FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Envisioning Committee
Graduate School of Education
May 2007

Overview

During the 2006–2007 academic year, deans, chairs, and representative faculty from the Graduate School of Education's (GSE) departments of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, Educational Leadership and Policy, Learning and Instruction, and Library and Information Studies met to discuss the future of the profession of education, librarianship, and selected concomitants as reflected by the school's current disciplinary/departmental emphases. Recognizing that sociocultural demands which influence the current educational landscape are increasingly shaped by global imperatives, and that schools of education must remain cognizant of these shifts in order to maintain relevance and utility as arbiters of research, knowledge, and professional skills, GSE challenged itself to forecast the profession and professional demands over the next fifteen years. The goal was to identify the purpose, mission, values, and conceptual/intellectual foci that will take GSE forward to 2021, and position it for excellence, prominence, and impact as a school of education. This vision will serve as a guide for our resource management strategies in the coming years. It was agreed at the outset that reference to current departments and programs would be suspended in favor of identifying those broad intellectual themes that would both illuminate and enable faculty and students to address the major issues important to a successful education enterprise.

Core Purpose

To inform and prepare a profession to positively shape human development, education, and the information environment in local, national, and global contexts.

Mission

GSE is a professional school with a social mission in the public interest. We create and apply knowledge informed by research on human development, educational policy, pedagogy, and information science.

Values

We believe that:
- Education and knowledge positively transforms peoples' lives.
- Excellent research is dynamic and recursive; it both informs and is formed by practice.
- Our best work is created when we collaborate with partners within local, national, and global communities.

- Ethical principles and professional standards are cornerstones of the Graduate School of Education. This commitment is evident in research, teaching, and service both on campus and in all of our collaborative endeavors. We recognize that in the context of rapid societal change, our signature achievement must remain the development of dedicated professionals and scholarly products characterized by their integrity, as well as their intellectual excellence.

Intellectual Themes

Known for excellence in research, a committed faculty, and recursive pedagogical methods, GSE shapes education and information. An emphasis on the following areas of inquiry • Institutional and Educational Policy Analysis, • Education for Social Equity, • Family-School-Societal Transitions, and • The Science of Learning and Pedagogy will shape the direction of GSE for the immediate future. These themes build on and extend existing strengths, as well as create exciting challenges for new areas of cross disciplinary research.

I. Institutional and Educational Policy Analysis[1]

Institutional and Educational Policy Analysis (IEPA) represents an intellectual theme that we believe will become a major GSE strategic strength and, potentially, a centerpiece of its academic reputation by the year 2021.

 The work of IEPA will focus on how institutions (both formal and informal) and official policies (and informal practices) affect lived outcomes across local, national, and international contexts, and how these institutions and policies are themselves affected by societal, economic, and political pressures.

 IEPA research is an applied, multi-method, multi-disciplinary, problem-focused, integration of research, policy, and practice. Theoretical lenses from disciplines and sub-disciplines in education, sociology, economics, political science, philosophy, library and information science, history, organizational theory, and industrial psychology, among others, provide necessary frameworks for helping to understand the complexity of institutional and educational policy analysis.

 We conceive of educational institutions quite broadly so as to include formal organizations such as governmental bureaucracies, schools, library and information agencies, and not-for-profits, as well as informal institutions such as families and social networks. Similarly, we define policy broadly, utilizing Fowler's (2000) definition that it is "… the dynamic and value laden process through which a political system handles a public problem" (p. 9). Furthermore, we construe policy analysis to encompass policy formulation, interpretation, enactment, and evaluation, as well as the critical practices that emerge informally. We will study the how, why, and by whom policies and practices are created. Such research might emerge from a mix of methodologies such as inside accounts of those who participate in the formulation and enactment of policy documents, outsider accounts of researchers who interview those involved and/or study the artifacts

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[1] *Subcommittee*: W. Barba, G. Dimitriadis, S. G. Grant, S. Jacobson, J. Lee

produced, and statistical analyses by researchers working with various secondary data sets.

For example, a central and on-going area of research will be examining the effectiveness of educational/social policies and interventions used by public and private preK-20 educational institutions, libraries, and information agencies and how they impede and/or promote social equity. Specifically, we hope to better understand how institutional and educational policy can work to improve individual outcomes and subsequent life opportunities by tracking relationships between policies and outcomes within complex multi-layered educational institutions and across these institutions and the publics they serve. We are interested, as well, in how these policies impact multiple constituencies such as students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other educational practitioners and policy makers.

We expect this area of research to cast new light on enduring questions of policymaking and to clarify our thinking, advance our knowledge, and inform current and future practice, especially as it pertains to the production of academic knowledge, student learning, and the preparation of future teachers, professors, administrators, other key educational support staff such as counselors and psychologists, and finally all those who engage in educational policymaking.

II.   Education for Social Equity [2]

Education for Social Equity is a major strategic strength of the Graduate School of Education. As a faculty, we recognize that education can either be a transformative force for equity and empowerment for the marginalized segments of society, or it can be a force for maintaining the status quo and continuing to privilege certain groups. Traditionally it has favored the latter. However, we see education as a transformative power for shaping future social structures and empowering people to participate equitably within them. These changes are made possible through critically-oriented research, pedagogies, and technologies that have as their mission the empowerment of individuals through education to thrive in and shape the society in which they live.

The goals of *Education for Social Equity* are to: (a) increase access to the conceptual and institutional tools necessary for meaningful participation in a highly technological and information-saturated society; (b) identify, understand, and transform conditions responsible for low-achieving or struggling students, adults, schools, and cultural institutions; (c) improve teaching and leadership for a diverse, pluralistic, and interconnected world; (d) critically analyze and take action toward resolving educational, informational, and societal inequities; (e) help individuals and groups realize the value of social responsibility and civic engagement; (f) protect unfettered, free access to information; and (g) use our institutional strength to attract funding for research, development, and assessment in schools, libraries, and archival agencies.

The research goals of *Education for Social Equity* are to: (a) study teaching, learning, and content appropriate to the languages, literacies, mathematical, scientific, and informational skills valued in local contexts and highly technological global economies; (b) identify, analyze, and address the social underpinnings and complexities

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[2] *Subcommittee*: J. Collins, L. Johnson, J. Lee, S. Miller, D. Moore-Russo, L. Peterson, R. Pope, D. Rissel, R. Ylimaki

of racial, gender, class, and urban-rural achievement gaps; (c) re-conceptualize learning throughout the lifespan through more critically-oriented perspectives that also address the intergenerational accumulation of social inequities; and (d) create, examine, and assess multicultural and global understanding and competence. Such educational research can contribute to enabling all segments of society to thrive in the 21st century workplace and in civic and personal spaces—in order to revitalize societies of the future.

For example, a central and on-going area of research is the examination of the effectiveness of interventions used by public and private preK-20 educational institutions, libraries, and information agencies and how they impede and/or promote social equity. Other examples can be found in the examination of the social and cultural contexts that can limit or enhance success in all facets of an individual's life.

Such research questions are at the center of many controversies about effective educational practices and social interventions to advance equity. Our research strength is in the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods to a variety of educational and social equity problems. Strengthening this already strong research agenda may involve new initiatives such as building a network of faculty for collaborative research across and beyond GSE, as is currently the case in the *Writing Intensive Reading Comprehension Study* and the *New Literacies Group.* By working across interdisciplinary boundaries we are hoping to establish a framework for accessing information, teaching, learning, and leading in 21st century contexts.

Conclusion

Schools, libraries, and other cultural institutions can be agents for transformative learning. Building on existing strengths in research on teaching, learning, and accessing information to promote social equity, *Education for Social Equity* is currently and will continue to grow as a central strategic strength of GSE, both as an intellectual theme and a research agenda that promise to propel GSE to an exemplary reputation by the year 2021.

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III.   Family-School-Societal Transitions

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One of the strategic strengths of GSE is **Family-School-Societal Transitions.** The faculty members of GSE believe that an understanding of the power of the family-school relationship, especially in the early years, is essential for positive outcomes for *all* children and adolescents. Likewise, the importance of preparing children, adolescents, and adults for successful transitions to higher education or the workforce is crucial. Our focus is explicitly developmental in preparing young people for successful movement through each life, school, and work stage in the context of societal changes and individual and family challenges. Some specific examples of this focus include career preparation for learners with special physical and mental health needs, improving the connection between school curricula and rapidly evolving workforce needs, integrating multiple literacies related to successful transitions, supporting families under stress, and working with others in GSE to improve access and equity.

The goals of the *Family-School-Societal Transitions* research agenda are:
(a) increase research and grant funding in the areas of family-school partnerships and career/vocational planning to enhance academic and psychosocial outcomes for

children, youth, and young adults; (b) attract faculty members who will increase our visibility and provide intellectual leadership by publishing in these areas; (c) increase cross-discipline collaboration with other units engaged in research in these areas (e.g., pediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, social and preventative medicine, social work, Center for Children and Families); (d) enlarge the number of doctoral and master's students admitted to programs within GSE related to this strategic strength; and (e) increase collaboration within GSE (e.g., Center for Reading and Literature, Early Childhood Center).

It should be noted that in the *Family-School-Societal Transitions* model, family-school relationships are not synonymous with parent-teacher interactions. Rather, the focus follows comprehensive program models that consist of school readiness, early learning, parent involvement that empowers parents to take a role in education, and school-linked mental health and career services designed to improve academic achievement by ensuring that the educational, health, and social needs of children, youth, and adults are met. The nature of interactions between families, schools, and the work place deserve further consideration. The *Family-School-Societal Transitions* agenda would assist in providing research models and training opportunities for the important "missing links" between families, school-based psychosocial and educational service programming, and the wider world of higher education, career planning, and the work place. This research priority is central to the missions of both GSE and UB.

IV. The Science of Learning and Pedagogy

At the core of a high-quality graduate school of education at a Research I university should be the scientific study of, and scientific advancement of the learning and pedagogy[3] of specific disciplines. These areas include essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a literate populace. Increasing American students' achievements, particularly in mathematics, science, literacy, and information, is a national priority, and GSE has an obligation to make a contribution.

GSE faculty are at the leading edge in developing lines of inquiry and comprehensive, complementary sets of research methods that define a science of learning and pedagogy. These include the following examples:

1. GSE faculty are leading the development of integrated learning theories, empirical research, and practice to realize the potential of the powerful but ill-defined construct of *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK; Shulman, 1986). For example, faculty in mathematics, science, literacy, language, and music education have developed domain-specific *learning trajectories* in social-cultural contexts. Learning trajectories are detailed descriptions of people's thinking, motivations, and learning in a specific domain, and related, conjectured pathways throughout which instruction is designed to facilitate learning. Similar research may be conducted in other subject-matter domains, and on learning by adults in professional settings, teacher expertise development, school administrator mentoring, and guidance counseling apprenticeship. This research can provide a

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[3] Pedagogy here is considered the profession of teaching, training, or professional development in a domain.

core for the development of PCK, helping to define it as a repertoire of strategies for structuring, transforming, representing, sequencing, and tailoring content for specific learners.

2. Critical for this work, and for progress of multiple methods of scientific research, is development of valid, reliable, and fair measurement instruments. GSE has been a leader in creating systematized instruments and measurements in content domains and counseling.

3. Scientific theories based on learning trajectories and PCK should inform how teachers guide students, clients, and patrons as they learn. Thus, these provide the basis for teacher and professional education. GSE is poised to become a leader in developing an evidenced-based *signature pedagogy* (Shulman, 2005)[4] for schools of education—a defining pedagogy that represents a powerful, unique, scientifically-based approach to education in the domain. For example, faculty across GSE are working to use technologically-enhanced video analysis tools to bring empirical research on PCK and learning trajectories from their research programs into their classrooms. That is, faculty record video cases, bringing them to university courses for technology-enhanced analysis and reflection. This is but one approach; the creation, development, and testing of learning and pedagogical theories requires the synthesis of multiple methodologies within a coherent, comprehensive research framework. To provide trustworthy evidence of effectiveness, researchers use methods ranging from qualitative observations and clinical interviews to randomized field trials. GSE has the potential to develop a signature pedagogy that will be emulated by schools of education throughout the nation and thus *extend the scientific basis for teaching and learning to undergraduate and graduate schools of education,* all within a common framework and thus each focus of the vision described here is synergistically connected to each of the others.

4. The creation, development, and testing of theories of learning and teaching (interpreted as the guiding and facilitation of learning) requires the combination of multiple disciplines and methodologies within a coherent, comprehensive research framework. For example, interdisciplinary research within GSE, and between GSE and other schools (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, engineering) is ongoing; further collaboration with other disciplines is needed.

Cross-cutting Themes

There are accompanying themes that permeate the identity of GSE, each of which is integral to the expression of our mission and values. GSE is committed to exploring and

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[4] Shulman states that "Compared to any other learned profession such as law, engineering, medicine, nursing, or the clergy, where curricula, standards, and assessments are far more standardized across the nation, teacher education is nothing but multiple pathways. It should not surprise us that critics respond to the apparent cacophony of pathways and conclude that it doesn't matter how teachers are prepared….The teacher education profession must come to this consensus; only then can accreditation enforce it." Our intent is to lead the development of such a signature pedagogy, and clearly to establish the value of our expertise (e.g., in the face of alternative certifications that do not address PCK).

articulating issues concerning **diversity**, **multiculturalism**, and **access** in all of its endeavors. We believe that the populations and cultures we serve are diverse; that our perspective is **global**; that **technology** is key; and finally that **partnerships** amplify our social impact.

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