

EMERALD STUDIES IN TEACHER PREPARATION
IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS



Teacher Preparation in the United States

History, Current
Conditions, and Policy

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MARY-LOU BREITBORDE

Teacher Preparation in the United States

Emerald Studies in Teacher Preparation in National and Global Contexts

Series Editors: Teresa O'Doherty, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland; Judith Harford, University College Dublin, Ireland; and Thomas O'Donoghue, University of Western Australia, Australia

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To the memory of Louise Boyle Swiniarski, PhD, Professor of Education, global educator, teacher educator extraordinaire. Our friend and colleague, whose support for children's universal rights – to play and grow and learn in peace – lives on in the thousands of teachers and teacher educators she influenced around the world.

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Introduction

At the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, 50.7 million children are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Another 3.1 million children are enrolled in public charter schools and 5.7 million are enrolled in private schools (NCES, 2020). These children represent an increasingly diverse student population with 47.6% identifying as White, 15.2% Black, 26.7% Hispanic, 5.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3.8% two or more races (NCES, 2020). Approximately one in four of all public school students in the United States are immigrants, for a significant number of whom English is not their first language.

Today's American school-aged children find themselves in varied economic circumstances. In 2018, 18% of children under age 18, approximately 12.6 million children, were living in poverty (NCES, 2020). This number would have been significantly higher if the data were expanded to include children whose families' yearly income fell slightly above the official poverty line. Poverty rates, and economic hardships, clearly influence the academic achievement of students, their success in schooling, and overall general health.

Twenty-first century children display different learning abilities and challenges with regard to their formal studies. In 2018–2019, for example, 14% of public school students, or 7.1 million children, received special education services (NCES, 2020). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) reminds us that learning disabilities “may impact a student's ability to read, write, spell, think, speak, listen, or do mathematics” (CEC, 2021).

Wider events in communities and throughout the country also have shaped the learning of twenty-first century children, as well as their larger lives and sense of well-being. School shootings have resulted in political movements, and connected policies, focused on stricter gun control laws. The past few years have seen a significant rise in the use of opioids and in rates of addiction which have compromised the stability of families. Children in the United States also have witnessed mass protests unfold in response to continued systemic racist practices in the country. The murders of African Americans, at times in police custody, have made headlines and filled courts across the nation.

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, children in the United States and throughout the world saw the COVID-19 pandemic shutter their schools as teaching and learning moved to remote formats. For some children, the shutdown of schools and workplaces meant that they saw more of their parents and their siblings. Many were able to access appropriate tools successfully to engage in remote learning;

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they learned how to use new software and how to type faster. But other children were left alone at home without supervision or help and struggled to secure technology or find safe, quiet places to learn. Misinformation propagandized about the source of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans, including Asian American students.

Young people of the twenty-first century are growing up in increasingly challenging and complex circumstances. Through challenging times, they draw support from teachers and other professional educators. These are the individuals who guide them with formal academic learning experiences as well as with other social and emotional aspects of their lives. Drawing support from education professionals is something that children in the United States have been doing for hundreds of years. The contexts of life, work, and school have certainly changed, but common elements in the work of teachers have persevered. These common elements include a sense of the larger purposes connected to the teaching profession and a moral persistence that many teachers bring to their work with young people. The twenty-first century educator Rita Pierson, who conducted professional development workshops for thousands of teachers during her career, was well known for her view that, “We’re educators. We’re born to make a difference.”

The purpose of this book is to explore how teachers have been prepared in American history to work with young people, to understand and be responsive to their diverse circumstances, in order to help them live and learn. In this book, we highlight both the opportunities and challenges connected to teacher preparation initiatives during different periods in the United States. Formal teacher preparation is an undertaking that millions of individuals have pursued. In 2017–2018 alone, for example, 3.5 million full- and part-time practicing public school teachers were employed in the United States who had completed formal teacher preparation programs (NCES, 2020). Our aim in this book is to present an authentic, comprehensive account and analysis of the programs and routes to teaching which so many individuals have chosen to pursue.

It is difficult to identify a starting point for examining teacher preparation initiatives in the United States. For tens of thousands of years, meaningful educations took place in Native American and First Nation groups. Native teachers educated young people in the art and science of surviving, using and appreciating the Earth; and in the beliefs, practices and traditions of the group, using storytelling and other oral traditions, rites of passage, modeling, and observation. Some of these educational traditions were shared with the European colonists who arrived in the United States in the 1500s and 1600s. Disease, warfare, and racism, however, saw the educational traditions of the colonists dominate. These European colonial traditions shaped the teacher preparation and initiatives and programs that unfolded from the 1600s to the current day. For these reasons, the authors commence our history of teacher preparation programs with the early academies and seminaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and continue into the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century with the development of private, municipal, and state normal schools; teacher institutes; public and private colleges with education programs; and newer “alternative” models.

We open this book by offering a working definition of the term *teacher preparation program*, as well as provide a sense of the evolution of these programs from the 1600s, when very little, if any, formal preparation of teachers was required, to the contemporary context when a baccalaureate degree and licensure are minimum requirements to teach in public school. Connected to this timeline, and throughout this book, we explore the impulses (thematic threads) that have shaped teacher preparation programs. These threads center on (1) the wider historical, social and economic contexts, processes, and policies guiding teacher preparation programs, (2) the structure, content, and pedagogy of these programs, and (3) participant experiences, including issues of equity and accessibility. Also woven into this book are short biographies of diverse individuals who have influenced or have been affected by teacher programs at different historical periods and in various contexts. Philosopher of education Jane Roland [Martin \(2011\)](#), who reconceptualized our understanding of the transmission of education broadly defined, reflected on the encounters that occur between individuals and wider contexts and cultures. In these encounters, the capacities of an individual or individuals and the stock of a wider culture become yoked together. These encounters are both an instant of individual learning, as well as one of cultural transmission. Applying Martin's theory to our study of teacher preparation programs, we believe that while teacher preparation programs certainly are shaped by larger societal contexts and structures, we cannot divorce the stories of individuals who also are intricately connected to them. We include these stories to provide a more holistic understanding of the historical and contemporary contexts of teacher preparation programs and the threads that bind them.

Teacher Preparation Programs

The definition, or defining characteristics, of *teacher preparation programs* have changed and evolved over time in response to changing milieus and policies. In the contemporary context, teacher preparation programs prepare undergraduate and graduate students for licensure in a variety of fields, including early childhood, elementary and secondary education, as well as specialist roles. It is assumed that students in these programs have completed the minimum equivalent of a high school diploma prior to entering them. Contemporary teacher preparation programs are approved at the state level, demonstrating that candidates enrolled in them meet specific state standards. They encompass both content and pedagogical studies, as well as require mastery of teacher licensure tests. Pre-practicum and practicum experiences also are embedded into these programs. In addition, these programs may be accredited at the national level by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Attributes connected to contemporary teacher preparation programs reflect societal contexts which are joined powerfully to accountability movements. The term teacher preparation programs also are referred to as teacher education programs.

Historically, however, teacher preparation was less bound to state and national standards. When the roots of these programs were budding in the United States,

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they reflected more of a moral and religious focus, in addition to an academic and pedagogical one. The requirements of these programs were less defined and intense. Indeed, educational historian James Fraser (2007) wrote that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the majority of teachers actually had no formal preparation. “Teachers were simply hired by school boards seeking the best person willing to work for the low pay offered” (Fraser, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, the definition of teacher preparation initiatives in early contexts differs tremendously from the twenty-first century.

When the United States was developing as a young nation in the late 1700s, following the American Revolution, teacher preparation programs reflected a particular political context bound to the period. An example of this is seen in the state normal school movement, introduced in the 1830s to help prepare teachers to work with a growing school-age population in a young nation. The early state normal school programs were often only two years or less in length. A smaller number of these programs were three or four years in length. Though these programs, too, encompassed academic and pedagogical studies, a concern centered on the low-academic preparation of students who entered these programs, particularly in the nineteenth century (Herbst, 1989). Requirements were less structured than the contemporary context, though these students were assessed by a board of examiners. Many of the state normal schools eventually would develop into four-year state teacher colleges and then universities. A smaller number of these schools became high schools and community colleges.

Teacher institutes also flourished in mid 1800s and usually met once or twice a year for a period of two to four weeks (Ogren, 2005). These were considered teacher preparation programs, but often lacked substantial content. These were not guided by local or state requirements. Various private colleges and universities began to offer teacher preparation programs, starting in the nineteenth century and increasing in the twentieth century. A sequential review of teacher preparation programs reveals how these initiatives expanded and evolved over the past 400+ years, as well as how defining characteristics changed to meet new contexts.

Research Methodology

Our approach to writing this book included historical research through which we examined primary and secondary sources connected to teacher preparation programs. Primary sources included school catalogs, educational speeches, committee reports, and student journals. Secondary sources included academic journal articles and books related to the field of teacher education. Our research also included document analysis connected to teacher preparation programs in the contemporary context. Some of the documents that we reviewed included reports from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). While undertaking this research we looked for themes that emerged related to teacher preparation programs, as well as outliers. We searched for the stories of

individuals who significantly shaped teacher preparation programs in the United States and/or were impacted by them.

Format of the Book

This book is divided into two sections. Part One focuses on the historical contexts and policies of teacher preparation programs in the United States. Part Two focuses on the contemporary circumstances and policies shaping teacher preparation programs. Within these two parts, there are six chapters.

Part One

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the colonial era and early national period when formal teacher preparation programs had not yet been implemented in the United States. There was an assumption that if one was educated enough to know as much as an eighth grader, and if one could keep a classroom of multi-age children, including farm boys who are 14+ years old, under control, then one could teach. This changed in the early nineteenth century with the growth of the population and the need to educate children for a new country and national language and culture. At this time upper class women increasingly sought a formal education. There were new female seminaries whose purpose was to prepare women to use their “true womanhood” – their presumably higher character and disciplined ways – to educate children either in the home as mothers or in formal schools as teachers. Chapter 1 highlights the influence of Samuel Read Hall, Joseph Emerson, Catharine Beecher, Emma Willard, Mary Lyon, Myrtilla Miner, and others, who established schools for this purpose and for the expanding country.

Chapter 2 analyzes formal teacher education in the United States starting in the 1830s with the commencement of state normal schools. It examines how the state normal schools reflected the political and social contexts of a new nation. It examines the schedule and length of teacher preparation programs in the nineteenth century, connected curriculum, model schools where practice teaching occurred, and the informal networks that formed among students. It highlights the movement through which teacher education expanded throughout the South and West during the nineteenth century. It explores the unique contexts of these areas and the factors that shaped them; for example, the quest for an American identity; the role of women in society; the growth of state responsibility; early immigration; slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction; and the White settlement of the West. This chapter also examines how the growth of the state normal schools in the US drew attention from representatives from other countries, including Argentina and Japan, who wanted to replicate the movement. This chapter features a biographical sketch of Horace Mann and information about Henry Barnard. Biographies of nineteenth century normal school graduates Mary Swift, Olivia Davidson, and Charlotte Forten also are highlighted.

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Chapter 3 examines the dual contexts of the post-Reconstruction Jim Crow era and the Progressive Education movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It describes as well the evolution and destiny of normal schools as higher education grew and transformed in the United States. The chapter analyzes changes in educational methods and materials in response to research and developments in the new disciplines of psychology and sociology. Biographies of Progressive teacher educators John Dewey and Fanny Jackson Coppin are included in this chapter.

Chapter 4 spotlights the mid-to-late twentieth century and how teacher education evolved during this time. It showcases the influence of the Civil Rights movement, War on Poverty, arms race, and space race on teacher preparation programs. It explores the growth of STEM education, multicultural education, special education, and peace education. Biographies of influential teacher educators during this period including James Banks, Geoffrey Canada, Eleanor Duckworth, Jaime Escalante, Maxine Greene, Ian Harris, Sonia Nieto, Nel Noddings, and Christa McAuliffe are highlighted in this chapter.

Part Two

Chapter 5 explores the contexts of twenty-first century teacher preparation programs in the United States. It examines federal legislation that shaped teacher preparation programs, transitioning from the twentieth century into the twenty-first century. This includes Goals 2000, Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). It examines the length of teacher preparation programs, curriculum, and connected licensure requirements. It explores the roles of state departments of education in approving teacher preparation programs, as well as the national accrediting role of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). It looks at national organizations such as the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE). The impact that diverse geographical contexts have on contemporary teacher preparation programs are explored, as well as controversies over the relative place of standards and assessment in teacher education and in the public schools. Featured teacher educators in this chapter include James Comer and Linda Darling-Hammond.

Chapter 6, the final chapter of the book, reviews the challenges facing teacher education at present and proposes policy recommendations to address them. Issues discussed include the disparity between who are the students in today's US and who are their teachers, the looming shortage of teachers in particular places and fields, and the recognition that attention to conditions in families, communities, and the larger society must be included in the business of schools. Recommendations target antiracist curricula and culturally sustaining pedagogies; holistic knowledge of students; and the need to prepare teachers to teach in a fast-changing society and a globally connected world.

Formal teacher preparation in the United States has a robust and varied history intimately connected to the robust history of this relatively young country

and to its ideals and realities. The book describes the forward movement to formalize and professionalize the work of teachers whose work extended to increasing populations of increasingly diverse children and families. As the lens of teacher education and education policy widens, we present a history that extends the story into the twenty-first century, a time of crises that, we hope, will spawn a clearer view of our problems, our accomplishments, and our possibilities.

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