No Child Left Behind Legislation and Teacher Preparation:

A Catalyst for Educational Change

Dr. Linda O'Neal, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Appalachian State University
Reich College of Education
310 Duncan Hall
Boone, North Carolina 28608
(828) 262-8686
oneallc@appstate.edu

Dr. Stephen R. White, D.A.
Assistant Professor
Appalachian State University
Reich College of Education
310 Duncan Hall
Boone, North Carolina 28608
(828) 963-7092
whitesr@boone.net

Abstract

The springboard for this research is the impending No Child Left Behind legislation and the potential impact it will have on future American education, teacher education, and the teaching profession. This study asserts that a Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree, as developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to improve postsecondary teaching, should now be employed to improve public education by producing teacher-scholars. The D.A degree could be an innovative agenda to transforming teacher preparation, enhance teaching praxis, aid in the recruitment and retention of well-qualified candidates in the teaching profession, and augment the No Child Left Behind demands on educational leaders and institutions of higher education. We posit that a Doctor of Arts in Teacher Education could resolve the above-mentioned issues. To confirm this hypothesis, the 117 superintendents (K-12) in North Carolina were surveyed relative to the appropriateness of the D. A. degree.

"What we know from educational research and policy reports is that it takes more than developing standards, aligning assessments and standards, and requiring accountability to improve student learning….We must also have knowledgeable, skilled teachers in every classroom, teaching every child"**(Cross & Rigden, 2002, p. 27).**

A Catalyst for Change in American Teacher Education

The "No Child Left Behind" legislation will be a catalyst for change at all levels of education. The policy specifically calls for a "highly qualified teacher in every classroom" (No Child Left Behind, 2001). The academic preparation, professional knowledge base, and classroom performance of every teacher must be provided to the public for scrutiny.
As a result, institutions of higher education and colleges of education will need to change their conceptualization of teacher education programs. This will require visionary leadership and innovative thinking. Thus, rather than view this requirement as a professional infringement, the reality is that it is a catalyst to prepare teachers as scholars and to socially honor them as our nation's public intellectuals.

Over the recent past, many superior teachers have moved into administration or into higher education as an avenue for professional advancement. This is an appropriate placement for many teachers but is illogical for many others. Such a trend does not reflect numerous educators' commitment to teaching excellence, nor is the transition of excellent teachers in administrative or academic roles in the best interest of our children and society. Why should institutions of higher education attract America's – "best and brightest" - to stated purpose of teacher preparation and then only to provide subsequent doctoral advancement that moves them from the classroom? Teachers are scholars. They are "instructional leaders" whose place is in the classroom. We assert that this problem can be partially addressed by providing an opportunity for the preparation of teachers at the doctoral level.

The Doctor of Arts Degree in Teacher Education: Preparation in Interdisciplinary and Pedagogical Scholarship

In the late 1970s, the Carnegie Foundation and the PEW Charitable Trust developed the D.A. degree for the advancement of teaching. The Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree, by definition is, the "*teacher's doctorate.*" Though a new concept within the American academy, the *Doctor of Arts and Letters* has been part of the European academic culture and secondary educational framework for decades. The original intent was for doctoral preparation of teachers for the university undergraduate and community college level of education. It is now time that this concentration be expanded to also include secondary teacher education (White and McBeth, 2003).

The Doctor of Arts (D.A.) in teacher education curriculum is designed to augment conventional graduate secondary teacher preparation through three distinct components: (1) interdisciplinary content knowledge, (2) pedagogical knowledge, and (3) through either discovery or integrative research. The design of the interdisciplinary content knowledge component is to provide the D.A. candidate the forum to develop pedagogical strategies within the context of an integrative knowledge base. This component is an integrated program of study designed to prepare candidates to teach in interrelated disciplines and to cultivate a deeper knowledge base to develop integrated curricula and learning experiences.

The pedagogical knowledge component is designed to develop the D.A. candidate's instructional abilities and skills. The goal is to enlarge the candidate's expertise in pedagogical strategies, learning theory, and curriculum development. A supervised clinical teaching practicum is required to assess the candidate's progress. Clinical observations of classroom sessions are conducted to measure their pedagogical and curriculum achievement. Thus the candidate receives mentoring in applied instructional methodologies.

The research component is required so the candidate can demonstrate that he or she has acquired the pedagogical content knowledge and instructional expertise necessary to address teaching situations effectively. The doctoral committee supervises the development of a dissertation that explores the discovery of a new interdisciplinary teaching model or the integration of recent research into a novel model. The committee evaluates the research dissertation in regards to its theoretical soundness and empirical validity.

The vision is that of a Doctor of Arts recipient who is a teacher-scholar and public intellectual, and who possesses the interdisciplinary knowledge base and pedagogical expertise to be a transformative leader in 21st century American education (White, 1999). More specifically, the D.A. teacher-scholar is well prepared to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind objectives and national, state, and local public education requirements.

A Survey of North Carolina Superintendents: The Research Findings

Research was conducted using a quantitative and qualitative survey of 117 North Carolina's (K-12) school superintendents. Approximately fifty-five percent responded to the mailing. Since the survey focused on exploring the practicality of a secondary education teaching doctorate, consideration of whether the superintendents responding have a doctorate degree themselves was an important issue. Currently, in North Carolina, seventy-five percent of superintendents hold a doctorate degree. Of the 64 superintendents who returned the survey, 39 had a doctorate degree. The sample that returned the survey closely mirrors percentage of the

North Carolina superintendents who hold the doctorate degree. Their responses and opinions are most revealing.

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents view teacher recruitment and retention as a *serious problem* for several decades to come. Forty-two percent believe that the opportunity to achieve a teaching doctorate has the potential to strengthen recruitment, while fifty-one percent feel that a teacher's doctorate would increase retention.

When asked if they believe that K-12 public education suffers from "pedagogic ills' (e.g., interdisciplinary curriculum development and content based pedagogy) sixty-five percent agree. Thirty-six percent believe that teachers in their school system would be interested in a teaching doctorate; fifty-five percent report not being sure.

The superintendents were asked to rank in order of importance the following four items according to what they believe are the strengths of the D.A. degree. The results revealed the following: (1) advanced pedagogical preparation, (2) preparation in interdisciplinary scholarship, (3) research in pedagogical content knowledge, and (4) increase in professional status as teachers.

Only twenty-three percent of the respondents were familiar with the Doctor of Arts as a "teaching doctorate." This is not surprising considering that the D.A. was originally developed for the advancement of college teaching. Yet, sixty-eight percent believe that public education systems would support doctoral teachers in K-12 education (e.g., financial awards, professional credentialing, providing university and political support etc). Also, eighty percent believe that having doctoral prepared teacher-scholars in their classrooms would not present administrative or leadership difficulties in their school systems.

The overall responses to a D.A. in teacher education were overwhelmingly positive. When asked about the effect of the D.A. degree on leadership in K-12 schools, sixty-seven percent of the responses are positive and indicate that superintendents have a true appreciation of well-prepared teachers. The concept that "K-12 schools need strong leaders to be successful" is consistently present in the responses. One superintendent writes, "Teacher scholars are the key to real improvement in K-12 education," while another writes, "D.A. teachers would comprise an instructional leadership team to advise and assist administrators" and "the D.A. would provide administration with a stronger pedagogical base." Yet another superintendent agrees with the writer of this paper: "This may be a strategy that will keep the very best teachers in the classroom" and "This would give teachers another career move."

When asked about any specific comments on the D.A. degree superintendents responses include: "Important to provide teachers with such opportunities and give them a path to excel in leadership within the classroom for the benefit of our students" and "We need to have a true marriage between theory and practice and make sure this advanced schooling prepares for teaching and not just scholarship".

When asked to determine Doctor of Arts interdisciplinary programs they believe the following degree programs would have the greatest demand and impact on schooling success: (1) mathematic and sciences, (2) humanities and languages, (3) social sciences, and (4) physical and health sciences. In short, these findings are significant. This knowledge base should serve as the springboard to further explore DA-teacher education. The No Child Left Behind legislation is a natural linkage to further warrant exploring these findings more in-depth.

Closing Thoughts

The Doctor of Arts degree is a reconceptualization of teaching as scholarship and has established its own academic identity and scholarly integrity. It is a doctoral innovation ripe to meet the new demands of the No Child Left Behind legislation and demands of teacher preparation.

D.A degree advocates hope that this re-vision will result in a new mental model of teachers as teacher-scholars and deserved professional recognition. We hope that our colleagues will become interested in the experiences of a teaching doctorate that has moved well beyond the discussion and experimental stage. At the very least, we assert that the Doctor of Arts degree should be acknowledged and included in the current debate over how to ensure that the "No Child Left Behind" reform agenda is successful in its goals.

We firmly believe that the D.A. is an innovative agenda to move American teacher preparation deep into the 21^{st} century. This is especially true in context of the impending No Child Left Behind legislation. The time has come to change our mental models of "teacher" and "teaching" and recognize teachers as public scholars. No Child Left Behind is a catalyst for this transformation.

Furthermore, the researchers are of the opinion that if the D.A. degree were strategically linked to National Board Certification, it would have even greater impact. We believe that working on both as a congruent program of study would have two benefits. The teacher would have not only a doctorate degree, but also National Board Certification and thus have irrefutable reputation as a teacher scholar. In addition, the recipient would get the financial benefit afforded National Board Certification, but not the doctorate degree alone. In North Carolina, the earned doctorate degree gets a salary adjustment of $253 a year. The National Board Certification recipient receives an additional 12% above the salary they would normally qualify for based on their highest degree and years of experience. Having both would afford the teacher the highest possible financial remuneration.

We believe that the nation could partially ameliorate the current and impending teacher shortage, the need for well-qualified teachers, and the essential element of raising the status of teaching through a revision of the Doctor of Arts degree in teacher education. Obviously, the superintendents who participated in our study strongly agree with our conclusions. With the D.A. degree in teacher education, an important step is made toward ensuring the No Child Left behind legislation will be a successful reform agenda. These questions constitute a triadic quandary--recruitment, retention and professional status (White and O'Neal, 2002). To support educators in the field with implementing national legislation is a complex challenge for educational leadership at colleges and universities nationwide to address.

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