

Introduction to Special Issue

Reimagining Clinical Practice

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Clinical practice is a dynamic and complex part of teacher preparation, with its multifaceted components, various designs, and implementation challenges. Clinical practice experiences remain critical to teacher growth, success in the field, and long-term retention. However, while some teacher preparation programs center clinically rich experiences throughout their programs, many remain focused on compliance-driven requirements, limiting the transformative potential of powerful clinical experiences.

This special issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* seeks to illuminate the complexities of clinical practice and to invite readers to reimagine its role in teacher education. When clinical experiences are intentionally designed, and meaningfully woven throughout a program, they support teacher growth rather than mere compliance and become more responsive to the needs of local communities. The articles in this issue collectively move teacher educators to look more deeply at how clinical practice is designed.

Rizvi and Marroquin open the issue with a commentary that reframes evaluation during clinical experiences as a collaborative,

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coaching-centered process that builds relational trust and supports teacher growth. Building on previous research in this area, they warn against a compliance-driven, punitive approach to clinical practice experiences that undermines teacher confidence.

Ramirez, Chitwood, and Kurkjian then underscore the importance of intentionally designed clinical experiences by examining how simulations can provide structured, low-stakes opportunities for candidates to engage in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) processes, strengthening both preparation and attitudes toward inclusion. Their quasi-experimental study examines the effect of the simulated IEP process in clinical practice.

Building on the emphasis on practice-based learning, Virmani explores Collaborative Learning Events (CLEs) which highlights the power of partnerships among teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and university faculty to engage in cycles of observation, rehearsal, enactment, and reflection within authentic school contexts. Virmani's article addresses a persistent challenge for teachers to engage in equity-focused activities in the classroom and provides a solution to more meaningfully connect theory and practice through clinical experiences.

Soto-Peña extends this focus by examining the importance of centering clinical experiences in bilingual teacher preparation. This qualitative case study explores how clinical practice design supports or constrains bilingual teacher development. With the rising demand of bilingual teachers, this research elucidates critical factors in clinical practice.

Finally, the issue broadens the scope of clinical practice through the use of technology-enhanced learning. Van Boxel and Taylor explore how tools such as video analysis, microteaching, and artificial intelligence can support reflection, feedback, and innovation across the continuum of teacher preparation and specifically within clinical experiences. They offer practical tools and a deeper understanding about ways to embed technology throughout the arc of clinical practice to improve how teachers use innovative technologies in their classes.

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