

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

Conceptual Framework

Presented for Review By:

**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION
(NCATE)**



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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*Preparing knowledgeable, reflective, innovative educators,
committed to improving educational practice
and learning in a diverse metropolitan community*

CONTEXT

The University of Toledo was founded in 1872, as the Toledo University of Arts and Trades. Established in 1884, as a municipal institution with a mission to serve the post-secondary educational aspirations of Toledo residents, the institution has grown and matured markedly since its modest beginnings more than 130 years ago. Many major milestones mark the university's evolution from a small, locally supported college to a state assisted Carnegie Doctoral-Research Extensive metropolitan institution. Notable among these are: The Education Department of the College of Arts and Sciences becoming a Teachers College in 1916; the university officially being incorporated into the Ohio state system in 1967; the first doctoral programs (in Education) being introduced in 1959; the university becoming a member of The National Association of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges in 1985. It must be noted, however, that despite its steady growth and expansion over the years, in the eyes of many, The University of Toledo still "belongs" to the City of Toledo and its greater metropolitan region. This belonging, manifest in the extensive integration and interaction of *town and gown*, remains a major anchor point in the current university mission (Hickerson, 1972; The University of Toledo General Catalog, 2002).

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The University of Toledo, a student-centered public metropolitan research university, integrates learning, discovery and engagement, enabling students to achieve their highest potential in an environment that embraces and celebrates human diversity, respect for individuals and freedom of expression. The University strives for excellence in its service to all constituents, and commits itself to the intellectual, cultural and economic development of our community, state, nation and the world.

UNIT MISSION

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo is dedicated to enhancing teaching, learning, and leadership in educational practice. The mission of the unit is to develop highly skilled, knowledgeable, and creative teachers and other educational leaders through high quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional development programs. These programs are grounded in professional standards of excellence and contemporary research reflecting experimentation, innovation, and accountability. The unit is committed to continuous improvement through assessment, inquiry, reflection and lifelong learning. The unit's mission is consistent with the university's student centered mission that promotes integrated learning, discovery and engagement, celebration of human diversity, a disposition of respect for individuals, freedom of expression, and community engagement.

UNIT VISION

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo is recognized for its premier programs in professional education at both the initial and advanced levels, and for its leadership in responding to present, emerging, and future challenges in education. The professional education unit's commitment to rigorous assessment and continuous improvement ensures that its faculty and graduates are: (a) well prepared in subject matter, pedagogical content, and field-specific professional knowledge; (b) disposed to assessment; (c) engaged as change agents in their schools and communities; (d) sensitive and responsive to individual and cultural differences, and (e) accountable for positive student outcomes.

UNIT PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE, AND GOALS/OUTCOMES

Philosophy

The unit adheres to the philosophy that exemplary educators are developed in institutions wherein: (a) professional programs are consistent with state and national standards of excellence and there is coherence across curriculum, instruction, and field and clinical experiences; (b) inquiry, reflection, research, and assessment result in continuous professional growth and development; (c) commitment to professional and school/community engagement is modelled and supported by faculty, mentors, candidates, and others in the educational milieu; (d) individual differences and diversity are valued as cornerstones of a democratic metropolitan society, and (e) emphasis is placed on professional accountability for student growth and development.

Purpose

The Purpose of the professional education unit at The University of Toledo is twofold. First, the unit must prepare exemplary, creative, empowered educators who demonstrate the attributes set forth in the unit vision. Second, and equally important, the unit must contribute to the continuing improvement of education at all levels through exemplary teaching, relevant research, in-service education, school-community engagement, and example.

Professional Education Goals/Candidate Proficiencies

The goals/outcomes of the professional education unit at The University of Toledo include the following.

Prepare candidates who: (a) know and fully understand the content of their disciplines and are exemplary practitioners in their respective educational settings; (b) systematically engage in inquiry, reflection, and assessment; (c) demonstrate a commitment to the improvement of educational practice through the exchange of knowledge, resources and expertise within school and community; (d) respond to the special needs of students in a diverse metropolitan community; (e) accept accountability for student learning.

Cultivate and support faculty and staff who: (a) have in-depth knowledge in their respective disciplines and model exemplary practice in their daily encounters with professional education candidates; (b) demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement based on inquiry and research, reflection, and assessment; (c) regularly engage in professional discourse with educators in the P - 12 schools and early intervention programs, and with individuals and agencies in the greater metropolitan community; (d) by example, affirm their commitment to adapt to the special needs of candidates and students in a diverse educational setting; (e) demonstrate accountability for candidate learning.

DISPOSITIONS

Based on its mission, vision, philosophy, purposes, goals/outcomes, professional commitments and performance expectations, the unit is committed to preparing candidates who will demonstrate the following dispositions: (a) responsibility for meeting professional and institutional standards; (b) commitment to continuous improvement and lifelong learning by remaining current in knowledge and professional practice; (c) commitment to continual assessment, reflection and inquiry in professional practice; (d) sensitivity and responsiveness to individual and cultural differences in a diverse community; (e) commitment to engagement with school and community; (f) commitment to accountability for student learning and development.

These dispositions are demonstrated in practice by both candidates and faculty and are embedded in both the preceding and following narratives.

COHERENCE

The conceptual framework provides coherence for the unit's operations and academic programs at both the initial and advanced levels. The unit's commitments to standards alignment, continuous improvement, assessment, reflection and inquiry, diversity, school/community engagement, and accountability are reflected throughout all professional education programs at The University of Toledo, and are modelled by unit faculty.

Candidate performance and dispositions are assessed using comprehensive sets of measures that are integrated throughout each professional education program. Special attention is given to authentic assessment in both methods courses and capstone field/clinical experiences in the unit's initial programs, with comparable assessments in its advanced programs.

Figure 1 (page 4) illustrates interrelationships of three sets of elements, or attributes, that distinguish the integrity and fidelity of the professional education unit at The University of Toledo. These sets provide a foundation for coherent professional commitments and performance expectations.

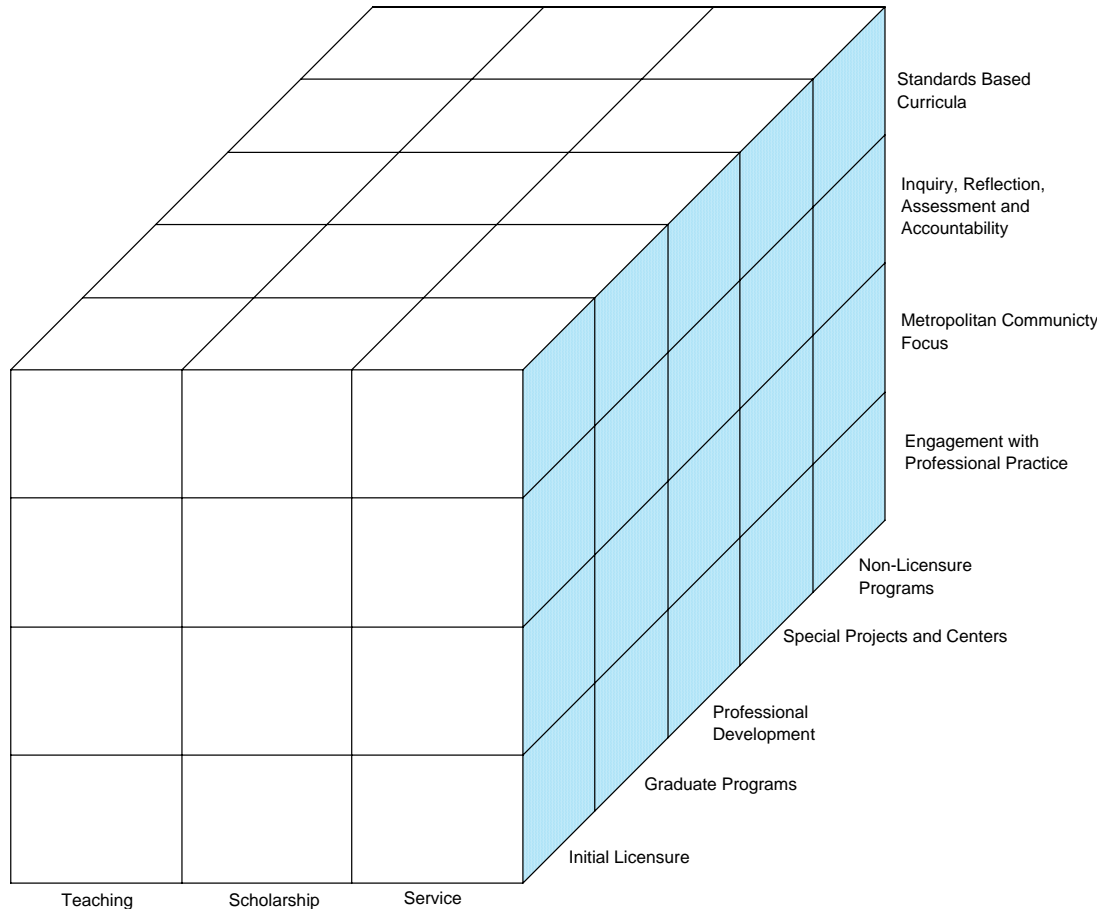
PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS AND PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Professional education programs at The University of Toledo are categorized as follows: (a) Undergraduate programs for the initial preparation of teachers and/or to provide a foundation for graduate level professional preparation; (b) Graduate programs for both the initial and advanced preparation of teachers and other education personnel; (c) Professional development programs designed specifically for education personnel; (d) Special projects and centers with programs dedicated to specific areas of education; (e) Programs for professionals in educational or clinical settings requiring neither certification nor licensure in education.

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo maintains that both faculty and candidates must model exemplary professional practice in *teaching, scholarship, and service*. Thus, by example and program design, unit faculty are committed to preparing candidates who are well grounded in both the content and pedagogy of their respective disciplines and who also are disposed to assessing and improving their own practice in these three defining areas of professional education.

The professional education unit is further defined by four distinctive but interrelated elements: (a) standards based curricula; (b) inquiry, reflection, assessment and accountability; (c) metropolitan focus; (d) engagement with professional practice. These elements are developed in the following narrative.

FIGURE 1



STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULA

Professional education programs must be aligned with standards that are grounded in research and implementation, and are current and relevant to contemporary practice. They must be coherent in terms of organization, design, and delivery of professional coursework. Clinical and field experiences must build on prior coursework, consistently striving for exemplary practice that reflects institutional conceptual frameworks. Consistency and coherence across all programs within a professional education unit, coupled with rigorous alignment with professional standards, enables the unit to prepare *knowledgeable, reflective, innovative educators who are committed to improving educational practice and learning in a diverse metropolitan community* (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; Eby, 1997; Danielson, 1996).

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo has developed coherent initial and advanced programs that reflect exemplary practice within and across all majors, whether in teacher education or other areas of education. These programs are aligned with the following sets of standards:

Ohio Performance Based Teacher Licensure Standards

The University of Toledo professional education unit rigorously adheres to the Ohio state standards in teacher education, which have been modelled after the standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). These standards are based on the following: (a) subject matter; (b) student learning; (c) diversity of learners; (d) planning instruction; (e) instructional strategies; (f) learning environment; (g) communication; (h) assessment; (i) professional development; (j) student support (Ohio Department of Education, 1996).

Standards of the Specialized Professional Associations

In addition to meeting state program standards, the professional education unit at The University of Toledo is committed to meeting the standards of the Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) and specialty area accreditation agencies. Currently, sixteen programs in the unit are either recognized by their respective SPAS or nationally accredited by the following organizations (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002).

American Association for Health Education
 Council for Exceptional Children
 International Society for Technology in Education
 National Association for Sport and Physical Education
 National Association for the Education of Young Children
 National Council of Teachers of English
 National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
 National Middle School Association
 National Science Teachers Association

American Speech and Hearing Association
 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs
 National Association of Schools of Music

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

For licensed teachers seeking graduate degrees in education, the unit continues to refine its advanced programs to align more closely with the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS]. These refinements are based on the following five core propositions: (a) Teachers are committed to students and their learning. (b) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students. (c) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. (d) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. (e) Teachers are members of learning communities (<http://www.NBPTS.org/standards/stds.cfm>).

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo is equally committed to meeting the six NCATE standards: (a) candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions; (b) assessment system and unit evaluations; (c) field experiences and clinical practice; (d) diversity; (e) faculty qualifications, performance, and development; (f) unit governance and resources (National Council for the Accreditation of Education, 2002).

Paralleling the coherence within and across programs in professional education units, many state agencies and professional organizations have established analogous standards in professional education. The following are commonly held to be significant components of high quality

professional preparation programs: (a) broad based liberal education; (b) subject matter knowledge; (c) professional education knowledge; (d) diversity; (e) educational technology; (f) proficiency in educational practice and synthesis; (g) assessment; and (h) accountability (National Council for the Accreditation of Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1992).

Liberal Education

A broad based liberal education provides candidates with a foundation of knowledge that may never be taught directly to their students but which is thought to influence their educational practice. Murray and Porter (1996) enumerate eight “claims” that support the study of the liberal arts by professional education candidates. These range from a concept that the arts are worth knowing for their own sake to the belief that a study of the liberal arts leads to invention, understanding, and a “clear conception of the good and proper outcomes of teaching” (p. 161).

Citing Virginia and Pennsylvania as “laudable examples” of states that have raised the liberal education standards for candidates, the U.S. Department of Education, in its *Annual Report on Teacher Quality* (2002, p. 25), is similarly supportive of a strong liberal arts and sciences background for education professionals.

All professional education programs at The University of Toledo require a strong liberal education background in the Arts and Sciences. Typically, this core curriculum is completed prior to admission to professional education. Additionally, undergraduate candidates preparing to teach at the junior and/or senior high school levels (grades 7 - 12) are required to earn dual degrees in the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences (BEd *and* BS or BA).

Subject Matter Knowledge

It is axiomatic that education professionals must possess both in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of their subject matter if they are to be successful in their chosen fields. This is stressed throughout much of the literature in education and is specified in both program and unit standards (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Murray & Porter, 1996; <http://www.NBPTS.org/standards/stds.cfm>).

At The University of Toledo, the professional education unit requires candidates to demonstrate, through multiple measures, their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter in their chosen fields. Assessment at the initial level includes, but is not limited to: (a) successful performance on the PRAXIS I examination, (b) a minimum 2.7 grade point average (gpa) in the major(s), and (c) a demonstrated knowledge of subject matter in all clinical and field experiences. The latter is based on observation by both field supervisors and cooperating professionals in P-12 and early intervention settings as well as evidence provided in candidate portfolios. At the advanced level, knowledge of subject matter is substantiated by letters of recommendation provided by supervisors and other education professionals upon admission to program, undergraduate GPAs, scores on the Graduate Record Examination, and graduate level papers, theses, projects, and dissertations.

Professional Education Knowledge

Professional education knowledge of the Twenty-first century encompasses an entirely different set of knowledge, skills, understandings, and dispositions than were required of educators in the latter half of the twentieth century. Abandoning the pre-packaged curricula and published teaching and assessment materials that were used extensively in the past, today’s educators must have a thorough understanding of child development, pedagogy and professional practice, assessment, and alternative

learning styles in diverse educational settings if they are to have a positive impact on student learning and development. Effective educators today must possess the knowledge and creativity to address the needs of students who enter school with a wide range of native languages, cultures, learning styles, challenges, talents and cognitive abilities. They must be willing and able to utilize a variety of assessment techniques. They must hold themselves accountable for the results of their professional practice. As the focus of educational practice shifts from process to results, and as education professionals at all levels assume greater accountability for student learning and development, professional education units must develop programs that are responsive to current and future practice in the P-12 schools (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Goodwin, 1997).

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo has responded, and continues to respond, to the many changes that have occurred in P-12 education over the past decade. The challenges of new professional standards that emphasize the role of assessment and accountability in candidate effectiveness in the schools, coupled with the dictates of professional ethics, have motivated unit faculty to reconsider, re-evaluate, and revise professional education curricula to meet the rigorous mandates of the current century.

Diversity

Today's educators, more than ever, must equitably respond to the special needs of a diverse population of students. Accountability in education means holding teachers and other professionals responsible for the learning and development of all children, regardless of cultural background and ability. Insensitive attitudes, discriminatory methods, and culturally inappropriate materials have no place in any segment of a democratic society, including schools, that claims respect for individual differences and justice for all.

Professional education units must ensure that all candidates develop a disposition to respect and respond positively to cultural, racial, religious, socio-economic, gender, sexual orientation, and diversity of abilities. This requires that candidates not only enroll in courses *that address* diversity, but that they also have abundant opportunities to work with others of differing backgrounds and abilities, including those with disabilities. They need to be taught by a diverse faculty and learn alongside a diverse student body. They must be assigned to clinical and field experiences wherein they are exposed to mentors and taught by faculty who model the positive dispositions and sound educational practice that foster positive educational outcomes for all children (Murrell & Diez, 1997; Huber, Kline, Bakken & Clark, 1997; Garcia, 1997; Porter & Stone, 1998; Putnam, 1998; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; Gutmann, 1996; Ramsey, 1998; Eby, 1997).

Professional education programs at The University of Toledo prepare candidates who understand how students differ, both as individuals and as members of cultural groups, in their approaches to learning. As a result of carefully sequenced course work and selected field experiences, teacher candidates, as well as professionals in advanced programs, are able to create instructional opportunities and other educational experiences that are equitable and adapted to a wide range of diverse learners, including students with developmental disabilities.

Educational Technology

In this information age, it is critical that educators are able to utilize technology to: (a) create rich learning environments for their students, (b) communicate effectively with students and colleagues, (c) maintain records, (d) engage in inquiry, (e) conduct research, (f) support decision making, and (g) enhance observational skills. Candidates must be prepared and confident in their ability to utilize

emerging technologies to individualize instruction in diverse educational settings. To develop these skills and a disposition to use them, prospective teachers require formal training in addition to numerous examples of the creative use of technology for educational purposes (Levine, 1996; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education; Ohio Department of Education, 1996).

Professional education programs at The University of Toledo prepare candidates who support and improve practice and student outcomes through the well-integrated use of technology. This preparation begins with formal instruction in a course that presents a variety of technological applications and is further developed by example in subsequent coursework and clinical/field experiences. At various junctures throughout their programs, candidates are required to use technology for the completion of assignments and/or in clinical/field practice.

Proficiency in Educational Practice and Synthesis

In most professional education programs, some form of practice is the capstone activity wherein candidates are able to synthesize prior learning experiences. Whether field based or a combination of clinical and field based, practice provides students with opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned and to receive feedback to facilitate adjustment or integration. Such experiences cannot be random; rather they must be developmentally appropriate, planned, and supervised. Although technology enables faculty and candidates to bring the classroom setting to the university, it is imperative that candidates also are provided with the opportunity to work directly with children in a variety of settings under the guidance and supervision of skilled mentors (Knowles & Cole, 1996; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education; Ohio Department of Education).

The University of Toledo professional education unit is committed to providing candidates with the best available field-based opportunities, with the expectation that they will collaborate with both university faculty and school/agency professionals. Inquiry, reflection, assessment, and accountability are critical to these field experiences and are processes that must be demonstrated for successful completion of the related courses. Since meaningful field and clinical experiences are integral to the professional education programs at The University of Toledo, the unit's relationships with the schools in the Toledo metropolitan area have evolved in such a way that there is a mutual understanding of the characteristics of the candidates and their instructional needs in their field placements. The university works closely with school-based educators to ensure that exemplary practices are expected throughout all planned experiences. In so doing, the unit views its collaborative role with the P-12 schools and other non-school educational agencies as an essential key to continuous improvement within the university as well as in the P-12 schools.

INQUIRY, REFLECTION, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Professional education programs at The University of Toledo engage candidates in a process of inquiry, reflection, assessment, and accountability in experiences that integrate educational theory and practice. Candidates are guided, individually and in groups, through sets of developmentally appropriate learning experiences to ensure that they become capable and empowered decision makers. Candidates are required to demonstrate that they have a positive impact on the direction of the schools and the learning and development of their students. The elements of inquiry, reflection, assessment, and professional accountability are reflected throughout all initial and advanced professional education programs offered by the unit.

Inquiry

The process of inquiry has been defined in a variety of ways and is seen as a critical component for high quality professional practice. It is a process whereby educators pursue continuous improvement by systematically collecting data relative to teaching and learning processes and by gaining insight into professional practice. Inquiry includes investigating ideas, practice, theories and other such phenomena. It involves a level of scholarship that requires basic research skills. Educators must know the concepts and tools of inquiry, as well as what to ask, how to search and question, and how to systematically develop answers.

Inquiry into practice conducted by classroom teachers and other professional educators is critical to professional development. This is a lifelong process. It also is necessary for educators to conduct their own research as well as to understand and apply the theoretical constructs generated by other education researchers. Inquiry enables individuals and entire schools to clarify effective components of educational practice, to better define good teaching, and to promote the development of meaningful professional preparation (Richardson, 1996; Eby, 1997).

By design, The University of Toledo professional education programs prepare educators who use inquiry as a tool for daily preparation and planning as well as for ongoing professional growth and development. Candidates are introduced to inquiry as a means to improve practice early in their programs, and subsequent courses build upon this foundation.

Reflection

Reflective practice in professional education is a conscious process whereby practitioners critically analyze their own performance, and the performance of their students, subsequently modifying their actions for the purpose of improving professional practice. Reflective practitioners question the assumptions, goals, and values that guide their work. They continually and thoughtfully evaluate the effects of their choices on students, parents, and other professionals, and actively seek opportunities for professional development (Richardson, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Accomplished educators often relate stories about their own experiences as learners. They gain much from reflecting on their experiences when they were children, and as family members, parents, and educators. They formally learn from reflecting on what they study and their experiences in professional preparation programs. These educators have discovered that the examination of approaches, ideas, and postulates about teaching and learning can shape and enhance their abilities and invigorate professional practice.

Reflection enhances professional practice and development, and it is both a retrospective and an introspective process that occurs while assessing wholly new concepts in practice. As with inquiry, reflective skills are necessary for education to occur and for educators to remain current in their chosen fields. Reflection and inquiry are complementary processes that can be taught and learned. Through the process of reflection, one can identify, define, clarify, and solve problems requisite to setting goals (Richardson, 1996; Eby, 1997; Girod, 2002; Danielson, 1996).

Professional education at The University of Toledo is designed to stimulate reflection at all levels. Programs provide opportunities for individual and group reflection in each component of each professional sequence, including field and clinical experience.

Assessment

Assessment is the means whereby one can determine whether or not goals and standards have been met and whether or not an educational process has resulted in positive outcomes. Assessment is performance-based process that enables an individual educator, or an institution, to evaluate professional practice and make appropriate changes for continuous improvement.

State and professional associations that have adopted the standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium mandate the use of multiple modes of assessment, mostly performance-based. As an example, portfolios have become an established means of assessing candidate and/or teacher performance on the basis of what they should know, how they act, and what they can achieve rather than focusing on the courses they have completed. Observations by supervisors or colleagues, reflective writing, standardized measures and, especially, student performance outcomes are other examples of methods whereby valid assessments of candidate and/or teacher performance can be made.

Professional education units that are committed to continuous improvement also assess the efficacy of their collective operations and overall performance. Such assessment is weighed heavily by candidate and alumni performance, with a second element of unit assessment focusing on the major contributions of faculty and candidates to educational practice. These contributions may be measured by the conduct of research and dissemination of information, community involvement, and positive professional relationships within the P-12 schools. Professional education units that take seriously the commitment to assess and improve their programs seek external review by specialized professional associations and/or accrediting agencies (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Richardson, 1996; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; Girod, 2002; Eby, 1997).

The University of Toledo professional education unit regularly and systematically collects and analyzes data on candidate performance beginning with applicants seeking admission to professional education programs, proceeding through appropriate checkpoints across the programs, and continuing with follow-up studies of graduates. The unit also assesses unit operations including resource acquisition and management, faculty composition and performance, unit leadership, and continuous improvement in information technology.

Accountability

Professional accountability is not a new concept in education. It is based on the assumption that educators are able to affect student performance and that they know how to improve educational practice. Basically, this is true of all effective teachers and other education professionals. The major challenge in education is to determine what part of student achievement, or lack thereof, is related to professional practice, and what part is entirely beyond the control of the educational system. Separating the attainable from the unattainable requires more than simply aggregating scores on paper and pencil tests. Evaluating professional performance and determining accountability must be preceded by careful assessment of the school and community. There also must be an understanding of the educational needs of the children who attend that school. Accountability may then be established based on studied educational goals that have been established on the basis of reasonable expectations. Candidates in professional education need to understand this process and they need to develop the skills that will enable them to be truly and realistically accountable for student achievement (Schlechty, 2001; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996).

Professional education candidates at The University of Toledo are held accountable for student performance in their clinical and field experiences. With the guidance of cooperating professionals in the schools and university faculty, they are expected to evaluate student achievement throughout their field experiences, and to improve and refine professional practice. The goal is to develop a disposition for accountability as a natural result of reflection, inquiry, and assessment.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY FOCUS

The mission of The University of Toledo clearly states that it is "...a student-centered public metropolitan research university..." As such, its two highest priorities are: (a) to meet student needs, and (b) to become fully engaged in the metropolitan community and its schools. The mission of the professional education unit at The University of Toledo reflects the institutional mission in this regard.

Candidate Needs

Professional education candidates in metropolitan universities have a number of defining characteristics. These include: (a) a widely ranging diversity that is representative of the surrounding metropolitan area; (b) a relatively high percentage who are non-traditional; (c) a significant number already in the work force, but seeking to either upgrade their current positions or qualify for a different profession; (d) a high percentage living at home and commuting to the university; (e) a large proportion requiring more than four years for program completion. These characteristics require sensitivity and responsiveness to human diversity in all phases of all programs. They mandate competent academic advising and flexibility in scheduling, including the development of a wide selection of evening classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Providing access to higher education is a major goal of metropolitan universities (Sirotnik, 1995; Boyer, 1995; Rosaen, Foster-Fishman & Fear, 2001).

Candidates in the professional education unit at The University of Toledo mirror the characteristics enumerated above. To provide for the unique needs of its students, the unit provides professional academic advisors who supplement faculty advising, and it establishes class schedules that accommodate commuting students. It also provides broad spectrum of evening and distance education classes, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, for students who are employed in full-time jobs. Unit faculty and staff are expected to model respect and equity for all program candidates without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or disability.

School Collaboration

Professional preparation units in metropolitan universities must be responsive to the unique educational needs of P-12 students in regional schools. To succeed in their mission, they must build school-university relationships that foster an honest and open interchange of philosophies, knowledge and resources (Danielson, 1996; Johnson & Bell, 1995).

The professional education unit at The University of Toledo has developed an extensive network with the schools in the greater Toledo area. Many of these schools are part of the urban Toledo Public School system, whereas others are located in the suburban and rural areas that surround the city. This enables the unit to assign candidates to a wide variety of diverse field settings, thereby providing them with the kinds of experiences that will enable them to teach in any Ohio school, regardless of location.

Unit faculty and staff collaborate regularly with P-12 educators in terms of planning and sharing expertise, and to develop and strengthen candidates' clinical and field experiences. They often offer special professional development seminars and workshops at the request of the public schools. They

also seek advice and feedback from school personnel on a wide variety of topics, including feedback on the preparation and competence of candidates and graduates. Four advanced programs have advisory committees providing feedback on curricular issues.

Community Commitment and Engagement

Professional education units in metropolitan universities must foster community commitment and engagement. Opportunities are boundless in a rich, diverse environment, with the result that there literally is something of interest, worthy of involvement for everyone in the unit: faculty, staff, and candidates alike.

The benefits that derive from engagement within a diverse community cannot be underestimated in terms of teaching, scholarship, and service. Maintaining a community network enables the unit to develop a shared vision with a wide variety of constituencies within the region. Community involvement provides the professional education unit with an understanding of regional educational needs and promotes the design of courses and programs that are sensitive and responsive to those needs. The community also offers abundant opportunities for collaborative research and development projects that can have a direct impact on regional ventures. These ultimately cycle back to the professional preparation programs, thus leading to continuous improvements in educational practice. Finally, the involvement of unit faculty and staff in community affairs fosters a lifelong disposition among candidates for community commitment and engagement (Rosaen, Foster-Fishman & Fear, 2001; Simpson, Mercier, Streit, & Hill, 2002; Johnson & Bell, 1995).

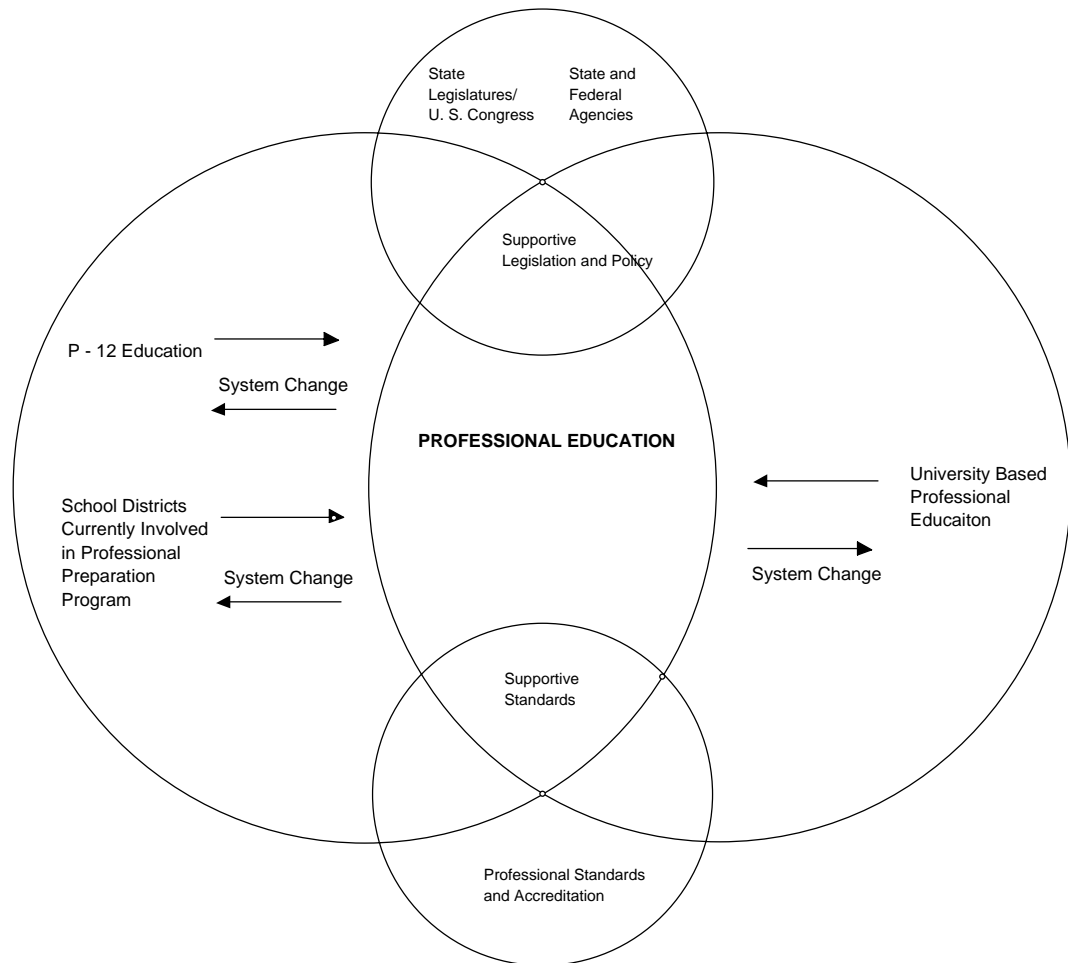
The professional education unit at The University of Toledo strongly supports community commitment and engagement in its many forms. Community activities may range from memberships on community agency boards to working with children's athletic programs and assisting with the "Ohio Reads" program. This extensive community involvement adds considerable depth to the interchange between the university and the metropolitan community. It also adds depth and understanding to the unit's professional education programs in that it provides faculty and staff with a better understanding of the needs of students and educators in the local schools. Finally, community involvement by unit faculty and staff provides models that candidates may carry with them regardless of where and when they begin their careers in education. Many University of Toledo graduates in professional education seek to improve their own professional practice as a result of their engagement in community affairs.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Among the many recommendations for reform of practitioner preparation programs is the call for these programs to be integrated with the world of professional practice. For many years, it is argued, practitioner preparation programs operated in relative isolation from educators who practice education on a daily basis. Candidates were prepared in university settings and then given over to the schools for their continuing professional development. Although many of these new professionals returned to the university for advanced course work and degrees, the course work and degrees were again not linked to the realities of work in schools and were frequently designed to prepare the student for even more advanced work at the university.

Fortunately this pattern of professional preparation has changed in recent years. Students at The University of Toledo now experience programs that from conception to delivery are fully integrated with the world of professional practice. The Venn diagram in figure 2 provides a conceptual framework for program design and delivery of the professional preparation programs at The University of Toledo.

FIGURE 2



The circle to the right represents the university-based professional preparation program. The circle to the left represents the school districts, teachers and administrators who cooperate with the university in preparing educational personnel for the schools. In the center, the overlap of the two circles is where we see the location of our professional preparation programs. The thesis is that professional preparation programs are best when they incorporate the university “way of knowing” a reality with the way that reality in “known” by those who practice education on a daily basis. It is our intent, over time, to place all of our professional preparation programs, from conception, design, delivery and assessment, in the intersection of the university and the world of professional practice. The arrows moving in both directions within the two circles reflect the continuing commitment of The University of Toledo to systems change within both the university and our partner schools. Through such collaborative practice, it is the intent to positively change both systems in pursuit of increased student learning.

The top of the diagram acknowledges the important role of supportive legislation and policy in crafting professional preparation programs that fit in the center of the Venn diagram. The bottom of the diagram acknowledges the crucial role of professional standards in providing further support for the creation of preparation programs denoted in the center of the Venn diagram.

The Venn diagram, thus, illustrates a central piece of the Conceptual Framework of the professional preparation programs at The University of Toledo and the engagement of the Professional Education unit with the world of professional practice (adapted from Imig & Switzer).

ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE

Professional education units must develop and utilize assessment systems that collect and analyze data on candidate qualifications and performance of graduates. These data then must become the basis for change and continuous improvement of programs preparing accomplished teachers and other educational leaders (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Ohio Department of Education, 1996; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1996).

At The University of Toledo, the professional education unit has developed a comprehensive assessment plan utilizing multiple measures for the evaluation of candidate performance at both the initial and advanced levels. Knowledge of content, dispositions, and professional and pedagogical skills are demonstrated routinely in a variety of ways, both in the classroom and in diverse clinical/field settings. Data collection begins prior to admission to professional education and continues throughout the candidacy period. Follow-up studies of graduate performance are coherent with those conducted in the unit's pre-service programs and all data are aggregated to provide the foundation for continuous program improvement.

SUMMARY

The University of Toledo professional education programs are based on the premise that educational preparation is a coherent developmental process involving instruction and planned clinical/field experiences in diverse settings, coupled with individual and collaborative inquiry, reflection, and assessment. This developmental process is influenced by many forces, which include the constituencies concerned with professional preparation, professional educational standards, and the shared vision promulgated by unit faculty, the university, and the community.

The University of Toledo professional education programs have been designed to develop educators, whether candidates or experienced professionals, who are accountable for student achievement. In the context of this developmental framework, all programs within the unit stress content mastery, pedagogical proficiency, and knowledge of the environment in which effective teaching and learning will occur. These learnings provide both beginning and experienced educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions requisite to professional growth and continuous improvement through a process of lifelong learning.

A conceptual framework for the preparation of knowledgeable, reflective, innovative educators, committed to improving educational practice and learning in a diverse metropolitan community

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