

# Placing Practitioner Knowledge at the Center of Teacher Education

reviewed by [Jenice L. View](#) – January 24, 2015

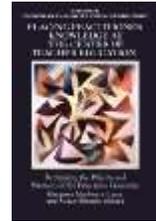
**Title:** Placing Practitioner Knowledge at the Center of Teacher Education

**Author(s):** Margaret Macintyre Latta & Susan Wunder (Eds.)

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*Placing Practitioner Knowledge at the Center of Teacher Education: Rethinking the Policies and Practices of the Education Doctorate* is one of five publications describing the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and its efforts to redefine the education doctorate. In particular, CPED seeks to distinguish the EdD from the PhD in education by redesigning the EdD as an assertively action-oriented research process involving all of the education players—doctoral student, university faculty and scholars, school districts, cooperating PK-12 classroom teachers, PK-12 parents, taxpayers, employers, and policy makers—working towards solving the “real problems of practice having to do with teaching and learning” (p. 41). CPED participants perceive themselves to be “policymakers from the middle” (p. 295), as well as teacher educators invested in practitioner knowledge. The book is an edited volume that provides a broad overview of the various strategies and outcomes from the first phase of the CPED consortium in 2007.

In the first and final sections, Margaret Macintyre Latta and Susan Wunder provide an overall description of the impetus for the CPED consortium as well as key ideas from the book, including “attention to inquiry, professional identity and programmatic change; involvement of professional development schools; ideas for program improvement; importance of faculty involvement and investment; commitment to equity and social justice; importance of CPED as a source for critical friends; and commitment to preparation of leaders in teacher education positions, be they clinical faculty, classroom teachers, school district advisors, or community educators” (p. 294).

Chapters Five, Ten, and Thirteen focus on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as an early site for experimentation and change. Heston and Swidler argue the value of practitioner inquiry and contrast it with traditional research methods. In sharpening the definition of *problems of practice*, they set the stage for Elaine Chan to describe the experiences of Nebraska-Lincoln EdD students conducting research in their own work settings. The challenges of balancing teaching and research, the importance of maintaining an inquiry stance, and the skill required to hold practitioner knowledge front and center were essential for examining the complexities of teaching. These

complexities helped prepare graduates for “earnest, thoughtful, collaborative discussions” (p. 247) about the nature of the teaching profession.

Eric Watts and David Imig argue in Chapter Two that one important element of the EdD should be to prepare clinical faculty to serve as linking and bridging roles between PK-12 schools and schools of education—ultimately leading to a clinical professoriate. This clinical professoriate would enjoy significant rank, status, and reward after undergoing special training to serve as advisers, critics, and liaisons between the campus and the PK-12 schools. The clinical professors would help train pre-service teachers to meet the accountability demands of contemporary PK-12 schools, and draw on research and practice to expand school-level definitions of student achievement.

Three of the chapters describe the institutional change process at Rutgers University that led to a reconsideration of the EdD in conjunction with the CPED Consortium (pp. 75-88), and offer a more detailed description from strong advocates for “moving a whole school” (pp. 163-178). Chapter Fourteen acknowledges the resistance to institutional changes by claiming that the transformation constituted a less-than-full paradigm shift after three years of planning, and that the program was “stronger on structural than pedagogical change” (p. 175). Finally, Ryan, Belzer and Heuschkel describe the process at Rutgers University for “integrating practice into an EdD program in a research focused university” (pp. 281-292).

Three chapters describe the professional development school model used at Penn State University to uplift the practitioner knowledge of school-based teacher educational specialists, such as university supervisors and mentors for pre-service teachers (pp. 105-124). Other aspects include advocating the value of professional development schools as laboratories of practice for the next generation of teacher educators (pp. 149-162) by embedding doctoral candidates directly into classrooms and schools as active participants, and describing the rotations that Penn State EdD students undergo, including the teacher rotation, the research rotation, the supervision rotation, and the leadership rotation (pp. 249-260).

Several chapters are “how-to” case studies; the programs at Washington State University, the University of Denver, and the University of Kansas are highlighted in some detail. Additionally, a chapter is devoted to Lynn University’s use of critical friends to assist in their curricular reform and to provide external assistance in the change process of a small institution.

Jill Alexa Perry provides a thorough history of efforts to improve professional training in the field of education, including the first PhD in education offered by Teachers College at Columbia University in 1893 and the 80 years of raging education doctorate debate prompted by the first EdD offered at Harvard University in 1920. Most telling is the articulation by former Teachers College president Arthur Levine, in 2007, of the six disincentives that might prevent 21<sup>st</sup> century schools of education from making a distinction between the PhD and the EdD, which are largely related to the money and

institutional power conferred by large-scale practitioner EdD programs, and the prestige conferred by the smaller scale scholarly PhD programs (p. 66). Nevertheless, CPED is a growing movement: in Phase 2 (2010-2013), eight California State University campuses and 27 additional universities joined the consortium, and the consortium decided to both expand and sustain the organization by becoming a 501c3 non-for-profit organization at the start of Phase 3 in 2014.

It is important to consider what has changed in the education landscape since the book's publication. Graduate school enrollment has declined by 2.3% between 2011 and 2012, following a 0.8% decline in the previous year, even as first-time enrollment in graduate education programs has begun to increase (Allum, 2014). The PK-12 teaching corps has a growing number of staff groomed through alternative certification processes (e.g., Teach for America). A fluctuating—but large—number of states, territories, and Department of Defense schools have adopted the Common Core State Standards that intend to provide “consistent, real-world learning goals ... to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life.” (Common Core States Standards Initiative, 2015).

Foregrounding practitioner expertise, as promoted by the book and the CPED consortium, would seem to be an urgent necessity in the shifting worlds of education policy, research, and practice. To do so in the course of doctoral study does not mean the EdD is inferior to the “pure research” model of the PhD in education. In fact, this text convincingly argues that practitioner knowledge is poised to transform PK-20 education more positively and profoundly than many current efforts at educational research and reform.

## References

Allum, J. (2014). *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2003 to 2013*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools. Retrieved from [http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/GED\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/GED_report_2013.pdf)

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