

Investing in communities of scholar-practitioners

Summary of article

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The formation of Communities of Scholar Practitioners (CSPs) are integral to the workings of the renewed teacher education program at UBC Okanagan (UBCO). These communities are intended to purposefully bring practitioners and researchers together and, thus, theory and practice together. The separation of practitioners from researchers, theory from practice, is documented for over 100 years in the research literature as being unproductive. The design of the CSPs assumes that effective school contexts, discerning leadership, and good teaching, lives at the intersections of theory with practice. Through attending to such intersections, educators come to understand their identity as scholar-practitioners--continually questioning what they are doing and why, theorizing their practices and practicing their theories. Envisioning opportunities to really explore what being a scholar-practitioner entails for learners and learning at all stages of study and careers, are what the teacher education program at UBCO is emphasizing. In other words, an educator's professional knowledge is formative and requires ongoing mentorship. Cultivating CSPs where teacher candidates, mentor teachers, educational leaders, and teacher educators understand learning as necessarily experimental, grounded in questions, collaborative, connected to and derived from work with students, and sustained and interdependent with school and local contexts and needs, forms our current task. The challenges, tensions, and possibilities encountered to date are mapped out and considered from multiple perspectives. The possibilities for reframing professional growth through negotiating the ongoing needed relationships with participating educators across all stages of careers, seeking fitting conditions and supports, and investing in conjoint mentoring relationships with schools and other education sites, are envisioned. We see much potential within CSPs for education's empowering roles and significances in the lives of individuals and communities.

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