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**Book Review**  
(October 2008)

Freeman-Moir, J., & Scott, A. (Eds.).(2007). *Shaping the future: Critical essays on teacher education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. 261 + vi page; ISBN: 987-90-8790-157-8

The book is a collection of fourteen articles on teacher education and one introductory essay. Eleven of the articles have been published in a previous edition of the collection with a different publisher (Scott & Freeman-Moir, 2000), although, as the editors write in their introduction of the reviewed edition, “a number of the authors have taken the opportunity to completely rewrite their chapters, two have added postscripts, while others have indicated that their pieces capture these crucial debates at particular moments in recent history” (p. 1).<sup>1</sup>

Rather than discuss the fourteen chapters separately, I will structure my review of the collection by outlining some of the central themes of teacher education that are addressed in the book. The treatment of these themes in different chapters of the book make it a valuable read for those interested in a critical perspective on central ideas and forces framing the shaping of teacher education in, at least, the USA, England, Australia, and New Zealand.

A central theme that stands out in this collection is the socio-political contexts of and their implications for teacher education in England, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The authors addressing this theme point particularly to three aspects of change in the socio-political context of teacher education (in those countries): changes in policy and practice that see governments take stronger control of teacher education, driven by concerns for maintaining an adequate supply of qualified teachers and the accountability for teachers and their preparation; derived from the first point, the development and implementation of standards of competency for teacher education programs and their graduates; and the transplant of a “market-style framework of public management” (p. 43) into education, leading to an emphasis of “competition, productivity and market-based management” (p. 43) in general schooling and, by implication, in the education of teachers. Such an analysis for the four countries can be found in particular in the first four chapters, which, according to the introduction, were written for the collection specifically to outline the socio-political contexts of and their implications for teacher education in England, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, respectively. Those chapters are now almost a decade old, nevertheless, with continued economic globalization and its impact on all areas of social life at national levels their relevance is greater than ever. Although I do share very much the view underlying these four as well as some of the other chapters of the great relevance and importance of the socio-political context for schooling and teacher education, I wished that some of the authors had provided more evidence for their claims about how the socio-political contexts frame and shape teacher education, rather than just referring to or quoting other authors that make the same or similar claims. Such evidence would be of great help to the general reader of the book, since it can safely be assumed that most readers will not be familiar with all of the national contexts discussed in the collection.

Another theme discussed in several of the chapters deals with the notion of teacher professionalism. In their critique of social issues in and educational imperatives for teacher education in Australia, Parry and O'Brian critique the new notion of professionalism that has sprung from the socio-political changes just described. Such professionalism is characterized by a politicization of teacher competencies and professional standards of teaching, reflected in the move toward a nationalization of those standards through national accreditation and towards a bureaucratization of those standards and the accreditation process. This notion of professionalism, the authors argue, has an imbalanced focus in teacher education on the acquisition of key competencies and professional standards, neglecting the broader educational aims and purposes and how those competencies can contribute to a socially just society and to productive responding with new ideas and practices to rapid changes in social contexts. The authors hold against "the new professionalism" a notion of professionalism that is rooted in more local control of standards within the profession itself and that considers the broader educational aims and purposes when considering relevant competencies for the teaching profession. Ivan Snook, a scholar from New Zealand, adds to this perspective the criticism of what he considers narrow competency-based models of teacher education to the neglect of conceptualizing teaching as a learned profession, which he understands as a profession in which foundational studies (called "contextual studies" by the author) are central to the education of the professionals.

Landon Beyer raises very similar points in his article, in which he argues against the current push for centralized performance standards for teachers in the USA under the notion of "a new professionalism". Interestingly, and to the credit of the editors, the collection of articles includes also a slightly revised reprint of an article by Linda Darling-Hammond (2006), who is a proponent of the type of new professionalism that Beyer discusses critically and who elaborates in her article on this new professionalism. Generally, it is one of the appreciated features of the collection that the authors provide the readers with articles that are in tension with each other in one or more respects, creating a sense of the 'uncertainty' around teacher education that two other chapters in the collection see as the condition of our (post-)modern times. Erica McWilliam in her article "Unlearning Pedagogy" argues against what she calls "seven pedagogical habits" that we need to unlearn in these times of greater uncertainty. In another chapter Phillip Capper and his collaborators even argue for a shift towards a "skills paradigm for conditions of uncertainty" that would require a complete transformation of schools as they now exist and the understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Another example of 'views in tension' provided by different chapters in the collection is connected with another central theme of the book, namely the way in which the views teacher candidates hold when they enter teacher education programs are considered in the curriculum and pedagogy in these programs. A number of the chapters argue for particular curricula for teacher education programs. For instance, Ivan Snook argues for the importance of foundations courses in teacher education programs, and Linda Darling-Hammond develops a complete outline for the curricular structure for "21<sup>st</sup>-century teacher education". In both those cases, curriculum is established *externally*, without consideration of the particularities of the teacher candidates in the program. Two chapters, however, argue for the centrality of that particularity for the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education programs. Rathgen, in her article "Why Teacher Education Needs a Feminist Core" argues that one reason why teacher education needs feminist thinking is that it is feminist thinking that brings the consideration of the personal into the learning to teach and, thus, teacher education. From a different perspective, Richard Tinning in his article argues for a "modest critical pedagogy" in teacher education, which is characterized by *the stance* of critical pedagogy combined with an *enacted* pedagogy that tries to connect with the teacher candidates as learners the way they come into the teacher education program. The most consequential approach towards a student-directed curriculum for teacher education, however, is presented in the chapter by Michael

Connelly and Jean Clandinin, for whom the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) provides the basis for the answer to the question what teachers should be able to know and do.

It is particularly for two reasons that I think that this (re-)publication of articles on teacher education issues provides a wonderful challenge to all those interested in central issues of teacher education program reform and design. The first reason is the variety of perspectives that this collection provides on the question of what does and should "shape the future" of teacher education (as the title suggests), from a focus on the socio-political context of and for teacher education programs, over issues of the curriculum and pedagogy for teacher education, to issues of how cultural practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have changed (in many countries) and, thus, the needs for certain kinds of educational engagement and its implication for teacher education.

The second reason is that the different national backgrounds and foci of the writers provide the reader with a better understanding of the discourses about teacher education in at least the four countries England (GB), USA, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> Especially in North America, the focus of attention is almost always limited to the North American context, while a greater awareness of what is going on in other countries can be of particular interest if one shares the view of the book's editors of the importance of the socio-political framework for education and teacher education. For quite some time now, the need to consider the international (economic and political) forces on national contexts for (teacher) education cannot be ignored anymore.

## References

- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, Linda (2006). Constructing 21<sup>st</sup>-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300-314.
- Scott A., & Freeman-Moir J. (Eds), (2000). *Tomorrow's teachers: International and critical perspectives on teacher education*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For references to and quotations from the book reviewed I will only refer to page numbers.

<sup>2</sup> All authors are scholars from one of those four countries, with the exception of the Canadian scholars Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin, whose chapter, though, does not take socio-political contexts for teacher education into consideration.

<sup>3</sup> With Connelly and Clandinin representing a Canadian connection, I am wondering why there is no chapter included that provides insights into the socio-political context for teacher education in Canada.

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