# FOREWORD

For the last thirty years or so, I have been interested in various dimensions of professionalism in the field of education. It always struck me, from the time I was a student in school myself, how erratic and often undisciplined teaching was as a practice and how much people in the field of education seemed to be attached to a kind of artisanal view of teaching. In this view, the complex world of learning had to be recreated from scratch each day in hundreds of thousands of classrooms. My own experience as a learner, with a rather jagged profile of competencies, was not well served by this view of teaching, from elementary school through graduate school. Could we create, I wondered, a strong, supportive, understandable learning environment that would both provide a clear and coherent theory of learning and allow for all the necessary adaptations to individual differences? Most professions grapple with this problem every day.

I began to pursue this interest in professionalism in earnest in the 1990s with a relatively simple idea: professions are distinguished from other forms of work by their shared practices; they use these practices to form a common identity and sources of social authority, to expand their knowledge, and to provide consistent approaches to diverse problems. I decided to use my position in the university to demonstrate this idea by working with practitioners to develop clinical practices that could regularly build a collective culture of improvement in the conditions of learning. My first such project was developing, with a group of colleagues and a collaborating set of schools and districts, the practice of instructional rounds. The second was the internal coherence project. The development of these clinical practices together has spanned some fifteen years.

As this book illustrates, diving deeply into the world of clinical practice requires a mastery of multiple disciplinary perspectives. In this case, the perspectives include basic theories of learning, the psychology of individual and collective efficacy, the sociology of collective learning at the team and organizational level, and multiple roles of leadership in learning. The central task of defining and developing a clinical practice is melding these multiple disciplinary perspectives into a causal framework that can guide actions, doing justice to the complexity of the underlying research, while at the same time making the implications of that research accessible to practitioners. The only way to do this is to spend time in direct discourse with practitioners and to engage them in the collaborative development of practice.

This work requires a particular set of dispositions and skills, embodied in the competencies of Michelle, Liz, and Candice, our authors. Each has a footing in a specialized field of research related mainly to influences on the development of teaching practice in school settings. Each commands a formidable battery of learning protocols that can be used to introduce and develop relatively abstract and difficult constructs into skills and behaviors that can be modeled, practiced, and used in the daily work of educators. And most importantly, each author has a broad range of interpersonal competencies that build trust and authenticity in work with practitioners. We can say that this combination of competencies is unusual among academics in research universities, but these competencies are also clearly central to the creation and development of professional practice.

For me, the internal coherence project was an important event in my personal development. As I developed my ideas around organizational coherence and clinical practice in my graduate teaching and professional development work, I realized that as my ideas became more concrete and specific, they also became narrower and less responsive to differences in context. For example, I began to use rubrics to provide feedback in my graduate courses, and that practice changed my entire mental map of what learning means and what role feedback plays in learning. I immediately gravitated toward the application of rubrics to the assessment of organizational capacity in the internal coherence clinical work. What I didn't reckon with is that the idea and practice of self-assessment is both unfamiliar in

school settings and completely at odds with the dominant culture of evaluation, in which assessments are typically "done to" rather than "done with."

I finally began to understand the use of rubrics in professional development by working with Michelle, Liz, and Candice on the design and enactment of actual learning experiences for teachers and principals. In these experiences, a series of exercises designed to introduce the idea of psychological safety and focused discourse around practice preceded the use of rubrics for self-assessment. Working with skilled facilitators and designers added to my understanding and to the development of my own practice. As the book states, we learn best when people with different skills, competencies, and dispositions have to build a common product.

I have read this manuscript with a combination of pride and humility. Pride, in the sense of having been part of a collaborative enterprise that so closely approximates what I intended to do thirty-some years ago; humility, in the sense of how much of this book is the product of the authors and their dedicated persistence in the development of the practice, and not to the original ideas that spawned my involvement in it. If one were to build a profession around learning, this would a good place to start.

One of the advantages of working in a leading research university is the opportunity to work with amazing partners—leading scholars in diverse fields, talented and experienced practitioners who have returned to graduate school, public school systems representing a range of conditions and diverse student populations, and institutions charged with advancing the connection between research and practice. Another of the advantages of being a tenured professor in a leading research university is that you can choose the problems you work on and the colleagues with whom you work. In these respects, I have lived a very privileged life.

This book would not have occurred without the collaboration and support of Carol Johnson, former superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, and those initial principals and teachers in the original pilot schools in Boston. The fundamental, broad-scale empirical research of Roger Goddard and his colleagues on individual and collective efficacy were essential to this book (formerly at Texas A&M, Roger is now at Ohio State University). The book would not exist without the collaboration of senior administrators in Fort Worth, Texas, and Clovis,

California; these individuals played an active role not just in modeling the work of the internal coherence practice but also, in important ways, as codesigners of that practice. Similarly, our wonderful, energetic colleagues at California State University, Fresno, were a powerful force in building and sustaining our collective learning in the Central Valley of California.

Projects of this scope do not occur without considerable institutional support, and for us, this came through our affiliation with the Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) at the National Academy of Sciences, and our colleague Suzanne Donovan. SERP was explicitly designed to deepen the connection between research, policy, and practice in education and to develop the disciplines associated with this connection.

Most of all, this book would not have occurred without the powerful, persistent inquisitiveness and dedication of Michelle Forman, Liz Stosich, and Candice Bocala, all experienced practitioners who began their work on this project while graduate students at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. All three have strong, independent minds and are fiercely dedicated to deepening the connection between research and practice. Our joint work on this project was, for me, a model of what graduate study in a professional school should be about: learning together, learning from each other, asking "why not?" to divergent ideas, and taking risks in bringing unfamiliar ideas to practitioner audiences.

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