

Editor's Introduction

Teacher Education in the Covid-19 Era: Perspectives and Possibilities During a Pandemic

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I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for your feedback on my manuscript. I am new to writing journal articles and I am not sure how the relationships with editors are supposed to be. So, if I am overstepping my boundaries, please let me know. But I have to say, I have never received such thorough feedback. I am overwhelmed by emotions that, for once, help me see myself in a much more positive light as a writer. In just half an hour (what it took me to read your comments), I feel a bit healed from the trauma I have experienced over the years as an immigrant kid in a schooling system that shames you for not knowing instead of celebrating learning. This is the first time I have felt like I belong in the academy. Even if my manuscript does not advance to publication, I had to share this with you. (S. Orozoco, personal communication, August 27, 2020)

Introduction to the Introduction

When the stay-at-home order was initiated in California, there was no consensus as to what teacher education faculty, teachers, or teacher candidates should do or ...how. It was a mess, and one in which those in charge seemed to have forgotten that teacher educators are people to—with needs and fears—who were worried about their health, loved ones, household responsibilities, not to mention their employment. In my college, what attention was paid went to students, teacher candidates, and staff, whereas emails to faculty barely acknowledged our humanity, or our concerns. No perfunctory, “hope you are well,” or “I’m here if you

need me.” Indeed, when an email came from our new Provost in which she acknowledged the humanity and efforts of faculty first and foremost, I felt compelled to thank her. And no, I am not wah-wah-wahing all the way home because nobody paid attention to teacher educators—but NOBODY PAID ATTENTION TO TEACHER EDUCATORS....or teachers across the nation. How hard is it to say: I appreciate you, your work, your efforts?

It is not hard. This issue is a pandemic Valentine to teacher educators everywhere: *Issues in Teacher Education* (ITE) appreciates you, your work, and your efforts. Many of the articles in this issue emphasize a similar need to recognize and humanize teacher candidates, and I wholeheartedly agree; we need to recognize the humanity of our teacher candidates actively, practically, and instructively. But I have a special fondness for the articles in this issue that highlight how teacher educators were, and often are, left to their own [technological] devices, with little direction or support. Moreover, as at least one article in this issue reveals, this neglect was happening well *before* the pandemic; first-generation faculty members, faculty of Color, and women suffer from this neglect more than others.¹ To the extent that ITE can make any headway towards mitigating these inequities, we are doing so, and it is our hope that this issue is the first of many in which the voices and perspectives represented are more inclusive, diverse, and attentive to equity.

Disquisition

For me, Covid-19 apprehension started early. I'd been reading about it in the newspaper in February and was sufficiently concerned to be dragging hand sanitizer with me to the CSUF Student Research Competition (SRC) presentations and whispering with guest faculty judges between presentations about trying to find N-95 masks. After three days of face-to-face student presentations, I resolved to be even more judicious with the time I spent on campus, and subsequently rescheduled intake interviews for our teacher credential programs to Zoom and started staying in before the stay-at-home orders took effect in California. I was still “seeing” the student finalists for the research competition virtually each week and could manage all of my other responsibilities online. I was okay (or that's how I felt initially). I wasn't teaching so I didn't need to shift everything online abruptly, and I wasn't responsible for students (other than the ten SRC finalists). I was, however, working with a full slate of faculty from across campus, so I was aware of what the shift was doing to them. And it wasn't pretty.

But I feel like what I was seeing in other colleges and disciplines paled

next to what my colleagues in the College of Education were confronting²: confusing statements, thoughtless decrees, irresponsible mandates (e.g., teacher candidates (TC) must go to school sites if teachers are required to go, even if PK-12 students are not there; documents still need wet signatures; assessments would neither be postponed or modified); and then sudden about-faces on those mandates (e.g., *don't* go to school sites; digital signatures *will* suffice; and, some assessments *can* be modified. There was neither constancy, clarity, or consistency. Moreover, in many cases, there was no clear point of contact—who do we ask about the questions coming from TCs? These gaps were managed by teacher educators (TE) for the most part; TEs were the ones communicating with TCs, as well as with master/co-operating teachers, school site administrators, and college of education administrators and staff. And even though I know none of us could have anticipated the scope of the pandemic (well some people did—hello epidemiology colleagues!), it seemed as if those who were doing the heavy lifting—teacher educators and teachers—were left to figure out a lot of things on their own without any of the type of baseline *cariño* that might have made the field of teacher education feel less vulnerable and depleted.

In an effort to introduce a bit more *cariño* into my own practice, my pandemic virtual meetings with students or faculty started with my asking how they were doing, before trying to point to the ways in which their research and writing might provide a sort of refuge. I started arguing more and more for the importance of writing as both a literal and figurative commitment to their present and future selves, a way of stepping outside of the pandemic to connect with what is deeply important: their work and their academic and professional advance. I think my words carried weight because of the fact that I was so clearly throwing myself into work—taking on more projects, more mentoring, and more responsibilities. I said “yes” to everything for that spring and summer, and this fall too. Why not? What else was I going to do? My work time rapidly fragmented into multiple jagged little pieces, and while initially they were relatively compartmentalized, they inexorably and overwhelmingly started to overlap and merge: one effort bleeding into another task, which seeped into another responsibility, which dripped onto another need. Tasks, responsibilities, needs. Every day. I started waking up at 2:30 a.m., worried about what I had to do, and in what order. I was constantly anxious about what I absolutely had to accomplish to stay above water. At no point was I “floating.” I was and remain underwater, weighted down with responsibilities and worry.

Working with faculty and students helped me. Teaching, editing, mentoring, and staying steady for others kept me occupied, upright,

and conscious even if I was a mess internally. Deeply afraid of needing to “go to hospital” (that’s the way they say it on all the British telly rabbit holes I fell into during the Covid-19 stay-at-home orders), I became ever more cautious and extended that worry to everyone I knew. *Doomscrolling* morning, noon, and night, I regularly sent updates about the virus and its effects to everyone I cared about (if you didn’t get anything, that doesn’t mean I cared less, sometimes it meant I was sparing you the anxieties that were consuming me).

Simultaneously, the Black Lives Matter protests bolstered my commitment to supporting the scholarship of faculty of Color both at my university and at another CSU where I serve as a writing consultant. I began by asking faculty of Color, and particularly Black faculty, about their experiences in the academy. And then I listened a lot, I read a lot, and I committed to doing what I could to mitigate inequities. I took on more mentoring, more collaborations, and initiated more conversations. I advocated more, spoke up more, and paid more attention. And my colleagues’ responses, as well as those of many of the authors in this issue, increased my sense of capacity to serve as a co-conspirator, even as I recognized there would be times I would mess up and not acknowledge my white privilege.

The current special issue is a meaningful result of my efforts to mitigate inequities, and it is, in all respects, a unique and collaborative one. It was April 30th, 2020, when I suggested the idea to the publisher, Alan Jones (who deserves accolades for supporting every aspect of ITE and the California Council on Teacher Education), and our extensive abstract submission and manuscript invitation, revision, and preparation process didn’t conclude until recently. Because all the manuscripts came in at once, I was overwhelmed the entire semester with reading, needed to read, or having just read and needing to return comments and track changes to authors. I was so focused on this special issue I couldn’t see how I would ever get through it and all of my other responsibilities. My sense of imbalance was underscored by a colleague I mentor who requested I spend less time on a paper that repeatedly wasn’t ready and more time on her. I agreed, and then gave that paper one more attempt; I didn’t want to lose anyone. But lose I did. Ten manuscripts right off the top (the authors bowed out), and one manuscript that no matter how much I extended the time for or how much I actually revised, I could not get where it needed to be for publication.

If it’s not yet clear, this special issue has been both my destruction and salvation. Working on this issue took evenings, weekends, “holidays” (I call them “ha ha-lidays” because the notion of holidays during the pandemic

feels like a joke; no one can get too far from work when it's all online). It often seemed as if the non-stop effort to develop the papers was all that was sustaining me. And I think this non-stop effort has been keeping a lot of us going. We long for the end of the semester, but we know what it more than likely holds: not seeing some/all family members, concerns about spring instruction, and a sense of time lost, irreparable educational damages, and deep societal rifts. But reading through this issue, it is clear that as teacher educators, faculty members, and scholars, there are things we can do to make things better—for me these things pivot on scaffolding and supporting faculty research and writing.

None of my suggestions have to do with “grace” or “gratitude,” however. I'm all for both, but more of each needs to be audibly and visibly directed to teacher educators and teachers. Maybe it was happening some places, but I wasn't hearing much about those places from anyone. Regardless, I'd like to see more gratitude extended to teacher educators who not only teach, but actively care for teacher candidates, and by extension the students they teach. When I read about the grace, patience, time, and yes, *cariño*, extended to teacher candidates by the authors in this issue, I am reminded of all the strengths TEs carry, exercise, and cultivate. I am reminded also to not only focus on what I couldn't do fast or “good” enough this semester, but on all we have accomplished (and you better believe I count this issue among these achievements).

Dispatch

I am so happy to have gotten to this point. I cannot express my gratitude enough for your support throughout this process. I am on cloud nine. Please know that I will do all that is within my power to pay this forward. I followed your instructions, and I accepted the edits, deleted the comments, and edited the last sentence to turn it into positive. I double checked the references section and bolded the title but left the text single-spaced since the rest of the paper was single-spaced. I will most certainly keep your email for RTP purposes but also to share with my loved ones. This paper is much more personal to me. (S. Orozoco, personal communication, November 8, 2020)

As ITE editor, I was intent on diving deeply into the pedagogic possibilities of the submission and revision process to develop the work submitted towards publication in this special issue. To this end, I read and re-read, edited, and copyedited every manuscript. Additionally, I offered to “talk through” revisions with multiple authors, many of whom were relatively new to publishing or were unsure about the novel “Disquisition and Dispatch” format, or the fact that ITE wanted them to write in the first person. My reasoning was simple: once an author was invited

and the manuscript was submitted, I wanted (read *needed*) them to be included in this issue. Perhaps it was a consequence of the isolating effects of the pandemic, or my inherent teacher tendencies, or the fact that as a first-generation college graduate, I struggled with publishing initially. Whatever the reason, I was committed to advancing as many manuscripts as I could. But I couldn't pretend what ITE was doing was "normal," and when a few authors asked if this was how editors usually shepherded manuscripts and authors through the publishing process, I had to answer honestly, "Not in my experience, no." There are many reasons for this of course, and at ITE we encounter one of these reasons in a particularly acute fashion every time we receive a manuscript and have to beg for reviewers: to dedicate this type of pedagogic and developmental attention to every manuscript, we need more reviewers.

Perhaps more pressing is the fact that reviewing manuscripts for a journal cannot be done well by one person alone; there are voices that may be missed, perspectives that may be overlooked, writing styles that may not "fit," but warrant consideration. A diverse panel of reviewers can make sure a diverse group of voices and perspectives are included (Does this sound like a pitch for reviewers? Well yes, yes it is. Sign up at the link on the ITE website). A healthy journal needs a range of active, engaged reviewers, from all levels of the academy. But I knew, given my experience as editor of ITE, that we could not depend upon reviewers to return reviews swiftly enough for our aims with this issue, and we couldn't squander time waiting if we wanted to get this special issue out before the end of the year. I also knew I could not manage the special issue manuscripts and general ITE submissions, so I asked Jana Noel, our Associate Editor, to keep the general submission process flowing. I am grateful for her attention to the journal and her unfailing support.

To engage in a bit more reflection, I loved and resented the manuscript development process in equal measure (I would imagine this ambivalence was shared by some of the authors when they received yet another request for just a few more revisions). I cannot overstate how much I loved working with authors; I relished helping them revise to publication. I enjoyed talking about their ideas, and for those new to publishing, I found great joy and purpose in mentoring them through what were some very difficult days. Every author included here took the edits and direction to heart, schooling me when and where necessary, while assiduously working to develop their papers in a very short turnaround time. Because I wanted every manuscript submitted to make it to publication, there was no respite for any of us until each paper was polished so highly that we could actually see ourselves in every reflective surface. And by "see ourselves," I mean recognize some element of teacher education as we know it.

What I resented was that we were constrained by time, resources, and energy. Writing takes focused attention, as well as an almost steely resolve to “do what it takes” to develop a paper to publication—a challenge at any time, but even more so when we are worn down by weeks of staying home. I know I hurt some feelings; it wasn’t always easy for authors to get their papers back, riddled with track changes, attached to emails that tried to be tender but were as often blunt and direct: “your paper needs this ---- please do it.” Yet the results speak for themselves; ITE has collected some of the most authentic, thoughtful, and instructive articles about the effects of the shifts to online instruction in teacher education available anywhere, and this work is a testament to the academic agility, tenacity, responsiveness, and commitment of the authors.

Ideally, I think the journal review process in general should be more like it was for this special issue: bespoke attention to developing papers to publication. Having served as the editor of ITE for almost three years and having submitted papers to and reviewed papers for other journals, in my experience the relationship between editor and author generally differs considerably from what we did with this issue. Instead of developing an author’s capacity, many journals diminish her confidence. And I realize that for some people, any criticism is a bad thing and can feel like denigration. But criticism, attention to details, and a commitment to improving are hallmarks of developing good academic writing. And I would argue that colleges of education (COE) (and more than likely many doctoral programs, in many disciplines) do not foster these skills, and particularly not in relation to doctoral candidates who, if they get a tenure-track faculty position, will be expected to publish to earn tenure and promotion.

To meet these professional expectations, all doctoral programs, including teacher education doctoral programs (Ed.D.s and Ph.D.s, alike), must provide more scaffolded preparation, direction, accountability, and explicit support for scholarly writing. Just about every tenure track position requires that faculty publish, and many hold up blind, peer-reviewed journals as a (if not *the*) goal. Yet absent adequate institutional support for conceptualizing, organizing, arguing, drafting, and revising manuscripts for journal publication, faculty, and particularly first-generation Ph.D.s and Ed.D.s, will be hard pressed to survive, much less thrive in academia. Should we have everyone work so hard in doctoral programs just to have them graduate, doctorate in hand, poorly prepared for requirements of the profession?

I recall the first time I ever even heard one could turn a dissertation into articles was when I was invited to a University of California All Campus Collaborative on Research for Diversity (UC ACCORD) confer-

ence as a panelist, and a tenured faculty member from another UC told me he published four (*four!*) articles from his dissertation. This was a revelation; I had never heard that one could do anything like this from anyone. (I subsequently ended up extracting three publications from my dissertation). Yet this is the sort of information all doctoral candidates should not only receive but also be taught. Specifically, doctoral programs should commit part of their course of study to supporting candidates' ability to draft journal articles.

These efforts need to be matched with a commensurate response from academic journals to reconceptualize their objectives to better meet aims for advancing their respective disciplines in ways that are more inclusive and attentive to inequities. Yes, we all want to publish rigorous, well written, empirically supported, and thoughtfully argued manuscripts that move our discipline forward. But ITE is lucky if a manuscript comes in that meets one of these criteria. And it's definitely not that the ideas are weak, but the execution often suffers from a lack of clarity (e.g., neglecting to operationalize terms or connect ideas), concision (e.g., redundancies or awkward wordiness), and/or cohesion (e.g., disorganization or poorly supported argumentation that detracts from rather than bolsters the strength or solidity of the piece). What can journals do to help foster better preparation for advancing within the paper to publication pipeline?

Editors and reviewers alike would better serve authors by providing reviews that are designed to help develop manuscripts. To advance authors' efforts, ITE provides editor comments in addition to reviewer comments and generally returns a document with changes tracked for any revise and resubmit we issue. We try and provide scaffolded support so authors are oriented towards success. The one category that is hard is the straight-out "reject." Oftentimes, these manuscripts are not well suited for the journal, don't fit with our focus, or do not make a substantive contribution to the discipline. ITE tries to specify which of these issues is of concern, so the authors understand the rejection (although we understand nobody likes to receive a rejection notice).

Journal editors can also create and lead workshops that help potential authors better understand the submission and review process. ITE has engaged in this type of work a couple of times for CCTE and we intend to continue to do so. And faculty authors can also develop their writing, by reading regularly, locating model articles, paying attention to both content and structure in well written articles, and seeking out what I call "harsh and concrete" feedback from friends or colleagues. Harsh and concrete feedback from one person, pre-submission, is worth much more than superficial niceties from ten people. I also regularly recom-

mend Wendy Belcher's *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success* (2009, 2019), to every aspiring academic author I meet. It is clear, accessible, and helpful as roadmap or reference. Moreover, Belcher advises, and I concur, that the best way to develop your writing is to do it on a daily basis. If you're a faculty member, you're a writer. Own it.

Thank you for taking the time to read this introduction. It should be obvious I wrote it just for you. Before you read any further, please extend a bit of appreciation to each of the authors for engaging in this process with ITE during a global pandemic, in a semester like no other. Just a brief pause—a slow inhale and slower exhale—to acknowledge the authors included here who revealed and shared a range of capacities, expertise, and attention to issues that were both professionally and personally illuminating, as well as illustrative of ways in which teacher education programs can better meet the needs of TCs and schools, alike. Pulling this issue together was a time-consuming, emotionally taxing endeavor for all who participated. Indeed, I liken the experience of the work involved in advancing this collection to publication to childbirth: wonderful in theory, exhausting in practice—but with a beautiful bouncing non-binary special issue to show for all our efforts. I couldn't be more proud of the result.

Notes

¹ It is important to note that for this issue, authors who appear to be “male” navigated through multiple revisions earlier than all the authors who appear to be “female.” I don't know what to make of this but let me assert clearly that the male appearing authored papers were not ultimately any better than the ones by females. What could account for this seemingly gendered difference?

² This was also the case for colleagues in nursing schools. Although they are not the focus of this special issue, nursing educators, we see you and we value you. Thank you for all you are doing, and especially those of you who are simultaneously working on the front lines—aka my dear colleague, Dr. Nurse Vu (she's a Ph.D. and an R.N. so I try and get all her titles in one swoop).