards but in the Unit Accreditation Board, NCATE's governing board, as well as in staffing NCATE Board of Examiners teams. Erskine Dottin, a social foundations scholar, is well known for his contributions to NCATE's requirement for an institutional conceptual framework as the foundation for meeting all the NCATE standards. The NCATE standards defines conceptual framework:

A conceptual framework establishes the shared vision for a unit's efforts in preparing educators to work in P-12 schools. It provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability. The conceptual framework is knowledge-based, articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the unit and/or institutional mission, and continuously evaluated. The conceptual framework provides the bases that describe the unit's intellectual philosophy and institutional standards, which distinguish graduates of one institution from those of another.¹⁶

14. deMarrais, Lewis, & Oran, "Educating Teachers for an Urban/Multicultural Context;" deMarrais, Oran, & Lewis, "Social Foundations as a Foundation for Literacy Instruction;" Barbara Harrison, *Collaborative Programs in Indigenous Communities: From Fieldwork to Practice* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2001).

15. Butin, *Teaching Social Foundations of Education*.

16. National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, "Standards," (2013). <http://www.ncate.org/standards/tabid/107/Default.aspx>.

In addition, knowledge and abilities central to the field of social foundations of education are woven throughout the standards themselves. For example, in the supporting documentation for NCATE Standard 1: *Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions*, social foundations plays a central role:

Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals need a sound professional knowledge base to understand learning and the context of schools, families, and communities. They understand and are able to apply knowledge related to the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education, professional ethics, law, and policy....They understand language acquisition; cultural influences on learning; exceptionalities; diversity of student populations, families, and communities; and inclusion and equity in classrooms and schools.¹⁷

In this section of the standards, readers are referred to “Information about what candidates should understand and be able to apply related to the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education may be obtained from the standards promulgated by the Council for Social Foundations of Education.”¹⁸

Perhaps most clearly, social foundations contributions are realized in NCATE Standard 4 Diversity as follows:

The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates can demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity. Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations, including higher education and P–12 school faculty, candidates, and students in P–12 schools.¹⁹

The supporting explanation for this standard addresses the issue raised about concerning the disconnect between today’s student population and the current teaching workforce. This portion of the standards is worth citing at length:

One of the goals of this standard is the development of educators who can help all students learn or support their learning through their professional roles in schools. This goal requires educators who can reflect multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students and families from diverse populations. Therefore, the unit has the responsibility to provide opportunities for candidates to understand diversity and equity in the teaching and learning process. Coursework, field experiences, and clinical practice must be designed to help candidates understand the influence of culture on education and acquire the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for all students. Candidates learn about exceptionalities and inclusion, English language learners and language acquisition, ethnic/racial cultural and linguistic differences, and gender differences, and the impact of these factors on learning. Proficien-

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

cies, including those related to professional dispositions and diversity, are drawn from the standards of the profession, state, and institution. Candidates are helped to understand the potential impact of discrimination based on race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and language on students and their learning. Proficiencies related to diversity are identified in the unit's conceptual framework. They are clear to candidates and are assessed as part of the unit's assessment system.²⁰

As NCATE and TEAC merge to become CAEP with a new set of educator preparation standards, this same focus on understanding diversity, the sociocultural contexts of schools and communities remains clearly stated in the organization's emerging standards: "The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) will ensure that programs prepare future teachers to know the content of the subject(s) they will teach, know how to teach that content effectively to students from diverse groups and demonstrate their positive impact on P-12 student learning in diverse school settings."²¹ Given these national standards, your social foundations faculty and their courses and programs are critical to the college's ability to meet NCATE standards and in the future, CAEP, particularly as related to the study of diverse student populations, understanding the contexts of schools and communities, and the impact of these contexts on teaching and learning. In addition, I encourage you to tap the resources of these faculty in leading accreditation efforts in the college. They are often particularly skilled in leading efforts to develop or revise your existing conceptual framework, articulate the college's ability to meet standards related to those sections of the standards cited above. Finally, I turn to the potential contributions of social foundations faculty in the educational policy arena.

Social Foundations and College Leadership

Faculty in the field of social foundations have contributed much to the leadership in colleges of education serving as deans, associate deans, and department heads. The first two deans I worked under, Gerry Mohatt at the University of Alaska and Richard Wisniewski at the University of Tennessee were both trained in educational anthropology and sociology and used these perspectives in leading their respective colleges. Wisniewski's 1979 paper written for the Society of Professors of Education Occasional Papers Series argues for using anthropological and sociological perspectives including ethnographic methods in understanding college of education leadership at the dean's level.²² Social foundations faculty bring a broad interdisciplinary social science perspective to college leadership. Over the past decades in the U.S. many social foundations faculty have served in college leadership roles as department chairs, associate deans, and deans and have provided leadership at the national level in organizations focused on educator preparation such as the Holmes Group and the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. In addition to these formal administrative positions, social foundations faculty contribute leadership to accreditation reviews at local, state, and national levels.

20. Ibid.

21. National Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, "Standards," (2013). www.caebsite.org/standards.html.

22. Richard Wisniewski, "The Dean of Education and the Looking Glass Self," *Occasional Papers, #11, Society of Professors of Education*, ed. James Merritt (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, 1979).

College Leadership in Educational Policy

You cannot be successful dean in today's climate without vigilant attention to the educational policy landscape at local, state, and national levels and often find yourself alone in tracking and responding to policy demands. I have heard deans bemoan the lack of knowledge and interest faculty have in regard to current educational policies as well as the state and national conversations related to both the critiques of educator preparation and the responses of policymakers. However, faculty are often too busy to track current policies matters given their responsibilities for teaching classes and mentoring students in their fields, engaging in research, and responding to various accountability requirements from NCATE, state program standards, annual performance evaluations, and tenure and/or promotion. With few faculty in a college of education focused on educational policy as a field of study itself, the dean's office has limited resources for the tracking, interpretation, and critique of educational policy at state and national levels. Social foundations faculty, typically prepared in their preparation programs to focus on educational policy and its impact on practice, remain current on the issues and policies and can be invaluable in providing an in-depth picture of the policy landscape deans must know in their leadership of colleges. As a dean you might work with your foundations faculty to provide critical reviews of policies, track current legislative initiatives, and communicate these in evidence-based policy briefs not only for the college leadership, but also for faculty colleagues to create a more informed college of education. Many social foundations faculty enjoy this type of work and would welcome an invitation to contribute in these ways.

Conclusion

I challenge you to assess the extent to which your educator preparation programs truly meet national standards including those that require candidates to acquire a:

sound professional knowledge base to understand learning and the context of schools, families, and communities. They understand and are able to apply knowledge related to the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education, professional ethics, law, and policy...[They] can reflect multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students and families from diverse populations.²³

Is yours a college where the social foundations of education has been marginalized to a 200 level course or reduced to a course called Introduction to Teaching taught by faculty trained in other fields? Where, under pressure to increase credit hour production within departments, graduate programs no longer require foundations courses? If so, how can you meet these national standards for preparing high quality educators? Today's teachers, leaders, and other school personnel not only need the tools and techniques of their major fields, but the abilities to apply sociocultural, political, philosophic, and historical perspectives to their work, to reflect on the values and beliefs they hold, and to understand and engage with children and adults in communities in meaning, productive learning. To these ends, I urge you to partner with your social foundations faculty in the leadership of the college and its programs.

23. National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, "Standards"

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