

Book Reviews

Curriculum theorizing and teacher education: Complicating conjunctions

Anne Phelan

Routledge (2015)

Review by Dawn Milner

Contact: dawn.m.milner@live.mercer.edu

Teachers are juxtaposed between being seen as objects of policy and forerunners of innovation. Not surprisingly then, teacher education is at a crisis between continuity and change due to anti-educational forces working against it such as standardization, performativity, and accountability. Teacher education must be about teacher subjectivity and provide those new to the profession opportunities for discussion of human agency and responsibility. There must be a return to what truly matters: freedom and self-formation through knowledge and experience. In the pursuit of the worthwhile, mentors play a key role in providing practice and theory in a way that supports the renewal of the profession, yet they may struggle with feeling that teacher candidates are arrivistes attempting to change the status quo in a way that will demean the profession. However, teacher candidates can and should participate in discussions about education and policymaking.

Anne Phelan discusses the confounding concurrences that surround teacher preparation as well as relational power struggles, both in the schools and in society, as well as the challenges facing the novice in the pursuit of becoming the ideal teacher. In the quest of what is worthwhile, today's teachers have been forced over time to distrust their own experiences and neglect practical wisdom. Veteran teachers know that knowledge alone is not the goal of education and that experiences play a key part. Schools can provide a context for study while at the same time hindering it. Consequently, teachers must

vacillate between philosophy and legalities in zones of indistinction while attempting to remain independent and meet the needs of the learners in their charge.

Phelan's thoughts are grounded in the humanities and blended with those of other scholars to create a work that is situated in the current realities of society and warnings about the deprofessionalization of teaching should be taken seriously by teacher preparation programs and curriculum theorists alike. If forces to undermine teaching and teacher education are to be reckoned with, both teachers and politicians must actively engage in complicated conversations to help reshape and refine the educational process.

Curriculum Theorizing and Teacher Education serves as a herald debunking common myths surrounding teachers and the teaching profession and will be of great interest to those both working in and researching teacher preparation, as well as policymakers desiring to let go of toughened biases and seek ways to rethink the way novices are inducted into the profession.