THE MISSING LINKS IN TEACHER EDUCATION DESIGN

Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices

Volume 1

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THE MISSING LINKS IN TEACHER EDUCATION DESIGN

Developing a Multi-linked Conceptual Framework

Edited by

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DEDICATION

*To my mother, Olive, who has always been
my inspiration and comfort*

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Series Editor's Foreword

This series in Teacher Education: *Self-study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP)* sets out to illustrate a range of approaches to self-study of teaching and teacher education practices and to highlight the importance of teachers and teacher educators taking the lead in reframing and responding to their practice in order to foster genuine educational change. The series will complement the International Handbook of Self-study of Teaching and Teacher Education practices (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004) and create strong examples of self-study that will further define this important field of teaching and research.

As self-study is generally initiated by, and focused on, teachers, teacher educators and the relation to their students (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), there is an inevitable necessity to determine whether or not practice is consistent with the evolving ideals and theoretical perspectives espoused by participants. The research is improvement-aimed; participants wish to transform themselves first so that they might be better situated to help transform their students and the institutional and social contexts that surround and constrain them. Hence, self-studies of teacher education practices commonly demonstrate strong links between teaching, learning and program organization (and structure) as a search for enhanced teaching and learning about teaching is pursued. Not surprisingly then, Hoban's notion of *The Missing Links* makes an excellent beginning point to launch the series. In this book, Hoban offers a conceptualization crucial to the "what", "how" and "why" of teacher education programming.

THE MISSING LINKS

As Hoban makes clear in chapter one, the need to develop quality teachers in order to enhance the teaching and learning of students inevitably requires a close scrutiny of the ways in which teachers are educated about teaching and learning. Hoban does not suggest that his conceptualization is the one and only true way to consider the nature of teacher education programs. But, what he does do is draw particular attention to the purpose of teacher education and to remind us of the importance of responding to the complex nature of teaching and learning about teaching.

Hoban illustrates how research consistently concludes that a “conventional” approach to teacher education programming has little influence on the way that student teachers come to view teaching; much less impact their practice. Rather, what he suggests is that instead of focusing on the individual elements of a teacher education program that there is a need to pay much more attention to design. In so doing, he begins to articulate his multi-linked approach to teacher education design argued on the basis of teaching as a complex profession that can be neither taught, nor learnt, simplistically.

The way in which the book is structured then examines in detail each of the four nominated links that together comprise a coherent conceptual framework for teacher education program design. The four links are:

- conceptual links across the university curriculum;
- theory-practice links between school and university settings;
- social-cultural links amongst participants in the program;
- personal links that shape the identity of teacher educators.

Each of the links is illustrated through exemplars derived from studies in “real” teacher education programs where the issues under consideration are analyzed and portrayed in such a way as to build a solid understanding of the link itself. At the end of each section, the studies that have been used to illuminate important aspects of the particular link are then distilled into a coherent whole to more fully display the nature of that link for the reader.

The four links then frame the book as they help to bring to life the separate design features that, when combined, promote coherence in a teacher education program. Importantly, Hoban argues that by focusing on the links rather than the independent elements (that are so often the main area of attention in teacher education programs), that the dynamics of teaching can best be learned. Hence, through his conceptualization, the complexity of teaching and learning about teaching is more fully realized and the value of the knowledge of teacher education practices begins to stand out as crucial to the valuing of teacher education itself.

Although the book is set out in a logical and progressive fashion, this is not to suggest that it needs to be read from cover to cover in a linear fashion. Clearly, an interest in any of the four links is not negated by the need to read all that precedes, or follows, that link. In fact, the studies that combine to instantiate each of the links are, of themselves, interesting and insightful examinations of particular approaches, ideas and practices in teacher education. Thus, each of the chapters can indeed be read as stand alone studies in their own right just as the four links also stand alone as coherent and meaningful on their own. Yet, it is in combination that teacher education design is fully realized

and able to be appropriately responded to in a manner commensurate with Hoban's aspirations for the book as a whole.

Because Hoban maintains a strong focus on the individuals within a teacher education program (students, teachers and teacher educators), he (and his chapter authors) constantly remind us of the importance of the "self" and how it is that in educating the "self" that real insights into the complexity of teaching might emerge. Just as Berry (2004) draws attention to the notion of tensions in teaching and learning about teaching that are derived from understanding teaching as problematic, so too Hoban continually draws us back to the complexity of teaching to remind us of the difficulties created when applying simple solutions to intricate problems. And, it is on this basis that perhaps many of the "conventional" teacher education program structures and practices falter and why conceptualizing teacher education through a multi-linked approach is so important.

Hoban is not inherently critical of the good work and fine efforts of so many involved in, and concerned for, the world of teacher education. Rather, what he attempts to do through this book is to create an agenda for meaningful change so that the hopes and aspirations of all involved might be more fully realized.

Currently, it could well be argued, that teacher education reform is hampered by the predominance of a structural approach predicated on making the most of that which already exists; despite the obvious inadequacies. Hoban invites us to see the problem from a different perspective, to reframe (Schön, 1983) the situation and to approach it as one in which dynamic, as opposed to disconnected learning is pre-eminent.

There can be little doubt that by concentrating on Hoban's four main links that genuine program coherence might be achieved. Yet, importantly, it is the social and cultural connections that he is personally drawn to highlight. In binding the links so that a teacher education program coherently holds together, the connections between participants (teacher educators, student teachers and teachers) matters because of the ongoing influence of identity formation. Because social interaction between participants so dramatically impacts on relationships and practice, and if program design is to be dynamic and responsive to the complexity of the profession of teaching, then this link is one that can not be overlooked, or worse, avoided, in program design. Moreso, what Hoban would argue, is that the social and cultural connections need to be strengthened—for if this link is sufficiently tempered, program coherence will more likely be achieved.

In this book Hoban has forged the links that comprise his approach to designing teacher education programs. The scholars he has assembled and charged with explicating particular aspects of his links help to demonstrate

the extent to which research in teacher education is advancing. Such advancement is in response to the growing concern of participants for enhanced learning outcomes in teaching and learning about teaching; and is becoming increasingly evident internationally. Not surprisingly then, many of Hoban's chapter authors are themselves leaders in the field of self-study of teacher education practices (*S-STEP*) as their personal involvement in, and concern for, teacher education drives their own research and practice; and the emerging research agenda for teacher education itself.

It seems obvious then that this book, with so much to offer the world of teaching and learning about teaching, is most appropriate to launch a series that is designed to positively challenge the work of teacher education. I have great pleasure in commending this book to you and trust you find it not only interesting and thought provoking but that it becomes a catalyst for the development of coherent teacher education program *redesign* in your setting.

Research that influences practice and practice that influences research; that is an agenda worth pursuing. Hoban has offered the invitation, how do you choose to respond?

J. John Loughran

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