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Kavita Kapadia Matsko
kmatsko@nl.edu

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Redesigning Teacher Preparation for the Future

Kavita Kapadia Matsko

National Louis University, Chicago, IL

As I'm sitting down to write this editorial, I've just finished another day's work at National Louis University, where I have the privilege of working with a warm and spirited group of colleagues. Together, we're building onto the esteemed and storied history of the National College of Education and dreaming into the future of teacher preparation. Towards that end, NLU teacher preparation has embarked on a significant redesign of its programs to ensure that our candidates are ready to face the increasing complexities of early-career teaching.

In a short time, we've made meaningful progress towards this goal by building a culture of self-study and learning during our team meetings, developing shared understandings of teacher education pedagogies, and articulating themes that we'd like to see cut across all of our programs such as diversity, technology, and socio-emotional learning. For these big ideas to come to life in our coursework, we will need to identify specific knowledge bases and core practices associated with each of these themes, revisit assessments, work with supervisors and mentor learning, and the list goes on! We are learning our way through these efforts, one step at a time. As exciting as the change process is, the challenges can feel daunting when we begin to think about the myriad of factors that influence the outcomes of teacher preparation, such as candidate dispositions, accessibility to quality mentor teachers, and placement schools to name just a few. So given the array of dizzying factors, how do we stay the course?

In reading through this issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education*, I'm struck by the germane wisdom embedded in its pages. All of this issue's articles are threaded together with a story about improvement—individual and/or collective. While the researchers are appropriately speaking to the particulars of their context, they also help us begin to see the universal implications from their work. It is these important reminders that I will carry back into my day to day, as my colleagues and I keenly strive towards the future.

Beginning with “In Taking Action: (Re)Imagining Professional Development Through The Teacher Research Project,” author Joan Gujarati reminds us first and foremost how **teacher-led research facilitates professional learning**. At NCE/NLU, we've come to similar conclusions through design-based research efforts around teacher education pedagogies we've engaged in to date. Gujarati reinforces the power of disciplined inquiry to drive program learning. In “Teacher Leaders of Collaborative Action

Research: Challenges and Rewards,” Stephen P. Gordon and Rachel D. Solis take us through four rich cases of collaborative action research projects. Their findings assert the **necessity of positive interpersonal relationships** between colleagues as they navigate the inevitable hills and valleys of any collaborative inquiry. Next, we move to “‘Experimenting with our Education’ or Enhancing It? Co-Teaching from the Perspective of Students,” in which Alyssa Harter and Laura Jacobi highlight the **importance of co-teaching**. While their article is focused on the benefits of co-teaching instructors for undergraduate students, I am reminded about the multiple learning opportunities that abound for faculty when we try something new together in a shared space. That engaging in **teacher research can deepen our own commitments** to our discipline is one of the key messages offered to us by the work of Heather Leaman and Robert Corcoran. “Teacher Action Research in Elementary Social Studies: Use of iPads in Sixth-Grade Geography Instruction,” illustrates how a teacher’s action research in a social studies classroom deepened instructional practice, promoted the understanding and use of materials, and enhanced student learning in the classroom as a result. Indeed, creating opportunities to systematically examine and reflect on our own practice need not be limited to what we do in our classrooms. In “Teacher-Researchers’ Reflective Narratives on Their Experiences at the Language Center Research Committee,” Kamla S. Al Aamri and Munira K. Al Wahaibi offer a unique reflective narrative about the perspectives and experiences of participants in the Language Centre Research Committee in Oman. They remind us, rightly so, about the importance of periodically **clarifying and revisiting mission and purpose** of any endeavor, as multiple stakeholders can often, over time, carry differing perspectives about our roles and responsibilities, as well as varying definitions of success.

Although our work at NCE is in its early stages, the sage pearls of wisdom about improvement shared through this issue of *i.e.* leave me feeling heartened that we are on the right track. I’m grateful to be on this collective journey forward, stretching and extending the preparation experiences we provide to our aspiring teachers in service of the firm belief that every student deserves a great teacher. I have found affirmation about NCE’s direction through the pages of this month’s issue of *i.e.* It is my hope that you will similarly be inspired by these illustrative stories about learning and improvement.