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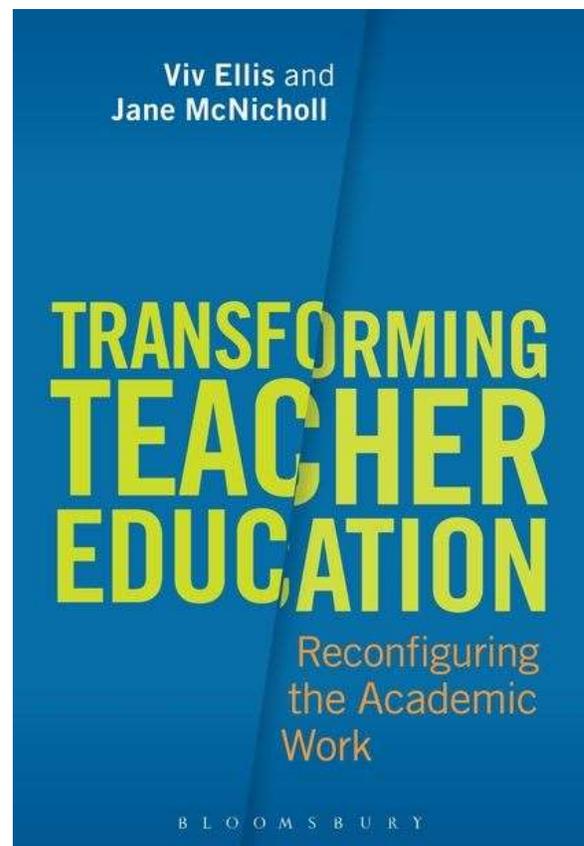
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**Reviewed by Andrew Markelz  
The Pennsylvania State University  
United States**

*Transforming Teacher Education: Reconfiguring the Academic Work* offers a transformative agenda for higher education scholars, particularly at the graduate level, to stimulate a reframing of teacher preparation. Examining the current state of teacher education within cultural and historical contexts, the authors argue that teacher educators are under-prioritized, a situation that diminishes their value and potential to contribute to new ideas and innovations in academic environments. This devaluation has taken place during a time when teacher educators' work has become more important to higher education institutions, yet their devaluation works against the goals of higher education, limiting research and development of effective teaching practices.

Lending credence to their position, the authors are researchers in teacher preparation: Viv Ellis is Professor at Brunel University (UK) and Bergen University College (Norway), and Jane McNicholl is Professor at the University of Oxford (UK).



As a researcher in special education teacher preparation immersed in current U.S. policy debates around teacher educators, this reviewer was drawn to the book title. My experience as an alternatively certified educator now working within a traditional preparation model provides a unique perspective from which to analyze the debate around teacher preparation. Reviewing this book provided a deeper dive into the contextual and theoretical underpinnings of this debate.

The authors structure the book into three sections. The first section offers an account of recent history and politics of teacher education with particular reference to England but within an international context. According to the authors, initial teacher education has transformed over the years into a policy debate. Traditionally, higher education institutions were responsible for the majority of teacher preparation; however, alternative routes to certification as well as distant learning programs have upended traditional models. In this section the authors also explore how the work of teacher educators is viewed within academic settings. After analyzing job description text and interviewing heads of education departments at universities, the authors write, “it was common for universities to conceptualize the teacher educator as a ‘super teacher’ . . . and was produced as a hybrid category of academic worker” (pp. 51-52). Within higher education institutions, academic capital and professional credibility is linked to a faculty’s ‘research profile’. A contradiction emerges for teacher educators when their roles produce results (effective teachers) without gaining academic capital (research). Even though the main goal of a teacher educator is to produce effective teachers, universities value research production the most. A teacher educator can, therefore, be training excellent teachers but not have the time or resources to conduct research. As a result, the university does not value the teacher educators’ output, and this devaluing

minimizes the priority and influence teacher educators have at universities.

The second section demonstrates how practices of teacher education and “day-to-day” demands of teacher educators are conceptualized by universities and teacher educators. The authors asked: (1) What is the teacher educator’s work? What are their typical professional activities and what are the material (social and cultural) conditions in which they are situated? (In short, what do they do?); and (2) How do teacher educators talk about their work?

Through qualitative analysis, using interviews, work diaries, and observations, the authors suggest that the defining characteristics of teacher educators in their sample was *relationship maintenance*, in other words, maintaining relationships between universities, schools where preservice teachers student-teach, and the preservice teachers themselves. The authors use in-depth analyses of four teachers’ daily narratives to show how consuming relationship maintenance is for teacher educators. The narratives highlight how much time is devoted to coordinating, relationship building, and otherwise known as ‘housekeeping’ activities, yet are essential for the efficiency and success of teacher training programs.

In the third section, the authors offer an applicable agenda for transforming teacher education. The authors turn to concepts derived from Marxist theory (Marx and Engels) to articulate the gradual proletarianization (i.e. downward social mobility) of teacher educators. Within academic settings where research is prioritized above teaching, teacher educators’ value has declined along with their potential to contribute to new ideas and innovations. The authors believe disregarding the experiences and expertise of teacher educators is detrimental to the progression of teacher education. Furthermore, this devaluing has come at the same time that the work teacher educators do (i.e., relationship

maintenance) has become more important than ever with rapidly changing models of teacher education. With competing programs for teacher education, such as alternative routes to certification and distant learning programs, universities need effective teacher educators and their relationship maintenance skills to keep traditional teacher training programs competitive.

According to the authors, two major consequences emerge with the proletarianization of teacher educators. First, the development of teaching and learning in schools is not being promoted and supported as effectively as it should be. Relationship maintenance may be necessary work for the operation of teacher education, however, it is not academic work and it does not maximize the deep professional knowledge and expertise of teacher educators. The authors suggest that teacher educators' expertise could be used more effectively in schools and classrooms to develop better teachers, while the responsibilities of relationship maintenance be assigned to administrative personnel. The second consequence is that teacher educators are not engaging in educational research. Valuing the experiences and expertise of teacher educators could lead to teachers and student teachers collaborating more in research that could positively impact professional practice.

To combat this proletarianization and transform the field of teacher education, the authors propose five principles:

**Principle 1:** Universities are public institutions that require academic freedom from government intervention to train effective teachers.

**Principle 2:** Education in public universities should seek new relationships inside and outside of the university to balance professional, policy, critical and reflexive knowledge.

**Principle 3:** The profession of teaching is a collaborative community responsible for the development of professional creativity to make a positive difference in the education of young people in schools.

**Principle 4:** The relationships between higher education and the profession around the preparation of teachers should be dynamic as opposed to rigid partnerships.

**Principle 5:** Teacher education activity can produce strong forms of action-research that benefits all collaborators.

While admitting their proposed principles are idealistic, the authors identify three actions that stem from the principles and contribute to their agenda for teacher education transformation. The first action is to create the conditions for change through powerful arguments in the public sphere. The proliferation of alternative routes to certification is compounding the debate around teacher preparation and highlights the importance of amplifying the argument in a public sphere as opposed to the confines of scholarly journals. Green (2014) authors a book stressing the importance of teacher educators and their role in training and shaping highly successful teachers. The authors of this book would agree with Green that teacher educators' work value is critical and arguments to undermine that value, even by systemic underpinnings, should be countered aggressively.

The second action is to design professional learning around complex understandings of practice. According to the authors, taking classes at a university and then undertaking some supervised teaching in neighborhood schools is contributing to the research to practice divide that limits the use of research-informed ideas in the practical world of teaching. It is important, therefore, to understand practice as being 'in motion'

when designing teacher training programs. Engeström (2007) discusses the frequent gap between good ideas and implementation which the authors suggest can be overcome when utilizing strategies like “collaborative teaching, modelling ways of working and then creating opportunities for student teachers to join in while they become increasingly independent” (pp. 146). Professional learning should, therefore, be scaffolded, school-based, and practice focused.

Action three is to rebuild the research program in teaching and teacher education around theory-building and cross-setting intervention research. This reviewer considers action three particularly relevant with regards to a persistent research to practice gap in special education (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). Since teacher educators are the bridge between research and practice, valuing their roles and incorporating their expertise into action-research may prove beneficial in enhancing teaching practices while simultaneously building academic capital for teacher educators. The authors, and this reviewer, believe these three actions may result in a reimagining of public institutions and the professionalization of teacher education.

A book that analyzes the historical contexts and theoretical underpinnings of teacher education and offers actionable suggestions for reframing the debate, is timely and beneficial. In the United States, the recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) underscores the transformation that education is currently undergoing with a shift in educational authority away from the federal government and back towards state authority. The value of extensive teacher education has increasingly been called into question as teacher shortages and cash strapped districts struggle to provide adequate services. Given such in-depth analysis and exploration of multifaceted constructs, however, the accessibility of this book may be limited to teacher education professionals and

students at the graduate level. As an example of the complexity of analysis, the authors state that their principles are based out of research in, “human learning and development, cultural-historical psychology, organizational theory and the sociology of science and of the professions . . . and underpinned by an evolutionary theory of innovation” (pp. 140). Exploration of these concepts are provided; however, this reviewer found the theoretical explanations challenging at times without extensive background knowledge or prior research experience. While the authors do a sufficient job defining terms, accessibility to the text may also be limited due to its focus on Marxist concepts such as academic capitalism, proletarianization, and labor value, especially for American readers who are less familiar with Marxist socioeconomic analysis than British readers.

Despite these weaknesses, *Transforming Teacher Education: Reconfiguring the Academic Work* is an insightful analysis of teacher education. The authors do an excellent job of supporting their claim that the proletarianization of teacher educators is undermining the advancement of teacher education, and their thorough methodological and theoretical building of an argument should place this book at the top of teacher educators’ and teacher education researchers’ reading lists. Although limitations may position the relevance of this book more towards an English audience, changes in teacher education are taking place across the globe. Understanding the conscious and subconscious value of teacher educators within society and academic institutions is critical in moving education forward. This book shines a spotlight on the proletarianization of teacher educators and, with concrete actions, provides a path ahead.

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## About the Reviewer

### Andrew Markelz

Doctoral Candidate

The University of Pennsylvania

Andrew Markelz is a Special Education Doctoral Candidate at The Pennsylvania State University.

His research interests include teacher preparation and educational policy. After returning as a Peace Corps Volunteer from the Republic of Kiribati, Andrew taught in Busan, South Korea, then Philadelphia, PA. He currently lives in State College, PA, with his wife and two children.



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