Critical Education

The Struggle for Critical Teacher Education:

How Accreditation Practices Privilege Efficiency Over Criticality and Compliance over Negotiation

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Abstract

In this article, the author uses a case study approach to explore and analyze a conflict within the Professional Education Unit (PEU) at her university. While the controversy seemed to focus on differing epistemologies concerning critical and traditional pedagogy for teacher preparation, the intensity of the clash suggested there were additional forces at work. The author argues that in this particular case, the undertow of a technical rational perspective, generated by an educational accrediting agency, privileged efficiency over criticality and compliance over negotiation. In addition, she suggests that the power structures embedded in the processes of accreditation interfered with unity supported by a common conceptual framework. The article concludes with recommendations on how an institution might use the educational ideals within their conceptual framework, required for accreditation, to liberate its authors from constrained communication that is bounded by a technical discourse.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires that all Professional Education Units (PEUs) create a conceptual framework that provides agreed upon goals and values to guide the preparation of their teacher candidates. While the primary purpose of the conceptual framework is to unify efforts toward teacher preparation, the technical and procedural work associated with accountability to the accrediting agency can render the framework into a jumble of empty high ideals. This paper investigates interpretations of a common conceptual framework in relationship to a dominant technical paradigm that underpins many of NCATE's stated objectives (NCATE, 2007). The following vignette illustrates an on going drama at my university and provides an example of divided perspectives.

> *I am a faculty member in the College of Education who teaches teacher preparation courses for future secondary teachers. On this particular day I am reading Ayers (2009) to learn more about transformative education and critical pedagogy. "Education is where we ask how we might engage, enlarge, and change our lives, and it is, then, where we confront our dreams and fight our notions of the good life, where we try to comprehend, apprehend, or possibly even change the world" (p. 77). These words are inspirational to me and echo the principles found in the Professional Education Unit's (PEU) recently approved conceptual framework.*

> *With my head and heart filled with democratic ideals of social justice and possibilities for more meaningful education for all, I left my office to refill my water bottle. As I was standing at the water fountain, a question was asked in a terse whisper behind my back, "What's happening in secondary?" The question was not posed to me. I held my breath, because I knew that there had been some negative feedback, from discipline areas and the College of Education alike, regarding certain secondary faculty members revising their curriculum to reflect critical pedagogy. A different voice replied, "For one thing, I heard that they aren't teaching how to make lesson plans any more in their secondary methods classes and the discipline areas are pretty upset about that." And then a third voice chimed in, "I think it is horrible that secondary instructors are sending teacher candidates, who have never taught before, out into our public schools to pass judgment over practicing teachers."*

> *With my head starting to pound, and my water bottle overflowing, I silently scream, "No, No, that's not it at all. We are boldly pumping energy and commitment into the conceptual framework that we all endorsed." Slowly, I twist the top onto my water bottle, wait for the voices to diminish, and slink back to my office.*

Currently at my university, many of the discipline areas (i.e. Art, English, Math, Music, P.E., Science) have eliminated most College of Education (COE) courses from their teacher education programs. The administrators and faculty members from these departments reasoned that these changes provided a tighter fit with NCATE requirements and national standards. An alternate view was that removing COE courses silences a critical perspective in preparing future teachers and meeting the goals outlined in the conceptual framework for NCATE accreditation. NCATE is central to both arguments. One perspective draws on the technical aspects of the conceptual framework expressed in the Specialized Professional Association (SPA) standards (included in the NCATE requirements) to justify its position; while the other perspective employs the values within the conceptual framework to explain its case. By design, the vision and mission statements within the PEU's conceptual framework are broadly written to sanction diversity for

teacher philosophies, pedagogical style, and curricula. Does NCATE's "effective efficient performance based accreditation system" (NCATE, 2007, Objective #2) prohibit a curriculum focus that strays from the technical perspective and highlights the critical? In the shadow of a technical paradigm, multiple interpretations of common goals can create a contestable space that may defy collaboration.

Through a case study approach, I began exploring the question, How does a Professional Education Unit (PEU), comprised of all colleges that prepare future teachers, unite to pursue their collective goals while remaining true to their individual educational values? While education values are not stagnant, particular values underpin curriculum decisions about what is most important. When a group endorses a conceptual framework, one of the goals is to unite within the bounds of "… a set of ethical guidelines embodied in a mission that expresses the spirit of a community" (Berg, Csikszentmihaly, and Nakamura, 2003, p. 42). A conceptual framework is an organic document that allows for individual interpretation within an agreed upon foundation to enable a "balancing of continuity and change" (p. 41). Uniting does not mean closure to discussion or exploration, but rather implies a collaborative enterprise toward shared principles. Remaining true to individual educational values can energize the debate to refine meaning and purpose for educational goals. However, this interpretation perceives unity as a process of negotiation. A counter discourse concerning unity that may fit more neatly with a technical paradigm would emphasize compliance and conformity. To explore the concepts of unity around diverse individual epistemologies, I analyzed field notes and multiple interpretations of our PEU's conceptual framework, as related to the goals of teacher preparation, to tease out the central issues that generated the controversy within the PEU. In this article, I present a descriptive account of a particular case to understand the power structure embedded in an accrediting agency that influences the struggle to collaborate within a common framework and mission.

I begin with the background of the particular bounded case being used as the focus of the study; I then discuss the analytical methods and data collection procedures. Next, I review and relate themes from the data to contextual meanings within a dominant discourse embedded in NCATE objectives. I conclude with a recommendation for how an institution's vision and conceptual framework might be used as tools to liberate its authors from constrained communication that is bounded by a normative and technical discourse.

Background

First, I will situate myself within the context of this research. As mentioned in the opening vignette, I am a member of the secondary faculty at the institution central to this study. When I began working on this project, in spring 2008, my aim was to render a detached account of conflicting perspectives related to a common conceptual framework. However, as my work evolved, claiming detachment seemed to be the wrong approach. My bias towards favoring a critical pedagogy kept bleeding through my 'objective' account. As Stake (1995) explains, "Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding. The intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given" (p. 45). This study is an analytical examination of a complex case based on my perspective as a critical pedagogue.

My interest in pursuing this research was to "make sense of murky musings and knotty problems" (Charmaz, 2006 p. 28) that emerged as some members of the secondary faculty began to shift our curriculum focus from a technical perspective to a critical viewpoint. When I was a

newly hired assistant professor, I was aware that the central objective of teacher preparation for secondary and elementary teacher candidates at my university was to provide skills for becoming a successful teacher. Because I wanted to be a team player and I did not want to disrupt what I perceived to be unity in the College of Education, I conformed to a skill based pedagogy. However, I was never comfortable with the concept of 'training teachers' by giving them a buffet list of teaching techniques and educational philosophies from which to choose. My dissertation, written almost 20 years ago, focused on the conservative professional teacher ethos and its power to obstruct inroads to improvement and educational reform. With tenure and public school and university teaching experience accomplished, I believed it was time to tackle the complexities of preparing teachers to change schools by emphasizing school contexts and critical questioning.

Upon reflection, I see that I was naïve to think that a curriculum modification that emphasized critical pedagogy would go un-noticed or at the most be passed over in the name of academic freedom. But at the time of this case study, I was puzzled by the difficult communication between the discipline areas and the COE. What was at the root of the conflict? The tension seemed to be bigger than a difference in epistemological perspective or individual educational values. I write this paper to better understand the underlying forces that silenced a critical perspective and to reflect on the consequences of such suppression. The following section is the historical background of the case that provides a context for the dissension.

My university began preparing to apply for NCATE accreditation in Fall 2007. Before deciding to pursue accreditation, the administration sought approval and discussion from faculty and staff of colleges that provided programs that grant degrees for PK-12 professionals. Once agreement was reached, the Professional Education Unit (PEU) began the task to create and write the required conceptual framework that would be approved by all faculty members and staff who were associated with professional education programs. The conceptual framework includes a vision and mission statement, philosophy, purposes, goals of the PEU, and the knowledge base of theoretical and research perspectives that support the framework.

A variety of groups and committees collaboratively wrote the framework. Input from faculty and staff of the PEU was encouraged. The University Secondary Teacher Education Committee (USTEC), which is composed of faculty from discipline areas and the College of Education (COE) that offer teacher education programs (e.g. English, History, Music), provided a strong voice in contributing to the content of the document. The conceptual framework and mission statement was completed and approved after a year and a half of writing, discussing, rewriting, and more rewriting. Written below are the principle themes from the conceptual framework.

Guiding Image: *Learning professionals committed to student success in changing environments*

Mission: *To prepare competent and committed professionals who will make positive differences for children, young adults, and others in schools*

Vision: *We develop educational leaders who create tomorrow's opportunities.*

(2009, PEU, Conceptual Framework)

Within our respective departments, we then began to align curriculum with the purposes set forth in the conceptual framework. Somehow, in spite of the tedious bureaucratic technical self-reporting necessary to align curriculum for an accrediting body, the faculty who prepare secondary teachers were energized by the discussions about what was most important for our future secondary teachers. The vision statement inspired the secondary faculty to revise our pedagogy to prepare our teacher candidates as leaders in the educational reforms for tomorrow's schools. In an effort to integrate the core values of the conceptual framework into our courses, the secondary faculty began to meet monthly to re-examine our courses and create meaningful enduring understandings for the secondary program. In this collaborative effort we discussed our personal and professional beliefs and values about education and how those related to leadership and change in schools.

With the approval of the Department chair, two members of the secondary faculty began to revise their courses within a team-taught cohort program by focusing their curriculum through the lens of critical pedagogy.

> Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation state. (McLaren, 1998 p. 45)

The cohort program integrates four required courses for certification within COE. The content for the integrated cohort courses remained the same and still reflected the State and National Professional Teacher standards and outcomes. However, the view of teacher education presented in their classes had changed from a 'technical-rationalist enterprise' (Furlong, 2005, p. 127) of prescribed lessons on instructional strategy and the practice of teaching to one of critical thinking and discourse about teacher practice, the reality of schools, and the teacher candidate's role in affecting positive change through leadership. This shift in pedagogical philosophy was met with both resistance and support within the Professional Education Unit (PEU). The opening vignette captures some of the negative feedback from colleagues in COE and hints at dissention from the discipline areas.

Although I was not a part of the first team-taught teaching cohort class, I fully supported their efforts, began to implement critical pedagogy in my own courses, and became part of the cohort teaching team in the following year. The intensity of friction that emerged as students, administrators, and faculty reacted to the revised curriculum was startling to me. I became increasingly curious about how this shift in pedagogy that had been prompted by values found in our conceptual framework triggered such a controversy. Stenhouse (1979) notes that research is "systematic self-critical inquiry. …it is founded in curiosity and a desire to understand…" (p. 103). Research provides a space in which to discuss difficult issues with the mutual goal of understanding as the context for conversation.

Analytical Methods and Data Collection

The methodology used for this research is the particularistic case study (Merriam, 1998). I draw upon Stake's description (2008) of intrinsic and instrumental case studies to illustrate the purpose or typology of this case study. This case study is intrinsic in that my main concern is to understand this particular case to uncover what is at the root of the conflict. By immersing myself into this particular case, I can describe the various forces at work that created a collapse of

communication. The research is also instrumental in purpose because I want to classify the friction found from this case so that it may be studied within other educational institutions.

The case was bounded by place – a medium sized state university, time – three consecutive semesters (spring 2008, fall 2008, spring 2009) that led up to an accreditation committee visit, and a shared experience – preparing for accreditation. The place is a system of relationships among the colleges that create bachelor and master's degrees with teacher certification. The Professional Education Unit (PEU) is comprised of programs in the College of Education (COE) and any other college in the university that grants degrees resulting in professional preparation in the PK-12 school setting.

The specific focus of the study is three colleges within the university that belong to the Professional Education Unit: College of Education (Secondary Program), College of Arts and Letters (e.g. Art, English, Music, History), and College of Engineering, Forestry, and Natural Science (e.g. Biological Sciences). These colleges represent the largest number of professional secondary education programs within the university.

The time period in which this case occurred is connected to the shared experience. Although there was a great deal of preparation for accreditation for at least two years prior to the NCATE visit in spring 2009, data collection for this case study began in spring 2008. This marks the time when NCATE preparation became a central theme for most college and department meetings. Although there were curricular discussions prior to the accreditation preparation, the process toward NCATE accreditation prompted many 'forced' conversations around specific objectives related to requirements as well as communication related to values and beliefs about teacher education.

To render a detailed picture of events and perspectives of multiple stakeholders, I collected data from three types of resources: observational field notes, semi-structured interviews, and official University documents such as the course catalogue and the conceptual framework document. Forms of data analysis include: categorical aggregation and direct interpretation (Stake, 1995). Categorical aggregation and direct interpretation "depend greatly on the search for patterns" (p. 78). I analyzed field notes and observations by first breaking the data into three types of events: (a) secondary faculty meetings (b) secondary retreat and (c) University Secondary Teacher Education Committee (USTEC) meetings. Following individual meetings, I employed direct interpretation to analyze and synthesize my interpretation of what happened. Through reviewing these notes and observations, I aggregated my impressions of these events into categories that would sufficiently map the perceptions found within the case. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a group of 12 faculty members and administrators. I used categorical aggregation to find patterns and themes within the participants' responses. In the next section, I present a summary of the observational field notes from the three types of events along with the outcomes that were manifested.

Field Notes and Observations

I began to take observational field notes beginning in the spring semester 2008 prior to the accreditation committee's visit scheduled for the following spring 2009. As noted in the background section, the secondary faculty (six members) routinely had hour-long meetings once a month or every other month to discuss issues related to department and college interests. However, at the onset of preparing for the accreditation visit, our meetings became more frequent and longer. Two primary reasons emerged from the data to explain the change in the length and

content of our meetings. First, our secondary faculty meetings were typically procedural in terms of going over tasks that needed to be completed. When we began to discuss the conceptual framework, we raised educational questions such as: What is meant by teacher leadership? How do we describe educational professionals? Are changes in learning environments restricted to change in a teacher's classroom or does it move beyond the classroom walls? These kinds of questions cannot be reduced to a list of tasks. Secondly, PEU members from COE and discipline areas alike were challenging the new critical approach to teacher preparation that the team-taught cohort program and others had adopted. We believed it was important to clarify our reasons for revising the secondary teacher preparation curricula and to identify support from the conceptual framework.

In response to the need for more in-depth discussions and a rationale for the shift in focus, we organized a two-day secondary faculty retreat. Four out of six faculty members attended. Three fundamental questions organized the retreat discussions. First, we considered the question, what are the goals for the secondary program? We agreed that in the recent past, "the goals for our teacher candidates were from a corporate view that our job as secondary faculty was to train teachers to fit in to the current system" (retreat report p. 1). The second question central to the retreat discussion was how do these goals align with the PEU conceptual framework? The third question was of a procedural nature and asked about what kinds of readings, films, etc. might support the goals for the program.

I expand on the first two questions by listing below excerpts from the conceptual framework as we aligned them with some of our goals for the secondary program.

Conceptual Framework	Secondary Goal
…we acknowledge the multiple contexts of schools and student populations (Sleeter, 2001) and engage in inquiry that informs the content and processes we teach and our understanding of the contexts in which our candidates will work (p. 21).	1. Reposition teacher candidates to 'read schools'
Mindful of Nel Nodding's (2002) cautions about communities that demand conformity, we value Greene's (1988) view of vigorous conversation within the communities as an important feature of the educative experience (p. 5).	2. Empower teacher candidates to be active professionals who build collegial networks
Inherent in their (Darling Hammond & Ancess, 1996) discussion is the imperative to challenge educational inequality: "Schools must help widen the narrow straits of the American mainstream, extending diverse tributaries, and negotiating new currents so that all Americans can have access to the good life and good society, and the promise of democracy" (p. 174)…	3. Prepare teacher candidates to critique, resist, and refuse to perpetuate the status quo.

Participants from the retreat wrote summaries from our individual notes and then condensed them into one document. In an effort to be transparent and to comply with a concept of unity, we shared the discussion points at a USTEC meeting held at the beginning of the fall semester, 2008. I was one of the secondary faculty members who spoke at the meeting about preparing teachers to 'read schools' and question the status quo. As I looked around the room there were small smiles from the discipline area USTEC members; but there was an overwhelming sense that what we were saying or the way we were saying it was out of place. When we concluded, the meeting attendees were silent and the committee chair directed the group back to the meeting agenda.

Upon reflection I realized the purpose of this meeting and all USTEC meetings was procedural and influenced by a discourse of unity as conformity. I wondered if we had approached the meeting with less regard for unity if our presentation would have been stronger and thereby unsettled a requirement for consensus. I remind the reader that until recently, the secondary faculty meetings had also been focused on procedural tasks. For secondary however, the communication around NCATE preparation prompted a shift from instrumental focus to a critical approach. This shift was not only experienced in our classrooms but in our meetings as well. We had developed arguments for our goals related to teacher preparation. I sought the same critical space at this USTEC meeting that had been developed in our secondary meetings.

The observational field notes from the secondary meetings, the secondary retreat and USTEC meetings provide shape to the case study and begin to expose a division between secondary and the discipline area epistemologies. This is not to say that there were not controversies prior to these episodes, but they were framed by questions of what was being 'covered' in each course. Our disagreements were masked by a focus on the procedural. Until now, the ideological was never a subject for discussion. The preparation for accreditation uncovered fundamental differences in purpose and values regarding teacher preparation. As secondary faculty began to refine our philosophies and goals related to our interpretations of the conceptual framework, many of the discipline areas were doing the same. However, while our conversations became expanded to include a critical perspective, the majority of programs seemed to focus on the technical process of aligning the Specialized Professional Association (SPA) standards with their teacher education programs.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the USTEC meeting, my curiosity about the lack of communication with the discipline areas increased. I decided to employ disciplined inquiry using semi-structured interviews with representatives from three colleges (College of Education, College of Arts and Letters, and College of Engineering, Forestry, and Natural Science). The participants were faculty and administrators chosen to achieve sufficient sampling of the groups involved in this case. I wanted to interview both faculty and administrators because although these two groups have differing responsibilities, the conceptual framework is the guiding document for both. The five administrators were at varying administrative levels and from three different colleges at the university. The seven faculty members represented three colleges and five different teacher education programs. In an effort to keep the identities of these participants confidential, I refer to them as Professional Education Unit Respondents (PEURs). I use PEURs to remind the readers that all participants in the case are members of the Professional Education Unit and work together under an agreed upon conceptual framework. I have separated faculty from administrators, but to insure anonymity, I did not link individual responses to a particular college or position.

The same protocol and questions were used for all the PEUR interviews, with minor modifications related to their positions in the university. The inquiry was open-ended and revolved around three major categories. The first category was about how the participant would describe their role and their department's role in preparing secondary teachers. The second category was about their interpretation of the conceptual framework: mission and vision statements and the guiding image. The third category identified the PEURs' notions about the problems in public education, their approach to prepare future teachers to deal with these issues, and how their programs and/or curricula prepare future teachers to approach these problems.

Surprisingly, two distinct groups emerged from the data that were consistently represented by contrasting ideological epistemologies. I did not expect the patterns of descriptions and narrative to line up so neatly into two camps. Group A is represented by eight participants who answered the interview questions in ways that suggested a perspective that supports pedagogy focused on the procedures of teaching. This group is a mix of faculty and administrators from all three colleges (COE, College of Arts and Letters, College of Engineering, Forestry, and Natural Science). The second group, Group B, is also comprised of both faculty and administrators from two of the three colleges. These four participants answered the interview questions in ways that endorsed a pedagogy that embeds teaching skills within a framework that includes the intersections of knowledge and the institutional structures of schools. I recognize that within both groups there is overlap in values and beliefs as well as varying shades of interpretation. In an effort to both ease the sense of duality and retain the tension between the two groups, I acknowledge that the responses may suggest certain epistemological values, but do not reflect the entirety of the participants' perspectives. This distinction is important as to highlight that these themes should not be used to pit one against the other, but to expose the contrast. That said, I cannot deny that the data suggests bifurcated classification of two distinct perspectives.

The binary structure of the data indicates an impasse. Once sides are taken, communication stops. As the data begins to reveal an acute split in perspectives, I argue that the averse structure is related to the power of influence found in the emphasis on procedural discourse leveraged by the accrediting agency. In the section below, I illustrate the distinct positions in Table 1 and then supply the data as well as an explanation to support the emergent themes of Groups A and B. Table 1 displays the three interview question categories, the number and type of participants for each group, whether the participants worked in the discipline area programs or in the College of Education, and the themes that describe the participants' responses.

Table 1 Question Categories and Emergent Themes

Question Categories	Group A 4 Faculty 4 Administrators 7 (Discipline Area) 1 (COE)	Group B 3 Faculty 1 Administrator 1 (Discipline Area) 3 (COE)
Roles	Methods	Context
Conceptual Framework	Adapt	Change
Problems	External	Internal

Roles: Group A —Methods Centered & Group B—Context Centered

The Roles category included questions around topics such as, "How would you describe your role, the college's role, your program's role in preparing future teachers?" I believed that asking these questions would begin to surface the PEURs' values related to teacher preparation. I was also attempting to uncover what they saw as their purpose and mission of their department or college. When I asked about the role of the College of Education in preparing teachers, seven (Group A) responded that the role was to "collaborate with content areas" and "supplement content with baseline courses." One participant (Group A) replied that there was no role for COE in undergraduate teacher programs. The remaining four participants (Group B) viewed the role for COE as providing a broader context for teacher preparation. "I see (COE's) role to guide our students to be thinkers, to think about the system and how (the current system) treats our students as products on a conveyor belt to pass tests."

When participants were asked, "How do you see your role in preparing teacher candidates?" Group A answered the question with concepts that were predominantly linked to providing skills or strategies for pre service teachers. For example: one respondent said, "… focus on the 'do' right from the beginning, and it eliminates the sense of transfer." Another from this group replied, "I feel that my role is to give teachers the skills and knowledge that they need to be lifelong learners and lifelong educators." Group B respondents answered this question in a way that included terms like 'system' or 'culture'. For example, "I see my role as preparing students, in a broad sense, to enter into school culture and to have some tools and theory to take their discipline and develop a progressive pedagogy in school."

Although some of the participants from Group A mentioned the need to connect theory with practice and be able to defend methods choices, emphasis was placed on methods. Participants from Group B seemed to be situated in a broader context. They placed their role as teacher educators in a social and political arena.

Conceptual Framework: Group A—Adapt & Group B—Change

The central point for my questions regarding the interpretation of the conceptual framework was on trying to understand the PEURs' individual interpretations of the conceptual framework. All respondents said that they agreed with the PEU's mission and vision statements that were embedded in the conceptual framework. Typical answers from the question "Have the principles from the conceptual framework affected your teaching methods or approach?" were: "My background in education and training… were completely consistent with both the mission and the vision." and "It just helped clarify what we were already doing. "We are definitely learner centered, definitely committed to diversity. You know, advocacy, lifelong learning all of that."

However, when participants were asked, "How do you interpret the guiding image, 'Learning professionals committed to student success in changing environments'?" there was a distinct division between those who saw student success as adapting to environments that change or student success as making changes to the environment. Group A answers that fell under the Adapt theme resembled the following: "Regardless of the situation that teachers find themselves in and no matter what the challenges, what the problems, what financial, whatever those problems may be, that they are committed to doing the very best job that they can for the students that are in that environment." Another from Group A responded with, "The skill set that people need in order to be successful is unbelievably dynamic." An administrator from Group A whose answers aligned with the Adapt theme had this to say about changing environments:

> I think we have to recognize that today very few of our students are going to have just one career; they're probably going to have three to four different careers. So, again, how do we give them that skill set, which includes problem solving, communication, you know, knowing how to access information, knowing how to communicate it well, how to work together as individuals and all those 21st Century kinds of skills. … The good news for us is we know when the economy goes down, interest in education goes up.

Responses from Group B talked about change in relationship to the guiding image. "(It) suggests that my students are helping their students change not only their educational environment but also the world." Another faculty member from Group B responded with:

> I knew it was interpreted around here as adapting to school environments, and I fully believe that's a fine thing. …And I've come to realize that a more energizing, more empowering interpretation of the guiding image is for us to be committed for students to be successful in schools where they will change schools.

These examples reveal a significant split in perspective. Although both groups could see value in adapting to and affecting change in school environments, Group A expressed the dominant belief that teacher candidates need to learn how to accommodate to the normative discourses of schools. An assumption that seems to underpin this perspective is that practicing teachers are bound by the school environment and must adapt what they know to be best for their students to fit with that environment. The interpretation of the guiding image also revealed notions about what was meant by professionalism and student success. For example, one faculty member from Group A explained:

> Well, I think that the idea of a learning professional is that we are preparing teachers to be good consumers of literature from professional organizations… That they subscribe to education journals and weeklies. And so this is something that

> they walk out the door with the idea that you know education is not a stagnant field. It's very, very dynamic.

An administrator from Group A:

> To me, committed to student success means committed to professional development. The only way you're going to continue to be top notch for your students is that you're top notch in your profession, and that you're aware of current trends, the current issues, changes, that you're continuously adding to your content base.

> In contrast to the examples from Group A, an administrator included in Group B responded

with:

> …being bold, appropriate, and courageous to change their practice to assist every student on their personal journey. Those are the ones I think have reached a high level of professionalism.

Problems in Public Education: Group A—External Origin & Group B—Internal Origin

The final category of questions dealt with perceived problems in public schools and what happens in the PEURs' courses/programs to prepare teacher candidates to influence these problems. With these questions, I drew from the vision and mission statements that refer to the future and the idea of educational leaders. I wanted to understand if the participants believed that anything needed to be changed in our public schools and how those needs were approached in their teacher preparation curriculum/programs. All participants believed that education needed improvement.

Within Group A, there was a consistent thread of linking problems in our public schools with external influences that act as obstacles for teachers in implementing best practices that make up the teacher education instruction. Some quotes that capture this point of view from individual Group A participants are as follows:

Problem: "We don't have systems in place that are thoughtful, that support teachers."

Approach: "In some ways our students should be leaving our program and being leaders in the kind of reform based teaching that we're looking for. The teacher role is curriculum implementer vs. developer"

Problem: "So, we do have weak teachers. We also have amazingly strong teachers, and I think the majority of them, need to have continued professional support from principals, from their school districts so they can keep getting the kind of professional knowledge and professional support that would help them become better teachers."

Approach: "Supervise our own teachers, bring faculty to campus, tell cooperating teachers this is what we need from you. We should all be working together."

Problem: "I blame it all on the administrators." They (new teachers) would like to implement the content that we're giving them, but in some cases they lack the technical support."

Approach: "I tell them this is what education is going to be like until we start educating parents." "I don't think most first year teachers are prepared to be active agents in the system."

The approach to these problems was to provide a strong curriculum that employed strategies and techniques that embraced many of the tenets found in the conceptual framework (i.e. student centered and inquiry based curriculum). These eight participants also mentioned that mentoring new teachers would help secure that the methods learned from their teacher education courses would remain intact in the face of more traditional techniques.

Group B spoke about the problems in public schools in terms of obstacles to powerful teaching linked to issues of replicating the status quo and curriculum that was not connected to social and cultural concerns.

Problem: "The overwhelming problem is the narrow focus on covering material and it is contrary to how people learn, and it distances students from their own understandings of how they learn and of their own knowledge about the world."

Approach: "Resist fragmentation of curriculum and teach powerful curriculum. Make sure that they're equipped to understand the cultural conversation about school and then secondly to help them understand where is that coming from.

Problem: "…there is no connection between content and learning. And our students have grown up in an environment where they think learning is about jumping through hoops."

Approach: "One is I'm trying to make sure that every lesson they create has high level thinking skills involved and collaborative pieces involved. The second piece to that is, they have to take their room, their teaching out of the room to the broader community."

Problem: "I'm seeing this enormous waste of time, just a waste of time because kids aren't being asked to do things that engage them, it doesn't have connections to the real world. And so the result is this robotic, reproduction of the status quo."

Approach: "I guess my thrust now is to indicate to the students I have… that I believe they're smart, regardless of who they are, that I want them to connect their real life experiences and what they see going on in the world as we open up windows to make that clearer for them, that they can learn it and that they can be savvy then about inequities in school."

Group B focused on preparing students to explore inequities in schooling and to affect change. The Internal theme classification comes from the idea that participants in Group B believed that it could be through the teacher candidate's understanding and acknowledgement of the broader scope of problems within our schools that they would be empowered to intervene. Better curriculum in the form of strategies would not improve education, but rather the change

would come internally through their educational perspective to be more inclusive, more questioning, to connect learning with their lives and the lives of their students.

To summarize the data, the observational field notes from secondary faculty meetings, the secondary retreat, and the USTEC meetings taken during accreditation preparation described the secondary faculty member interactions as becoming more invested in epistemological discussion while a majority of the discipline area faculty became more absorbed with the technical task of alignment with NCATE requirements. Group A from the semi-structured interviews emphasized a procedural interpretation with attention paid to educational theory as a way to explain classroom and curricular methods, techniques, and strategies in contrast with Group B's interpretation of applying theory to analyze the discourse of schools and question the stats quo. The crux of the differing perspectives is found in Group A's interpretation to adapt to changing environments versus Group B's interpretation to engage in changing environments. The next section answers the research question that guides the study, discusses the implications of the findings, and suggests a process to disrupt a dominant technical discourse.

Discussion

How does a Professional Education Unit (PEU), comprised of all colleges that prepare future teachers, unite to pursue their collective goals while remaining true to their individual educational values? When the collective goals are re-appropriated to fit within a narrow technical construct and the notion that unity means conformity, the PEU cannot unite. With an emphasis on technical alignment and reporting accountability, there is little space for intellectual discourse.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, many of the discipline areas in our PEU have argued that due to their extensive SPA requirements, most of the COE courses are no longer needed in their teacher education programs. The argument is correct if a technical rationale supported by efficiency is the accepted standard for programmatic decisions. I believe that dialogue could have eased our differences in educational epistemologies and broadened our perspectives. Both groups A and B had common interests and values that were clearly articulated in our conceptual framework. Eliminating courses that offer a critical perspective for teacher candidates is a dismal consequence when a blanket of technical discourse dominates to obscure the values of individual educators and the diverse epistemologies embedded in the common conceptual framework.

Williams (1977) explains that schools act as agents of "selective tradition" which provides a context for the technical interpretations. The key word is 'selective' whereby the dominant culture chooses certain meanings and practices for emphasis while other meanings are neglected and excluded. Apple (2004) further explains this context in his discussion of hegemony, "it (hegemony) refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived. It needs to be understood on a different level than 'mere opinion' or 'manipulation' " (p. 4). Most accrediting agencies are concerned with aligning outcomes with strategies and procedures. The inherent qualities of NCATE represent a "selective tradition" that favors a technical discourse and pushes towards an adaptive epistemology.

The current trends in education to tighten standardized accountability and develop more efficient teacher-training models echo a dominant technical discourse and are reflected in this case study's data. Although several of the participants from Group A included funding, standardized tests, overcrowding and the like as problems in public schools, the language for addressing these external problems was a technical discourse. For example, several participants within Group A

described professionalism as being "up on trends", "good consumers of literature from professional organizations," and "current with 21st century literacy skills." While all of these things might be good for students, we can understand the dissension within the PEU when we compare these comments to Group B's description of professionalism as being "bold and courageous," and "able to assist each student on their individual educational journey." Group A responses lean toward a corporate model that speaks of improving the product through better techniques and strategies. Although Group A talked about the importance for students to understand why these methods were consistent with 'best practice' and what research has to say about good teaching and learning, the emphasis was placed on the 'do.' Group A's perspective as illustrated from the data in this case study, coalesces with NCATE's focus on the technical and procedural. I recognize the peril of a binary reflecting the positions of Group A and B; however, the data supports two distinct camps. In spite of the fluid and messy nature of philosophies, the opposing poles are even more clearly drawn due to the strength and power of the external influence of the accrediting agency.

The data expresses that although the conceptual framework used phrases and concepts that invite dissent, argument, inquiry, change, and educational leadership, the context surrounding these powerful forces is a normative technical discourse. Conceptual tensions around differing ideologies within a university can be a positive occurrence. The tension can create discussions and growth of seeing things from different perspectives. However, this requires dialogue. Freire (1973) says, "only dialogue truly communicates" (p. 45).

> Dialogue is the only way, not only in the vital questions of the political order, but in all the expressions of our being. Only by virtue of faith, however, does dialogue have power and meaning: by faith on man and his possibilities, by the faith that I can only become truly myself when other men also become themselves. Dialogue creates a critical attitude. (Jaspers, 1953, in Freire, 1973, P. 45)

Freire goes on to explain that dialogue is represented by a horizontal image where communicator A is on the same level with communicator B. Empathy needs to be created between the 2 poles that are engaged in a joint search. Anti dialogue involves vertical relationships between persons. "This vertical relationship does not foster dialogue nor does it create a critical attitude. Thus, anti dialogue does not communicate, but rather issues communiqués" (p. 45).

Burbules (1993) builds on Freire's inspirational and moral descriptions of dialogue to provide applicable definitions to the concept. "Considering dialogue as a kind of relation emphasizes the aspects of dialogue that are beyond us, that we discover, that we are changed by" (p. xii). The aspects of dialogue that enable room for change suggests a need for openness on the part of all participants so that degrees of influence may occur.

> Dialogue is guided by a spirit of discovery, so that the typical tone of a dialogue is exploratory and interrogative. It involves a commitment to the process of communicative interchange itself, a willingness to "see things through" to some meaningful understandings or agreements among the participants. Furthermore, it manifests an attitude of reciprocity among the participants: an interest, respect, and concern that they share for one another, even in the face of disagreements" (Burbules, 1993 p. 8).

Arendt (1968) advocates "visiting" multiple perspectives to promote dialogue. From Arendt's point of view explained by Coulter and Wiens (2002), "visiting" involves carefully listening to the perspectives of others because "the more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, the better I can judge" (Arendt, 1968, p. 241). The secondary faculty had some success in "visiting" multiple perspectives through dialogue. We disagreed on many issues, but were open to being influenced by each other. There was a force of empathy in that we were engaged in a joint search of strengthening our teacher education programs. In contrast, the USTEC meeting described previously was an example of anti dialogue. Empathy was broken. The secondary faculty presented our summaries as an item on the agenda list – a communiqué. Slinking back to my office as described in the opening vignette is another example of anti-dialogue. Although dialogue can be uncomfortable, it was my responsibility to "visit" the perspectives that entered my consciousness while filling my water bottle. I missed the opportunity to listen, learn, and share.

In order to enter into an environment of dialogue, we need to resist the impulse to tell those who hold a contrasting view that they are wrong and offer the reasons to support our claim. Rather, while still owning individual values with no façade of neutrality, we need to employ communication virtues such as patience, an openness to give and receive criticism, and a willingness to listen (Burbules, 1993). Dialogue does not need to be directed toward conformity and agreement but toward establishing intersubjectivity to create understanding, tolerance, and respect across difference (Burbules & Rice, 1991).

Habarmas (1974) argues that in order to engage in dialogue, individuals must be liberated from the social processes that distort communication and understanding. He suggests that we must be aware of how our aims can be distorted by dominant social ideologies and provide obstacles toward true communication. The dominant technical discourse found in the NCATE accreditation materials, is an example of a discourse that possesses the power to crush the drive for inquiry and alter the university environment from a pursuit of discovery and growth to mechanistic accountability.

My suggestion for interrupting the kinds of conflict described in this case study is to take a lesson from Friere and Burbules and others (i.e. Arendt, 1968; Giroux, 1988; Habarmas, 1973; McLaren, 1988) to create space for dialogue within the Professional Education Unit. This recommendation interferes with the efficiency technical model found in NCATE's objectives. The concept of dialogue does coalesce with the 'idea' of the "transformative initiative" (Cibulka, 2009) put forth by the NCATE President James Cibulka. Since there is no mention of social justice, inquiry, or democracy in Cibulka's description of this initiative, I suspect we may have very different views regarding the interpretation of "transformative." Some dialogue with Dr. Cibulka may be in order.

The process towards dialogue requires a recognition that there are values manifested by 'selective tradition' ever-present in our lives and society. This ubiquitous existence is an argument for why we need mission statements and conceptual frameworks to communicate feelings and understandings that go beyond the common discourse. They can inspire us to expand perspective to seek a more just society or a deeper commitment to higher values. As scholars at institutions of higher education, we have a responsibility to critique and interrupt a technical discourse that muzzles messy discussion. Using an institution's mission statement as a worthy guide to strive for higher ideals can support horizontal dialogue between two poles with empathy in the middle.

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ISSN 1920-4175