Whither Standards in the *Professional Project*?
An Essay Review of *Visions for Teacher Educators*

Patrick M. Jenlink
Stephen F. Austin State University

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In *Visions for Teacher Educators: Perspectives on the Association of Teacher Educators' Standards*, editors Klecka, Odell, Houston, and McBee present a collected work of contributing authors focused on the Association of Teacher Educators Standards for Teacher Educators. The book is divided into four parts, the first offering three chapters that discuss the history of teacher education, the definition of a teacher educator and how the Association of Teacher Education (ATE) standards have been and/or are being

conceptualized, developed and tested. Part II presents a chapter for each of the current nine ATE standards, encapsulating the salient points of the respective standard. A common framework organizes each chapter, beginning with a rationale and followed by the theoretical or empirical base, focus of the standard, and a section on demonstrating the standard. Part III reflects on how those who identify themselves as teacher educators might apply and use the Association of Teacher Educator (ATE) standards. As well, the nine chapters in this section expand the readers thinking about the standards and how they may or may not apply to others. Part IV includes four chapters that provide viewpoints on Standards for Teacher Educators and examine the potential impact of the ATE standards on the profession, with teacher education as a central focus. In this review essay, I use the term *professional project* as a lens through which to examine the book's content as a dialogue for furthering one's understanding of the complexities of what it means to be a teacher educator, juxtaposed to the responsibilities and obligations one has as a teacher educator and professional.

The *Professional Project*

The question of standards in teaching is most often explored within the context of teacher education. Whither standards in the *professional project*, a question that goes to the heart of historical discourses of teaching and professionalization, focuses on the work of realizing teaching and teacher education as a profession. And it is a question of positionality with respect to standards in the *professional project*. In particular, it is a question

that concerns the place of standards in teacher preparation and the curriculum necessary to preparing teachers as well as the pedagogical practices, and equally important, it concerns the policy and politics of credentialing and licensure. It is also a question of the connection between professionalism and professionalization of teaching and teacher education. When we ask whither standards, we must also ask what is a teacher, teacher educator, a professional?

The idea of a professional teacher has a deep history (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Gitlin & Labaree, 1996; Labaree, 1992, 1998; McIntyre, 2009; Tyack & Hansot, 1984). The *professional project*, as Imig and Imig (2009) note, "is the effort to gain recognition for teaching as the equivalent of medicine or law or other established professions. The acknowledgement of teaching and teacher education as professional work and the professionalization of all aspects of teaching and teacher education is the goal" (p. 244). Whereas professionalism and professionalization are distinct but contingent processes, as Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) have noted, there are many tensions and paradoxes associated—teachers aspire to be considered professional, but their professional lives are continuously challenged because of political, economic, and social reasons.

With respect to professionalization, there is a contested terrain. As Gitlin and Hargreaves (1996) have argued, this terrain is " . . . the criteria by which groups make claims about their knowledge, abilities, and skills. One factor that affects the success or failure of a professionalization project is the extent to

which members of an occupational group can restrict access to their ranks" (pp. 89-90). Also weighing in on professionalization is an argument noted by Clifford and Guthrie (1988) that speaks to the primary orientation of schools and colleges of education that have responsibility for preparing teachers, which it is argued, is to take "the profession of education, not academia, as their main point of reference" (p. 349). Which in turn, it is argued, necessarily requires teacher educators being more cognizant of the reality of schools including changing demographics, diversity issues, economic conditions, standards and accountability, cultural politics and pluralism, and redressing the imbalance that exists with respect to preparing teachers for a world that is dramatically different from the college classroom. This also means that substantial professional criteria should be considered in the guidelines and processes of teacher education faculty preparation for the work of educating teachers and, concomitantly, in the review of teacher educators' performance; if the *professional project* is to be realized, then the question of whither standards must be addressed.

Whither Standards? Addressing the Question

Visions for Teacher Educators: Perspectives on the Association of Teacher Educators' Standards (Klecka, Odell, Houston, McBee, 2009) offers a needed discourse toward answering the question, whither standards in the *professional project*? This edited collection not only articulates a vision for the profession through Standards for Teacher Educators but also provides a historical perspective of and

explores the issues surrounding these standards. Klecka et al. (2009) present teacher educators and interested others with an examination of Teacher Educators' Standards through the perspectives and voices of teacher educators. Importantly, *Visions of Teacher Educators . . .* is concerned with standards for teacher education as a profession in which social and political responsibilities are embedded. Whereas there are others in the political and professional areas that would determine the standards placed upon teachers and teacher educators, Klecka et al. (2009) have taken the initiative to open a direct dialogue with teacher educators in response to defining the professional teacher.

Foundations for Teacher Educator Standards

Examining the history of teacher education as a discipline, McIntyre (2009) notes: "Perhaps now more than any other time, teacher education is central to the discussions of state and national legislators, policy makers, and other educators" (p. 20). Opening the first section of *Visions for Teacher Educators . . .* , the contributing authors, in their respective works, lay a foundation for understanding the historical nature of standards in schooling and teacher education. McIntyre's (2009) examination of teacher education as a discipline illuminates a parallelism between early teacher training experiences in Europe and experiences of teacher training today. Although modern teacher training closely parallels the training of teachers in Europe, in colonial America things were very different in that there was no formal training for teachers. An important denotation is that public schools and teacher education is a relatively

recent development, "the link between the nation's public schools and teacher education was established a little over 200 years ago" (McIntyre, 2009, p. 7). Salient historical contributions to teacher education as a discipline are examined by McIntyre, and, as he notes, early in the evolution of the discipline ". . . attempts to create standards for teaching and teacher education are not new . . ." (2009, p. 13). The emergence of standards, according to Edelfelt and Raths (1999), traces back to two assumptions. One assumption was that a code could be developed to define 'best practices'. The other assumption was that some approaches to teaching and teacher education were better than others.

The era of standards and accountability in teacher education is hallmarked by such reports as *School and Community Laboratory Experiences in Teacher Education* (Flowers, Patterson, Stratemeyer, & Lindsey, 1948). Commonly known as the Flowers Report, after John Flowers who chaired the Sub-Committee of the Standards and Surveys Committee of the American Association of Teacher Colleges, "it established standards for professional laboratory experiences, including student teaching . . ." (McIntyre, 2009, p. 13). An evolutionary outcome of the era of standards and accountability as well as accreditation efforts was the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1952, which remains an influential force today. Over the last 60 plus years, teacher education as a discipline has been shaped by standards and accountability, political agendas, and the efforts to gain recognition as a profession. Groups like the

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) (1992) and National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (1996) who, along with NCATE, sought to fortify and extend the existing system for preparing and certifying teachers have been and continue to be forces in the evolution of teacher education as a discipline and as a profession. These groups have advocated historically, and continue to do so, measures such as defining the kinds of knowledge and skill that prospective teachers need to acquire in order to teach effectively; using program accreditation to make sure that teacher education programs focus on transmitting these capabilities; using testing and the certification process to make sure that prospective teachers demonstrate competency in these areas before entering the classroom; and using board certification to set standards for optimal practice among practicing teachers (see Labaree, 2004, pp. 198-199). As McIntyre (2009) notes, "[t]he era of accountability and standards for education and teacher education does not appear be ebbing in the near future" (p. 20).

Adding to the discourse on foundations of teacher education, Fisher (2009) poses a singular questions: who is a teacher educator? This question is rightly situated in the larger question framing this essay review: whither standards in teacher education? Toward answering Fisher's (2009) question, Labaree (2004) is instructive, suggesting that "teacher educators are in the business of demystifying teaching, giving away their own expertise in order to empower the prospective teacher to carry on the practice of teaching without need

for continuous consultation and chronic professional dependency" (p. 61). This goes to the point of what a teacher educator does, but who is the teacher educator? Fisher (2009) includes as teacher educators "individuals who teach, supervise and mentor . . . [including] faculty members in higher education institutions . . . [and those in] alternative certification programs . . ." (p. 30). By including such a wide range of people to contribute to the education of teachers, teacher educators can be defined " . . . by the work they do . . ." (Fisher, 2009, p. 31). Answering Fisher's question draws into specific relief the concept of teacher educator, and the notion that this concept is ". . . impacted by changes in teacher education programs" (Fisher, 2009, p. 29). Labaree (2004) clarifies, to some degree, the otherwise contested nature of who is a teacher educator when he states that the special expertise required " . . . is not disciplinary knowledge but the capacity to teach others how to teach this knowledge effectively" (p. 60).

The ATE Standards for Teacher Educators are directed, as Fisher (2009) notes, "at those educators who provide formal instruction or conduct research and development for educating prospective and practicing teachers" (p. 33). Toward the goal of furthering the *professional project*, Standards for Teacher Educators necessarily considers changes in teacher education as having an impact on teacher educators. Defining as well as delineating the role of teacher educators is necessary. As Fisher (2009) notes, "[t]he role of teacher educator has evolved through the years as the process of educating teachers has matured" (p. 39). Within and across the era of

accountability and standards as discussed by McIntyre (2009), the evolution of standards and accreditation is parallel to the evolution and maturation of teacher education.

The value of standards, as Fisher (2009) exemplifies in his discussion, lies, in part, in the important realization that teacher education is a career-long experience (Odell & Huling, 2000). Those individuals who are defined as and in the role of teacher educator are provided an operational definition of teacher educator via the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators. This operational definition also goes to providing a necessary focus for research on teaching and teacher education, and it goes to furthering the realization of the *professional project*.

Houston (2009), balances the discussion on Standards for Teacher Educators, asserting that "[e]ducation in Western culture has become an objectives-based system" (p. 45). Having historical roots dating some 300 years, Houston (2009) notes that standards "have evolved over the past century to become a major force in determining and judging the quality of education, with teacher education at the forefront. Today, it is widely believed that standards provide a framework for all individuals in the education of teachers. The Association for Teacher Educators ATE ". . . explored standards for teacher educators and their use in certification beginning in 1992 . . . and continued through 2000 with the publication of a set of standards for teacher educators" (Houston, 2009, p. 52). The ATE Commission on Teacher Educator Standards began the work on these standards. As Houston (2009) notes of the standards, they ".

. . remain a 'work in progress'" (p. 60), clearly aligned with the evolution of teacher education as discipline and a profession. This evolution and malleability of teacher education is exemplified in Houston's (1974) own words written over thirty years ago:

The ebb and flow of educational thought has been shaped by and has in turn spawned a series of educational movements and trends. Each movement has reflected a general societal climate, technological advances, research, innovations, and the dreams of educators. As each movement has matured, it has come under increasingly close scrutiny by educators and the general public. (p. xiv)

As Houston (2009) points out, these words ". . . could have been written about the development of the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators over the past decade" (p. 49).

Returning to Fisher's (2009) question, what is a teacher educator?, Houston's (2009) closing statement goes to the question in its assertion that "[t]eacher educators have an obligation to be precise about what is entailed in being a teacher educator" (p. 61). As Labaree (2004) rightly points out: "Preparing teachers, it turns out, is extraordinarily demanding, in large part because of the complexities of teaching itself as a form of professional practice. The core problem is this: Teaching is an enormously difficult job that looks easy" (p. 39).

Examining the foundations of Standards for Teacher Educators has rendered a level of clarity with respect to the original framing question: Whither standard in the *professional project*? The Standards for Teacher Educators

are designed, as Houston (2009) acknowledges, ". . . to foment a continuing dialogue designed to sharpen our understanding of the multiple roles of teacher educators and the qualities that make them effective" (p. 61).

Visions for Teacher Educators through Standards

The most enduring and consequential reform movement at the turn of this century is the one that seeks to impose standards on education and teacher education. Arguably, the primary issue in this movement is to hold teachers and teacher educators " . . . accountable for producing a desired level of academic performance, and the mechanisms it has introduced to carry out this goal are both numerous and varied" (Labaree, 2004, p. 193). However, it may also be argued that the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators address another equally important issue, that of realizing the *professional project*. Accordingly, the importance of the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators lies, in large part, in operationalizing the definition of teacher education, which may be seen as a next step in not only defining the teacher educator but equally important, it may be seen as a necessary step in achieving status as a profession.

The contributing authors for Part II (chapters 4 through 12) of *Visions for Teacher Educators . . . * respectively examine each of the nine standards comprising the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators. The nine standards are: standard one-teaching; standard two-cultural competence; standard three-scholarship; standard four-professional development;

standard five-program development; standard six-collaboration; standard seven-public advocacy; standard eight-teacher education profession and standard nine-vision. The nine chapters provide the reader with a clearly articulated and accessible examination of each standard, offering, when the chapters are taken together as a whole, not only an operational definition of teacher education, but a working response to the question whither standards in the *professional project*.

Kessinger (2009), focusing on the standard of teaching, provides an overarching framing for the importance of the ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators, emphasizes

> . . . the importance of teacher educators as model teachers who are exemplars in content and pedagogy and who use technology, reflection, and other research-based practices in continuously seeking to improve an share their craft. (p. 69)

The full complement of ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators reflect a belied that teacher educators, as operationally defined, will be expert teachers of teachers, as well as scholars involved in the production of differing forms of new knowledge about their field. Holding dual roles of practitioners and researchers (Klecka, 2009), teacher educators understand the need to take their

> . . . own professional work as educators as a research site and learning by systematically investigating [their] own practice and interpretative frameworks in ways that are critical, rigorous, and intended to generate both local knowledge

and knowledge that is useful in more public spheres. (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 220)

Importantly, this set of standards also emphasizes teacher educators' moral responsibilities to schooling, to teacher education as a vocational field, and to the development of their own occupational group. The importance of being designated an occupational group lies in Breshears (2004) explanation that: "How an occupational group is viewed by the general public determines, in part, the group's level of professionalization" (p. 25).

With respect to the question of whither standards in the *professional project*, each of the contributing authors in his/her discussion of the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators draws upon the original version of the ATE Standards as expressed:

> Teacher educators have an obligation to be precise about what is entailed in being a teacher educator. To do less at a time when the quality of children's education weights so heavily in the balance is indefensible. (ATE, 2007, ¶ 2)

Importantly, this single statement from ATE critically links the work of teacher educators with their professional responsibilities, not only to their students in teacher education but also to the quality of schooling and to children as learners.

Multiple Voices—Applying the Standards Across Disciplines

Whereas the chapters in Part II provide an overview of the nine ATE Standards for Teacher Educators, the chapters in this section (chapters 13-21) present a set of perspectives on the use of the standards. Authored by college and university professors, alternative certification partnerships, and a state director of education, the reader finds frank and honest discussions on the Standards for Teacher Educators, following a continuum from the concern for hegemonizing force of educational standards to the pragmatic considerations for implementation. The authors draw into specific relief the Standards as situated in different venues, and with respect to the implications of the Standards. Importantly, each author adds his or her voice to further addressing the question of whither standards in the *professional project*.

Emblematic of the nine authors in this section, is Grant and Gibson (2009) statement: "We have sought to name our best practices, to outline the ideologies and pedagogical beliefs that support our work, and to problematize key ideas in our field" (p. 134). In analyzing the standards, ". . . looking at the indicators, the rationale, and the artifacts called for in the standards," (p. 134) Grant and Gibson further note they found "a well-researched document, inclusive of scholars representing a variety of viewpoints and addressing the multifaceted work of teacher educators" (p. 134). However, Grant and Gibson go on to pose an important question: " . . . what happens now that these standards have been added to the teacher education discourse?"

Sowder (2009) focuses the reader on the question of who is a teacher educator, and whether classroom teachers mentoring teacher candidates meet the definition of teacher educator set forth in the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators. Sowder draws particular attention to the Standards, noting that the purpose lies "not in the way they may be used to define practice," (p. 143), but rather in "the way their use enables individuals to reflect on how their teaching affects their students, to examine how their efforts contribute to the larger community, and to imagine the possibilities for their future practice" (p. 143). What stands out in Sowder's discussion are two points. First, she directs the reader's attention to Darling-Hammond (1999), who cautions,

> Standards, like all reforms, hold their own dangers. Standard setting in all professions must be vigilant against the possibilities that practice could become constrained by the codification of knowledge that does not significantly acknowledge legitimate diversity of approaches or advances in the field; that access to practice could become overly restricted on grounds not directly related to competence; or that adequate learning opportunities for candidates to meet standards may not emerge on an equitable basis. (p. 39)

Second, Sowder directs the reader's attention to the importance of involving practitioners, teachers who work in the schools, as valued contributors to shaping standards such as ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators. Sowder (2009) reflects that she thinks ". . . of professional standards less as sets of definitive knowledge for practice, and more as 'generative material' for personal and contextualized inquiry into teaching" (p. 149). As she states, in contrast to the cautions put forth by Darling-Hammond (1999), "It is the enlightened implementation of more open-ended guidelines for practice formed from the synthesis of research and experience from the professional community that offers a legitimate, alternative voice for education practice" (p. 149).

Heiden (2009), a literacy teacher educator, believes "that the ATE standards hold particular potential for informing the recruitment, screening, and hiring of highly qualified teacher educators and for guiding the work and development of early-career teacher educators" (p. 166). Heiden also draws the reader's attention to a necessarily important concern: "When educators speak of standards, they often refer to 'meeting,' or 'addressing,' or 'mastering' them. What is often ignored is the question of how well standards are met. . . . Surely there are degrees of competency and expertise" (p. 163). Certainly Heiden's (2009) point goes to the larger question of whither standards in the *professional project*. Perhaps, as Heiden (2009) states, ". . . the ultimate question for a teacher educator is whether or not she accepts the standards as important, meaningful, and representative of her own philosophical orientation" (p. 166). Simply

stated, ". . . it is up to the individual to decide whether or not she would consider herself to be a participant in the consensus that established the standards" (p. 166).

Peterson (2009) gives voice to the oft-perceived political issue of alternative routes to licensure. Perceived political in that alternative certification programs often compete with more traditional programs. In her examination, Peterson focuses on the ". . . role of high quality teacher educators providing teacher preparation for those gaining certification through alternative routes" (p. 181). The application of ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators to alternative certification programs, as discussed by Peterson (2009), directs the reader's attention to the question of who is a teacher educator, and also acknowledges that the Standards may be less than familiar to those individuals responsible for alternative certification programs situated in schools districts, regional offices of education, and less traditional venues for teacher preparation. Embracing alternative certification programs, and utilizing the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators in collaboration with alternative certification entities, as Peterson (2009) argues, could move us closer to Zeichner's (2006) position:

> We need to support teacher education programs of all kinds that have . . . characteristics that are shown by research to enable the achievement of desired outcomes, whether they are traditional or alternative, and criticize and/or close down that that do not have them. (p. 332)

The Standards for Teacher Educators, Peterson (2009) states, "have the potential to benefit the alternative certification community" (p. 193).

Few would argue against the statement: "Diversity defines the professional life I lead" (Rodriquez, 2009). Teacher educators from minority backgrounds recognize the value of this statement, just as should all teacher educators. The ATE Standards for Teacher Educators emphasize the value of diversity the definition of a teacher educator. The question of whither standards in the *professional project* is perhaps nowhere more importantly answered than in through the operational definition of teacher educator. A teacher educator, as Rodriquez (2009) states, has "the responsibility to provide and to facilitate instruction that is meaningful to all students, including students from diverse backgrounds" (p. 198). The cultural competence standard stands as clear statement to the unfinished work in teacher preparation programs and institutions of higher education that continue to struggle to incorporate standards for implementing diversity curriculum and pedagogical practices attentive to the needs of a diverse teacher profession and its responsibility to a diverse society.

Suffice to say there are variant degrees of support, often cautiously optimistic, for the ATE standards, paired with important and critical questions regarding implementation and practical use of these particular standards. It is noted that since various educational affiliations and professional entities have their own set of standards for teachers, ATE's

Standards for Teacher Educators present challenges and opportunities for collaborative enterprise and a continued evolution of how the Standards might further the *professional project*.

It is of importance to note that Andrews (2009) in his examination of the roles and perspectives of state directors of teacher education draws into play a particular politic of the Standards, as it does with any set of standards; state directors of teacher education often resist change. That said, Andrews (2009) denotes that of the nine standards, only two have significant relevance. Equally important is to draw attention to Wise and Leibbrand (2009) in their discussion of the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators as a tool to clarify and inform teacher educators' professional goals. Juxtaposed with NCATE's definition of a conceptual framework, Wise and Leibbrand acknowledge the importance of ATE's Standards as a "conceptual framework by which teacher educators can analyze their own practice" (p. 233).

Returning to Grant and Gibson (2009), who speak from the perspective of university professors, it is important to note that,

> The great benefit of the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators is that they give voice to the need for rigor and pre-eminence of praxis in teacher education: they articulate the multiple layers of our work: and they are a document that all can agree is important. (p. 125)

For the contributing authors of Part III, it was generally agreed that the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators are rigorous and necessary to the professionalization of teacher education. What is discerned as being of particular importance in the voices and perspectives shared is that the unfinished work of the *professional project* is not the work of any one individual or group, rather it is work that must be undertaken by all that share the responsibility as teacher educator and are committed to the realization of teaching and teacher education as a profession.

Perspectives on Standards

Imig and Imig (2009) note that "[o]ver the past twenty-five years there have been repeated efforts to convey to the public and to policy makers that teachers should be accorded professional status" (p. 245). ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators advance a set of standards intended to contribute to the *professional project* that has occupied teacher educators for than a century. The chapters comprising Part IV of *Visions for Teacher Educators* . . . examine the discipline of teacher education, advancing at times a retrospective analysis, and at times advancing a needed critical heuristic to question the substance and the promise of ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators. There is, as Imig and Imig (2009) note, a " . . . 'surround' of competing pressures and expectations on teacher educators" (p. 243), that makes the work of teacher educators difficult, and which warrants a standards-based initiative as set forth by the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators.

The evolution of standards in education has not been without its challenges, often contentious and politically charged. Imig and Imig (2009) note " . . . teacher educators have led the efforts to claim that teaching or education should be recognized as a true profession . . . " (p. 249). As well, Imig and Imig note: "Most teacher educators acknowledge that they have responsibilities and obligations to the education profession just as faculty in other professional schools on their campuses have responsibilities to their particular societies, accreditation practices, and colleagues" (p. 249). The ATE Standards for Teacher Educators provide boundaries and expectations necessary to reconsideration of the professional project in current times, toward the definition of teacher educator professional in a variety of settings, and along a variety of traditional and alternative routes to teaching teachers. Imig and Imig (2009) point out, rightly so, that the success of the ATE Standards " . . . will be measured not by attainment of credentials but rather by the success of those they prepare, or 'in-service'" (p. 269).

Edelfelt (2009) informs the reader that " . . . there is currently no demarcation or assessment process to distinguish teacher educators from other personnel involved in teacher education" (p. 276). This information begs the question of the ATE standards: for whom are they intended? As Edelfelt notes, "Aspects of the standards could be applied to cooperating teachers, to teachers who team-teach with professors, and to teachers who help prepare teachers in professional development schools" (pp. 279-280). An equally important question is posed by

Edelfelt (2009), "How can the standards become policy and be implemented in practice?" (p. 279). A primary challenge before ATE and before teacher education, if the *professional project* is to be realized, lies in acceptance and implementation of the Standards for Teacher Educators. As Edelfelt (2009) admonishes, this " . . . is not a task that ATE should undertake alone. It is much to large a project, and it affects many more teacher educators than members of ATE" (p. 279).

Lin and Klecka (2009) argue that the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators " . . . provide a language of possibility to articulate the values and social participation objectives for teacher educators" (p. 286). Offering " . . . a working theoretical framework grounded in the standards," (p. 296), Lin and Klecka advance the argument that a pedagogical self-study can potentially guide teacher educators in " . . . reflection on their work and the profession" (p. 286). In part, the question of acceptance and implementation set forth by Edelfelt (2009) might be addressed through a pedagogical self-study framework, which would ostensibly focus on the ATE Standards and "learning *about* teacher education . . . learning *within* teacher education . . . learning *for* teacher education . . ." (pp. 287-288, emphasis in original).

Bringing a more critical lens to focus on standards, Clift (2009) in her chapter "Be Careful What You Ask For: Do We Really Want or Need Standards for Teacher Educators?" presents a provocative contribution to *Visions for Teacher Educators . . .* And it offers an important response to the original framing question, *whither standards in the professional project*? Clift contends "ATE has defined the individual as the target or the locus for change" (p. 299) and that the term standards must be viewed in

> . . . relational concepts . . . the terms *high standards* versus *minimal standards* versus *no standards* in relation to one another convey a continuum of quality and judgment—without established standards a person, institution or organization is somehow derelict. The terms *program standards* versus convey a locus of responsibility, the former holding an institution or curriculum accountable for meeting criteria, and the latter interrogating actions by people independent of context. (p. 299)

Clift (2009) sees using standards as placing the full responsibility of meeting them on the individual and none of the responsibility for meeting the standards on the institution that may not provide the support needed for teacher educators to meet the individual standards, such as mentors, collaboration, time, etc. As Clift (2009) reflects in her critical analysis, "It is highly unlikely that teacher educator standards—even if mandated and applied rigorously and widely—will impact the culture of the university or society" (p. 304). Imig and Imig (2009) also offer a cautionary note that furthers Clift's concern:

The terrain of teacher professionalism is highly contested; e.g., between 'the state' and teachers, between teacher unions and local boards of education, between parent's groups and teachers, between communities and

schools. With little certainty about who should 'control' the agenda related to teacher's work, it seems that we are headed into a time of greater uncertainty in where and how teaching and teacher education take place. (p. 269)

Suffice to say, Clift's argument poses a different and difficult question, if all who work with prospective teachers (defined broadly) were to transform the ATE Standards into related curriculum and pedagogical practices as well as documents necessary for accreditation, "what could we envision about the process?" (p. 307). And, as Clift argues, " . . . if our goal is to encourage continuous improvement and to work toward excellence in teacher education, administrative nurturing matters, mentoring matters, support, sufficient resources, and encouragement matter" (p. 311). Clift concludes her chapter noting that " . . . the Association of Teacher Educators adoption of Teacher Educator Standards is a done deal . . . [and] We don't know what will happen to them in the future" (p. 311). Her final thought, a simple yet profoundly important question: with respect to Standards for Teacher Educators, " . . . will there be an unintended and catastrophic consequence as more and more talented young professors decline to engage in preparing the next generation of teachers?" (pp. 311-312).

Points of Concern

Although I found *Visions for Teacher Educators: Perspectives on the Association of Teacher Educators' Standards* to be an important addition to the teacher education literature, several concerns need mentioning. The first concern involves

the relationship between ATE's Standards for Teacher Educators and the policy discourse on teacher preparation. Introducing a set of standards, while important, has little or no implication unless the standards become a prominent part of the policy discourse, and more importantly, unless they move for discourse to action. There is a definite need for advocates of the standards to move forward in their efforts to make the Standards for Teacher Educators actionable through policy that is more than a rhetorical treatment of professionalizing teacher education. Teacher educators can ill afford to be quiet in the policy discourse on preparation or to let this moment pass.

The second concern involves whether or not the Standards for Teacher Educators can be operationalized at the institution and program levels. Simply stated, the concern is whether the Standards can provoke teacher educators to take the steps necessary to translate the nine standards into curriculum and pedagogical practices for preparing teachers. This will require that teacher educators challenge their conventional beliefs regarding the purpose of standards as well as where standards are situated in the learning to teach experience; pedagogical and curricula as well as construction of the professional identity of teacher. This means sorting out the relationship of the Standards with respect to "learning *about* teacher education . . . learning *within* teacher education . . . learning *for* teacher education . . ." (Edelfelt, 2009, pp. 287-288, emphasis in original).

The third concern resides with the original intent of the editors of this collected work:

[We] intended to highlight the work and visions of the National Commission on Teacher Educators Standards. . . . Our goal was to disseminate the ideas, conceptions, and intentions of the original development and subsequent revision of the Standards for Teacher Educators. We also aimed to unearth questions and issues about these conceptualizations . . . the goal [of this book] is to be inclusive. (Klecka, Odell, Houston, & McBee, 2009, p. 315)

To that end, the editors and contributing authors have accomplished their goal of providing information and opening a professional, inclusive dialogue. While it was the intent of Klecka et al. (2009) " . . . to envision what's possible through the standards" (p. 316), the concern is whether the vision argued for by the editors is realistic or much too grandiose to be fully realized? There is a certain vagueness or ambiguity to the standards that leaves them open to individual and/or institutional interpretation. This lack of clarity can be perplexing depending on how the standards are used. If the standards are used to reconsider the current structure of teacher preparation programs, the ambiguity could play an unintended role of further mystifying what and who a teacher educator. The same ambiguous standards could be problematic for teacher educators if the standards were used to evaluate the teacher educator's performance, particularly if there are no clear set guidelines with measurable assessments. As noted by several of the contributing authors, the language of the ATE standards needs to strive for more specificity and clarity.

Grant and Gibson (2009) seem to best sum up the ATE standards as they are presented,

> . . . while the standards are well researched, inclusive, and comprehensive, they strike us as functioning still as rhetoric. There is certainly no argument about their validity and importance, but . . . How well will they accomplish what they set out to, and how will we evaluate and measure our progress? Where is the language moving towards action, and then where are the tools of adjudication to measure this action? As so often happens within teacher education, we have defined good teaching, we have defined our outcomes and objectives, but we have not given consideration to assessing our progress against these outcomes and objectives. (p. 134)

A final concern lies with realizing the *professional project*, which, perhaps, encapsulates each of the aforementioned concerns. There are, as Imig and Imig (2009) noted, a " . . . 'surround' of competing pressures and expectations on teacher educators" (p. 243), a statement that is profound in its implications for any attempt to further the *professional project*, whether it be ATE's standards-based initiative or a comparable initiative intentioned to realize the status of professionalism desired for teacher education. However, the concern here is who will do the heavy lifting when it comes to the Standards for Teacher Educators. Certainly the contributing authors to *Visions for Teacher Educators* . . . have demonstrated their

commitment by giving voice to so many differing perspectives, but this is, in and of itself, not sufficient. While the collected voices shared in the respective chapters will certainly provoke lively and spirited discussions on education, teacher educators, and professional standards, the real work is out in front of all who are vested in realization of the *professional project*. The journey toward being recognized as a profession began many years ago. *Visions for Teacher Educators . . .* reminds all that are teacher educators that there is much farther yet to go if we are to achieve our goal.

Despite these concerns, Klecka et al.'s (2009) *Visions for Teacher Educators: Perspectives on the Association of Teacher Educators' Standards* holds import for teacher educators and has currency for furthering the policy discourse on teacher preparation. The differing perspectives presented to the reader offer much needed examination of an historical and complex issue, the place of standards in teacher education. Given the ongoing debate about standards in American society, and the focus on standards as a mechanism for improving education, *Visions for Teacher Educators . . .* engages the reader in a dialogue, furthering one's understanding of the complexities of the what it means to be a teacher educator, juxtaposed to the responsibilities and obligations one has, as a teacher educator, to furthering the *professional project*.

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About the Reviewer

Patrick M. Jenlink is Professor of doctoral studies in the Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership and Director of the Educational Research Center at Stephen F. Austin State University. His professional work has primarily focused on educator preparation, democracy and education, qualitative research, and cultural-historical activity theory. His teaching area includes ethics and philosophy and research methods. Currently he serves as editor of *Teacher Education & Practice* and co-editor of *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, both peer-refereed journals. His most recent writing includes *Cultural Recognition and the Struggle for Identity in America's Schools* (2009, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education), *Dewey's Democracy and Education Revisited: Contemporary Discourses on Democratic Education and Leadership* (2009, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education), *Equity Issues for Today's Educational Leaders: Meeting the Challenge of Creating Equitable Schools for All* (2009, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education), "Creating Democratic Learning Communities: Transformative Work as Spatial Practice" published by *Theory Into Practice* (2008)