The topic of this edited volume, teacher preparation programs situated within urban contexts, is prescient. Recent mandates from a major accrediting body (i.e., Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation) are coercing colleges of education to build relationships with school districts, and scholars have noted the importance of context in teacher preparation. Additionally, Urban Teacher Residencies (UTR) have cropped up across the country, and there are 17 partner organizations in the Urban Teacher Residency United (UTRU) Network at the time of this writing. Clearly, teacher preparation for urban education is a timely issue and one that must be addressed in a multifaceted manner. Noel’s edited text provides guidance to teacher educators of all stripes regarding how to develop and nurture these programs.

The volume includes an all-star team of researchers on urban education. Indeed, this is apparent from the very start of the book which opens with a piece from eminent teacher education scholar
Zeichner and co-author Payne (pp. 3-19). These authors raise the question of whose knowledge should count in teacher education. They advocate for a diversity of perspectives and the lessening of hierarchies in teacher education; their call extends to veteran teachers as well as community members. Helpfully, the authors provide examples of such programs which illuminates their point and connects theory to practice. The authors caution,

> [W]e need to be careful not to assume that merely bringing people together from the different spheres of universities, schools, and communities is necessarily any different epistemologically than what went on before, or is any more educative for teacher candidates or students. (p. 12)

Moving teacher education into urban contexts takes more than simple physical relocation, it requires a shift in our ways of knowing.

Emphasizing the linkages between learning, knowing, and acting, Glass and Lindquist Wong (pp. 20-35) report on several projects from a Professional Development School (PDS) network called the Equity Network. The descriptions of these projects—(1) health and science curricula; (2) a community mapping exercise; and (3) lesson study—succeed in illuminating the processes for preparing teachers for urban schools. Although the concluding segment of the chapter devolves into a bit of a rant about high-stakes accountability, the point of contextualized learning for preservice teachers is well made here.

The first two chapters comprise Part I of the book, which is devoted to democratizing knowledge in urban teacher education programs. Part II focuses on preservice teachers, and includes two chapters. This section of the book is notable for the authors’ use of data; both chapters here report mixed methods data on particular urban teacher education programs. Stairs and Friedman (pp. 39-55) relate both qualitative and quantitative studies on the Urban Immersion (UI) program at Boston College. The two methods afforded different opportunities for learning about the UI program; for example, the qualitative studies revealed themes about the complexity of urban teaching, translating theory into practice, and more. The quantitative survey data conveyed participants’ beliefs about the value of different pieces of the program—such as the partnered field experience. Overall, this chapter illuminates the
strengths and areas of development of the UI program and thus contributes to a body of case knowledge about teacher preparation programs.

Lee, Showalter, and Eckrich (pp. 56-71) report on the findings from two quantitative studies of their urban teacher education program. A significant contribution of this chapter is the authors’ development of instruments designed to measure the influence of course work on preservice teachers’ attitudes and perceptions. Specifically, two measures were designed for these studies: (1) the Urban Teaching Intentions (UTI) survey, and (2) the Urban Education Perceptions (UEP) survey. These instruments could be used or adapted for other programs to evaluate preservice teacher disposition in urban teacher preparation programs. The authors conclude, “traditional teacher education outside of contextual classrooms is weak, making it difficult to develop skills relevant to specific communities” (p. 68). Indeed, the authors make a compelling case for situated preservice teacher learning.

Part III focuses on students, and opens with a chapter from Catapano and Thompson (pp. 75-88) on a student poetry project. Grounded in the communities of practice and culturally responsive teaching literature, the authors report on an after-school, middle grades poetry project that was a joint venture between a university and an urban school. This program had a unique feature in that preservice teachers were required to provide service learning to the school. The authors report that the project continues to evolve, and that the ultimate goal is to move the project beyond a once-a-week meeting between students and preservice teachers. These are points that other teacher education programs, generally, may attend to as well.

Morgan-Fleming (pp. 89-101) provides students’ perspectives on what they want in a teacher in her chapter. As part of a partnership between Texas Tech and an elementary school, Morgan-Fleming solicited students’ perspectives on good teaching. Their advice, including to “not be too strict or too nice” (p. 97), is illustrated by students’ own drawings about good teaching. Such perspectives are particularly illuminating to the field of teacher education because students spend more time with their teachers than administrators or even researchers. These perspectives should be solicited frequently, and via developmentally appropriate methods (such as Morgan-Fleming’s related here) at all grade levels.
Part IV, “Focus on Practicing Teachers and Schools,” includes two chapters that report on the perspectives of other important, yet often quiet, stakeholders. Jeffery and Polleck (pp. 105-119) relate the perspectives of cooperating teachers in university-school partnerships. The data that the researchers collected included class observation field notes; teacher-report questionnaires; and an in-depth interview with the school principal. In-depth interviews with the cooperating teachers may have revealed richer data regarding their perspectives. Indeed, this study focused solely on the benefits and challenges of implementing a school-university partnership from public school constituents’ perspectives. Although illuminating, it would be helpful to learn more about participants’ funds of knowledge regarding working with preservice teachers in a school-university partnership.

Katsarou, Picower, and Stovall (pp. 120-133) adopt the stance “that teaching for social justice is an act of necessity and solidarity” (p. 121) and their chapter illustrates this enactment of social justice in teacher education through prioritizing community strengths. Helpfully, the authors highlight the importance of selecting mentor teachers and they describe how they work with these individuals to discourage deficit assumptions in teacher candidates. The authors provide examples throughout to illustrate the points they make; for example, an anecdote about a successful partnership between a mentor teacher and a teacher candidate is included to show how these individuals affected change within a community by creating a garden. The authors concluded that adopting a program that prioritizes community strengths requires locating mentor teachers with “specific mindsets and skill sets” (p. 132).

In Part V, the focus shifts to community partners. In Chapter 9 (pp. 137-151), Noel relates the development and decline of the Urban Teacher Education Center (UTEC) at Sacramento State University. Notably, the author relates her own field notes that she kept while building relationships with a matriarch in the community and how this relationship developed into a larger university-community partnership: a tutoring/mentoring center. The author reports on evaluation data on the UTEC program collected after five years of its operation; the evaluation mainly focused on the benefits of the program, equality in the partnership, trust within the organization,
communication between stakeholders, and the self-efficacy of those involved in the program. Although Noel moved out of her role in the UTEC program, and the program itself ceased to exist, there are still relationships between the university and the community—a testament to the need for deep relationships between multiple individuals in order to sustain school-university partnerships.

Onore and Gildin’s chapter (pp. 152-167) relates a partnership that sought to prepare urban teachers as public professionals. This goal, they noted, required,

- a vision of schools as sites for educating publics in civic virtues—virtues that center on understanding our rights as individuals alongside of and in balance with our responsibilities to our communities;
- understanding the interdependences of community members, even those with unequal power; and seeking and finding shared values and goals with others to produce forms of life that benefit the wider public. (p. 154)

This vision differs from that espoused in previous chapters in its Confucian-esque notion that members of a particular society are inherently interconnected, and thus socially responsible, to one another. The authors related their work with the All Stars Project Inc. (ASP) in Newark, New Jersey. Notably, the authors collected ongoing feedback in the form of focus groups and reflections with the university students, and community and university faculty and staff. These data revealed the influence of the after-school project on the teacher candidates and the impact on the community.

University faculty are the focus of Part VI. Peterman (pp. 171-184) relates the toll that working in and coordinating a teacher education program can place on teacher educators. She relates the stories of three teacher educators who left the profession for various reasons—to pursue other positions, because of an inappropriate fit, or even due to disillusionment. Peterman also includes the story of a successful teacher educator who remained in the profession long term. She attributed this endurance to the individual’s patience, persistence, resilience, and resistance, in addition to her “consistently renewing identity as a teacher educator strongly rooted in altruism; an ability to develop and sustain relationships and community; integrity; and creativity, creative problem solving, and a disposition toward creating future settings”
(p. 178). Thus, a teacher educator who aims to stay in the profession for a career must possess and/or develop an appropriate disposition.

Like Noel, Sessoms (pp. 185-199) also reports on her experiences in teacher preparation at Sacramento State and the Equity Network, specifically. She relates conditions that support changing teacher preparation including state-level changes in mandates for teacher preparation programs; changes in university hiring; funding opportunities; and trust building. She concludes by noting that the professional ladder in the academy is one of “‘moving up means moving out’” (p. 197). Many of the individuals involved in the Equity Network found ways to more effectually affect change by leaving the program. Thus, these individuals found themselves applying the knowledge they learned through their work in the Equity Network outside of it.

The final portion of the volume, Part VII, focuses on a “grow your own” (p. 202) program. Skinner (pp. 203-216) conveys her experiences as the coordinator of project Nueva Generación, a Chicago-based program that aimed to develop Latino community members as teachers. This program was steeped in a funds-of-knowledge approach to teacher preparation; specifically, the focus of the program was on developing community parents as teachers in order to build relationships with this population and fulfill vacancies in hard-to-staff schools. This chapter conveys all of the joys and challenges that come with implementing a Grow-Your-Own (GYO) teacher education program, including helping traditionally marginalized candidates gain admission to the program and combating deficit assumptions about the candidates—sometimes even within the academy. GYO programs are a viable means for reducing teacher shortages in hard-to-staff urban districts, and for lifting up disenfranchised communities. These models should be explored further, but Skinner’s chapter is a helpful start.

Overall, the volume is relatively comprehensive and portrays a variety of programs in urban settings. Yet, as is true of any work, this text would benefit from additional insight in several areas. Specifically, one area that the text does not address is funding programs for urban education. Other urban programs, such as the George Washington University Urban Initiative, have disappeared due to lack of funding. Building programs for urban teacher preparation is important, but ongoing development of these programs is
arguably more significant. This text would benefit from a frank discussion about potential funding models to support urban teacher preparation programs.

Additionally, teacher education programs that place preservice teachers into school contexts inherently rely on master teachers as teacher educators. As a field, we must begin to learn more about effective methods for supporting and developing the knowledge of veteran cooperating teachers, and also tap into their funds of knowledge in working with teacher candidates. Teaching teachers requires different professional knowledge and skills than teaching K-12 students; it is time we recognize this differentiated role and develop a research line in earnest to support this role.

The volume would also benefit from more objectivity. Many of the chapters were written by program directors and faculty members about their own programs. This automatically introduces a degree of subjectivity which could be combated by the input of additional, external authors. However, the extensive use of data by the authors in this volume does help to combat some of this subjectivity. Indeed, a research-based approach to teacher education is modeled in this volume and should be continued and taken up with fervor in the field at large.

About the Reviewer

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