

# **Towards Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup>: Implications of the Role of the School Task Force Report for Teacher Education in Western Canada**

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## **Abstract**

Over a period of two years (1999-2001), a Task Force on the role of the school held hearings with various stakeholders in education in Saskatchewan, Canada, and wrote a major report. The Final Report entitled School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth was widely distributed in March 2001. Since its release, it has provided a focus for educational change in the province. For the Faculty of Education specifically, it has provided a “changing agenda” for teacher education for the future. The Task Force Report conceptualizes a new organization of delivery of human services to children and youth within the province through, what is called, a School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment. The new environment can be described as a matrix that draws all of its services from existing governmental and non-governmental agencies, and coordinates them in school-linked and school-based configurations to meet existing and emerging needs of children and youth. Since the release of the Report, the educational partners in the province have responded to the Report’s recommendations. As one of the partners, the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina is now engaged in a process of dialogue with the other partners to determine the implications of the Report for teacher education. Through this process, the Faculty is coming to a better understanding of what it means to be a “community-oriented” Faculty.

## **The Problem of Change in Teacher Education**

What change in teacher education is worthwhile? How can meaningful and lasting take place? What drives significant change? Who should be involved in teacher education change? These are important questions for teacher educators. Teacher education change around the world has often been strongly driven by external forces such as financial restraint or teacher shortages leading to shortened teacher education programs. Other forces, better characterized as internal such as the reflective teaching movement or the professional development school approach, have been championed by teacher educators. Certainly, the research that teacher educators draw from to change programs has become “a much richer and more varied body of inquiry” in the past decade (Zeichner, 1999). From time to time a major report such as that of the Holme’s Group (1986) in the USA will address the need for change in teacher education to which teacher education programs respond in varying degrees. Very seldom does a broader range of stakeholders in education decide how teacher education should change to fit into and promote more sweeping educational change.

This paper reports an ongoing development in a Faculty of Education in Canada that has been less influenced by any of the factors listed above than by a report on the role of the school and the need for schools to change. The report, entitled School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth (Tymchak, 2001), was the result of a two-year dialogue process that integrally involved the educational partnership in the province. Since the release of the Report in March 2001, each of the educational partners in the province has formally responded to the Report’s recommendations. As one of the partners, the Faculty of Education has been in a process of dialogue with the educational partners and others to determine the implications of

the Report for teacher education. Dialogue focused on the Report has also been taking place within the Faculty. Through this process, the Faculty is coming to a better understanding of what it means to be a “community-oriented” Faculty, one that has closer links to other communities that are interested in schools. A vision for Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup> is growing.

The teacher education change process in the province is being propelled forward by the dialogue among the educational and non-educational partners. Within the Faculty, a new conception of teacher education is beginning to emerge that is being strongly shaped by the context of education in the province. This paper presents the argument that teacher education needs to be strongly oriented to the local conditions of education, and committed to the educational partnership if change is to be meaningful and long lasting.

There is a precedent in the province for significant change in teacher education. In the 70s, several Aboriginal teacher education programs were established for First Nations and Metis students. The Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP), Southern Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP), and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Department of Indian Education are still in operation with hundreds of graduates presently teaching in Saskatchewan schools. These programs value Aboriginal history, culture, language and pedagogy. In a study of the NORTEP graduates, it was found that they had been profoundly impacted by their teacher education program, a finding not common to mainstream teacher education programs (Friesen and Orr, 1999;1998). This remarkable development in teacher education over the past three decades was in response to a particular need—a rising Aboriginal population and few Aboriginal teachers—identified by the educational partners in the province, and the recognition that teachers of Aboriginal descent were needed as role models both for these children and the society at large.

With the release of the Task Force Report, the educational partners including teacher educators are again called upon to respond. It would appear that the context for change in teacher education is in place in the form of an involved educational partnership with a singular focus, the changing role of the school.

### **School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth**

The Task Force on the Role of the School was created by the Government of Saskatchewan Cabinet in May 1999. Its task was to conduct public dialogue and make recommendations concerning the role of the school in dealing with the impact of profound societal changes on the needs of today’s children and youth. The study culminated in March 2001 with the delivery of the Final Report to the Minister of Education. The chairperson of the 12-member Task Force and writer of the Final Report was Dr. Michael Tymchak, the former Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Regina. Task Force members consisted of 12 individuals representing the traditional educational partnership (teachers, trustees, administrators, universities), but also non-traditional participants such as Aboriginal people, labor, social services, health and justice. The author of this paper was a special consultant and Director of the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDRU) that supported the Task Force study.

During Phase 1 the Task Force conducted an extensive consultation and information-gathering process in over thirty communities throughout the province. The dialogue process

involved listening and talking to a wide variety of community organizations, members of the partnership, and the public over a period of a year. Role-alike focus groups, as well as written submissions to the Task Force, constituted the primary avenues for input. The results of this process—what the Task Force heard and preliminary recommendations—were reported in the Interim Report in June 2000. Phase 2 involved soliciting feedback on this Report and its recommendations through various means such as a broad-based symposium of educational stakeholders including education partners, community and Aboriginal organizations, as well as parents, teachers, administrators and students. Comments on the Interim Report were also sent to the Task Force via a website. The feedback enabled the Task Force to engage in deeper reflection on the role of the school, which is contained in the Final Report, School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth.

The effort to create the Task Force arose in the context of a growing awareness that the role schools play in society—and the role they are expected to play—has altered dramatically. Where has this expanded role come from? The Task Force used an earthquake metaphor to represent the powerful change forces that have fundamentally impacted schools. Each of these factors are called “tectonic factors,” which not only have their own impact, but also interact with each other in such a way as to create an “earthquake” for schools.

The Task Force identified the following tectonic factors as having a pronounced effect on the “ground” on which schools stand: increasing special needs students integrated into classrooms, major demographic shifts, the rise of the information society and globalization, increasing child poverty, increasing at-risk student population, rising pupil mobility, profound family changes, cross-cultural issues, human service integration, rural depopulation, curriculum reform based on new understandings of teaching and learning, career concerns of young people, the phenomena of school violence, and increasing concern about student attitudes and behavior. While many of these factors are desirable, such as the integration of special needs students into classrooms, the overall effect has produced profound change for the traditional role of the school. Simply stated, the school is called upon to do more than it ever has before without significant additional resources to accomplish its mission.

The Task Force found that while a description of these factors was important, it was more important to look at what they mean for teachers’ experience. The dominant impression relates to teacher identity, losing one—the primary role of providing academic education—and taking on many others. Teacher comments throughout the process suggests that they experience this role confusion in a variety of ways, including a sense of grief or loss at losing their traditional boundaries and a heightened awareness of the tension between addressing student achievement needs versus their social needs.

It became apparent to the Task Force that the tectonic factors are societal factors and speak to the need for the creation of a new society as opposed to fixing schools. Particularly in the area of Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal relations, the Report suggests that a “re-contact” period is crucial; only this time, education, not the fur trade, needs to drive relations. The “contact era” is the period when the two cultures, First Nations and European, first met in Saskatchewan in the 1700s. The context for this contact was the fur trade. Another period of contact transpired later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the arrival of agricultural settlers, the signing of treaties, and the establishment of Indian reserves. Therefore, the role of the school is crucial for success of Aboriginal people in the “New Economy” characterized by information and technology as opposed to the old economies of fur and buffalo. The Report urges that

nothing more and nothing less than the forging of a new society lies before the people of the province so that the needs of children and youth of every race and color are met.

In making its recommendations, the Task Force kept in mind the foundational belief that the primary “good” at which schools should aim is the humanization of children and young people; helping them become persons more fully within a framework of justice, equity and fairness. This perspective allowed that Task Force to focus more strongly on the needs of children and youth along with the mission or purpose of schools.

Creating a new society calls for vision, will, and resources. The Final Report reminds us that we urgently need to begin a journey to recreate the school and human-service environment in the image of our children and youth; that is, an environment shaped to their needs.

The Report recommendations begin with an affirmation of the provincial Community School program and go on to call for an expansion of the program to more schools, including high schools where there is a significant at-risk student population. Community Schools were established in urban locations in the province where there is a significant “at risk” student population. These schools are given additional resources to provide programs that address the effects of urban poverty as well as affirm the students’ cultural traditions. They commonly have a nutrition program, a school/community coordinator, a school council, and teacher associates. Impressed with the success of Community Schools, the Task Force called for the adoption of a Community School philosophy (Tirozzi, 1999) for all schools in the province to encourage stronger links between schools and communities.

The next major set of recommendation of the Report calls for interagency coordination of services to children and youth through the location of the school within the nexus of a wide variety of governmental and community-based, human services. This concept is much like the “full service” concept advocated by Dryfoos (1994). These recommendations build on voluntary attempts to integrate human service delivery in the province by calling on government at the cabinet level to authorize the integration of government human service departments through a new integration authority called the Saskatchewan Education and Human Services Network (SEAHSN).

A third set of recommendations conceptualizes the School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment as a matrix organization that will draw all of its resources from existing governmental and non governmental agencies, coordinating and integrating those resources to operate School<sup>PLUS</sup> programs to meet the needs of children and youth. These recommendations see the “New School” existing within a larger human-services environment with many available programs integrated and coordinated in a much stronger way than is now possible. The primary focus of the school remains public education but within an environment that strongly links human services to schools and, in where possible, basing these in schools. An interagency fund is recommended to create School<sup>PLUS</sup>. Other recommendations suggest that educational partners explore organizational and legal as well as staffing implications for School<sup>PLUS</sup>.

The Task Force recognizes the implications for role changes of teachers and administrators and suggests that the education partners, especially the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) and preservice colleges of education, explore these implications.

Other recommendations call for closer partnerships between schools and students and parents for the purpose of including these voices in the creation of policy and decision making. The

Report suggests that schools regularly include students in school assessment processes, not only as a source of feedback, but also for student leadership development.

In terms of programs in a School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment, the Task Force recommends pre-kindergarten programs to optimize health and learning opportunities for 0 to 5 year olds and to provide help for parents and other care-givers. A program for the retrieval of “hidden youth”—youth not attending school—is suggested, including the development of absenteeism protocols and a tracking system especially between provincial and Band school systems (Aboriginal First Nations schools that are funded by the federal government and not the provincial government).

A host of other recommendations address: court orders and school attendance, public education for troubled youth, information technology, distance education, career education, extracurricular activities, high school reform, school fees, Aboriginal education, student attitudes and behavior, school-community cooperatives, and the physical plant. It also includes recommendations concerning the changing roles of teachers and in-school administrators.

Funding and implementation are addressed by the final recommendations. A committee of stakeholders to oversee the implementation of the Report’s recommendations is suggested. This committee is called the School<sup>PLUS</sup> Children and Youth Monitoring and Action Plan (SCYMAP). Budget estimates are provided for four years of implementation.

In conclusion, the Task Force’s investigation into the role of the school led them to reevaluate how the province delivers all human services to children and youth. They were convinced that the issues identified called for decisive, determined intervention. They feared that the failure to grasp the urgency and significance of the moment, the magnitude of the concerns raised, and the responses they invite, could result in serious long-term consequences for the province.

The Task Force concluded that as the role of the school changes, so must the roles of those most responsible for the delivery of public education. The Report’s conception of better school-linked and when possible, school-based services, provides a model for schools wherein teachers are relieved of other roles (social worker, court worker, nurse etc.) so they can attend, in a more focused way, to the educative function that has always been the central focus of schools. However, teachers will in the future need to be better prepared to assess the needs of children and youth, and to refer students to appropriate agencies and workers. They will need to be prepared to work in the School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment with its expanded diversity of program offerings and additional adult workers providing services in the school setting. Teachers will also need knowledge and skills in the area of community development if the Community School philosophy is to be realized.

A role change for in-school administrators will also be required. An expanded human service environment calls for an enhanced management function that provides coordination among the various service providers. The leadership function will have to become increasingly important because of the need in the new environment to develop additional programs in a more flexible setting to meet the changing needs of children and youth. The Report recommends that these additional administrative functions not simply be added to existing duties, but that the capacity to deliver administrative services be increased.

For the purposes of this paper, the specific recommendations related to teacher education need to be stated.

#### Recommendation 6. Pre-Service Colleges of Education

The Task Force is conscious of the fact that the implementation of its recommendations carries significant implications for pre-service teacher education and graduate studies in Education. Generally speaking the teacher of tomorrow needs to be much more aware of the wide range of professional human services than is typically covered in undergraduate teacher education programs. There is a need for enhanced awareness of the principles of community development, an appreciation of the role of parents as active participants in their children's education, and the contribution to school that can be made by non-governmental, community-based organizations. The human service administrator, both in School<sup>PLUS</sup> and within central office, will need to value collaboration, and be able to promote team-work; will need to foster a rich and sensitive environment for human relationships.

In light of these considerations, the Task Force recommends:

That the two colleges of education in the province, at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, as well as the Aboriginal teacher education programs, NORTEP, SUNTEP, ITEP and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Department of Indian Education, carefully consider the implications of the integrated human services environment contained within School<sup>PLUS</sup>, and, that they determine how their undergraduate and graduate programs might best be changed and adapted to support this new environment; and in particular,

That the colleges and Aboriginal teacher education programs consider the role of the teacher and the role of the in-school administrator implied by School<sup>PLUS</sup> and determine how the knowledge, understanding and skills requisite for an integrated human services environment might be promoted (Tymchak, 2001, pp.76-77).

The final statement in the Report challenged the stakeholders to adopt a "visionary spirit" to bring about the magnitude of change recommended by the Report.

Our proposal to recreate school and human services in the image of children and youth calls for a visionary spirit that is prepared to make a generous commitment of human and financial resources in the cause of a brighter and better future. We believe that the time for such action is now (Tymchak, 2001, p. 113).

## Responding to the Report

The Faculty of Education, University of Regina, submitted a formal response to the Task Force report (Friesen, 2001) in the "visionary spirit" called for by the Report. This section outlines that Response, which evolved from dialogue among faculty during sessions focusing on the Report.

The Response notes that because of the Report's recommendations, the implications for teacher education are beginning to become more apparent to the Faculty of Education. Teacher education must prepare a different kind of teacher for the New School. In order to continue their role in public education, teachers need to have a strong content background, but they need equally strong pedagogical knowledge and skills. And they need to acquire

professional judgment capabilities in professional settings not just academic knowledge in university classrooms. They need to have enhanced interpersonal abilities to relate to agencies, parents and communities. Prospective teachers need to have internships that go beyond school classrooms to include technology environments, cultural settings, and social work, justice and health experiences to become better acquainted with the changing social and cultural contexts of schools. Teachers will also require better understandings of their community in order to work collaboratively with that community for its improvement. The focus of teacher education must transcend the usual K-12 range to prepare educators to work with pre-K children, adults returning to school to finish high school programs, and parents and community members accessing school programs. Teacher education candidates need to better reflect the diversity of the community.

The introduction to the Response that follows captures the notion of the Report being the focus for teacher education change.

The Role of the School Task Force Report presents both opportunities and challenges for the Faculty of Education, University of Regina, in delivering teacher education that supports the School<sup>PLUS</sup> vision. Our response to the Report is more of a self-reflection, in terms of implications for teacher education, than an analysis of the recommendations. Although there are a wide range of views regarding the recommendations, there is general agreement by Faculty that the Report should be a focal point for our discussions on teacher-education reform. The Faculty's approach to teacher education is built upon a strong foundation of integrated theory and practice, and is well positioned to take up the challenge of educating teachers to meet the changing needs of schools that the Report has so vividly brought to our attention.

The Report also provides a challenge to the provincial educational partnership. During the past two decades, the Faculty has been an integral part of this partnership, focused on the implementation and actualization of the Core Curriculum. During this time Directions (1984) provided the focus for educational change. Yet the release of the Task Force Report provides a broader contextual focus for change for the partnership as we continue to work together towards the actualization of the Core Curriculum in schools.

There has been an initial enthusiastic response to the Report by the Faculty. The Report comes at a particularly opportune time with Faculty involved in an ongoing visioning process of several years, as well as embarking on a Unit review by the University of Regina. Faculty, including many new members, are eager to engage in focused dialogue about how we can improve our teacher education offerings to meet the needs of Saskatchewan children and youth. The Report will provide a sharp focus for dialogue during the next phase of our journey. It underscores the issues of social justice, human-service integration, community development, school change, and technology integration that are integral to Faculty principles as well as the University of Regina's vision (Friesen, 2001, pp. 1-2).

### Initial Action by the Faculty of Education

The Response outlines some initial actions by Faculty precipitated by the Report and others that were the result of discussions held prior to the release of the Report. The following

chronicles ongoing Faculty initiatives and specific changes related to issues raised by the Report.

- presentation of the Role of the School Report at a SIDRU seminar (Winter 2001)
- presentation of the Report at a Faculty workshop (Spring 2001)
- publication of an invited paper on implications of the Report for teacher education by Dr. Michael Tymchak in the *Journal of Professional Studies* (Summer 2001)
- presentation and discussion of the Report at the Faculty fall seminar (Fall 2001)
- introduction of Report in EPS 100, 215 and 225 in 2001 to expose all undergraduate students to it
- delivery of the weekly fall 2001 Faculty SIDRU seminar series on implications of the Report for teacher education (invited guests represent the teacher education partnership)
- development of a stronger connection to human- and community-service agencies over the past several years in various courses
- announcement of an Aboriginal faculty position for Fall 2002
- involvement of students from two undergraduate programs in community studies as part of the Off-Campus Residential Experience (OCRE)
- incorporation of the Report in several graduate level courses
- establishment of an early childhood section in the Elementary Program to specifically prepare preschool teachers for community-oriented schools

## Emerging Possibilities for the Faculty of Education

The Response also presents some preliminary thoughts on the implications of the Task Force Report for teacher education, and some of the ideas that have captured Faculty members' imaginations since the release of the report in March 2001.

### *Enhancing undergraduate teacher education experiences.*

Following the lead of School<sup>PLUS</sup> ideas developed in the Report, the concept of a more "community-oriented" Faculty has emerged from discussions. This Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup> model suggests a closer link of faculty and students to community agencies and organizations in the delivery of teacher education. As in Community Schools, the community would become more visible in our space, and the "Community Faculty" would become more visible and active in the community, providing our students with community experience and knowledge of community issues and resources. An example of a community-oriented Faculty activity would be to expand student internships from schools only to internships in the areas of justice, social work and health. Also providing students with community-study experiences in a variety of Saskatchewan communities (rural, reserves/First Nations, urban, Northern) would provide students with a stronger community orientation.

### *Developing school leadership: A focus for the Graduate Program*

The Report underscores the need for the development of leadership within school systems in the province. The Graduate Program is strategic in developing the leadership capabilities of teachers and administrators for a more collaborative, facilitative orientation to teaching and administration as called for in the Report. Possibilities for the Graduate Program would include the introduction of a graduate course on Community Schools and community

development, and encouraging graduate students to undertake thesis and project work related to the changing role of the school.

### *Developing new approaches to using technology*

Over the past decade, the Faculty has been innovative in expanding the use of technology with both Faculty members and students to enhance teaching and learning. As in school systems, the Faculty too, has had to allocate substantial resources to this area. Increasingly, students are coming to teacher education with enhanced technical computer skills, while schools continue to explore ways to incorporate technology into teaching. Because of rural depopulation and subsequent school closures, alternate methods of education delivery, such as distance education, will need to be given more consideration in our programs. The Role of the School Report also serves to remind us that schools must provide equitable access to technology for all students.

### *Engaging in research, evaluation and development*

The Faculty is well positioned to assist the educational partnership with research, evaluation and development related to School<sup>PLUS</sup> initiatives. In the past, the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDRU) served the Directions initiative well and, because of its role in producing the Role of the School report, is capable of supporting the new focus. Research, evaluation and development funding, targeted to the new initiatives, will need to be secured to support the new focus.

## Changing Teacher Education: Challenges

The Response suggests that along with increased possibilities and opportunities come the challenges of preparing teachers for the School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment as described by the Task Force Report. The Report suggests a redefined role for teachers that needs to be further clarified and understood by all the partners. The Faculty will need to engage in this dialogue with the partners.

### *The need for involvement with educational partners*

Given experiences with Directions and Core Curriculum (1984), the most effective change in education in Saskatchewan appears to happen when the educational partners pursue common goals. This also will be the case with the Role of the School Report. Faculty is willing to participate in a long-term, collaborative change process that is inclusive of all the stakeholders. In particular, the Faculty will need to work with the partners in education to develop a much clearer view of the changing role of the teacher to better address teacher preparation for School<sup>PLUS</sup>.

### *The need for increased resources*

Teacher education that is concerned with the formation of a teacher identity that is attuned to School<sup>PLUS</sup>, as imagined in the Role of the School Report, must provide the kind of broad experiences suggested above. For example, if the undergraduate programs, in particular, are

to become more community-oriented, then they will, necessarily, be more challenging to deliver. Just as the School<sup>PLUS</sup> model will require a broader support base in terms of cooperation among government departments, so too Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup> will require additional support to deliver an enhanced form of teacher education.

#### *The need to develop theoretical and practice frameworks for the Report*

Further development and critique of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the Role of School Report needs to be an ongoing process to provide the strongest possible arguments for change. However, Faculty also believes that the Report is "under-practiced" in that many of the recommendations need to be implemented immediately in schools, and that it is a matter of resolve on the part of government, along with the educational partners, to implement the recommendations. Faculty should continue to play a strong role in identifying promising practices related to the concerns of the Report, while developing theoretical frameworks to make sense of and assess these changes.

#### *The need to prepare teachers specifically for the province.*

The vision of School<sup>PLUS</sup> is highly problematic without appropriately prepared teachers. The Report strongly suggests that the role of teachers will need to be expanded in a number of ways. At a time when teacher candidates increasingly come from urban areas, it is important that, during their preparation, they are exposed to rural, urban and Northern schools if, as graduates, they are to consider these places for teaching. They will need to experience the different roles suggested by the Report during their teacher education to be adequately prepared for the School<sup>PLUS</sup> environment.

#### *The need to prepare teachers to address both equity and excellence*

Another challenge for our teacher-education programs will be to prepare teachers who can address both equity and excellence in schools. Certainly, School<sup>PLUS</sup> will require well-educated teachers with broad practical experiences. This underscores the need that the four-year teacher education programs (and five-year Arts Education Program), as well as our two-year after-degree programs, contain strong academic and teacher-education components that are rationalized according to School<sup>PLUS</sup> needs.

#### *The need for continuing Faculty development*

It will become even more important in the future to acquaint those who come to work in the Faculty of Education from outside the province with the provincial partnership and the educational developments here. Ongoing professional development will be required in the areas of, among others, Aboriginal education, equity, integrated services and community development.

### **Working Together Towards a New Vision**

The Response concludes by affirming the commitment of The Faculty of Education to being involved with the other educational partners in creating and implementing a new vision for education in the province—a vision that started with Directions (1984) and is now being reshaped by the Role of the School Report. A more strongly community-oriented teacher

education is seen as an appropriate response to the Report to prepare teachers to meet the changing needs of children and youth in schools. The Response views involvement in this change as an investment in this province in meeting both demographic and economic challenges.

Through its response, the Faculty sees the Role of the School Report as engaging the educational community along with others in important dialogue about change in schools. The Saskatchewan partnership is encouraged to exercise moral courage by further developing and embarking on the pathway envisioned by this Report. Keeping with the spirit of the Report, the processes for implementing change must value and practice inclusion, dialogue and consensus if a shared vision is to be realized. The Faculty of Education is committed to being part of this kind of change process.

## **Reflecting on Change in Teacher Education**

In an article entitled *The Challenge to Teacher Preparation*, Manley-Casimir, Dean of Education at Brock University, Canada, searches for anchors of stability for new teacher candidates who navigate in the “maelstrom of change” (2001, p. 4) that the Report calls tectonic plates. Referring to the work of Thomas Green, he suggests that a teacher must have some sense of moral purpose to provide the needed stability to guard against the negative effects of change. He sees teacher education as needing to provide a professional conscience that is morally grounded to withstand the political currents affecting schools.

The Task Force report provides such a moral purpose in several ways. Firstly, it puts a face on education in the province, especially with respect to “at risk” students, and Aboriginal students. It points the reader to situations demanding a response, such as youth disenfranchised by schools. Secondly, it suggests that all of the partners have a role to play in better meeting the needs of children and youth. It calls for a response from everyone. Thirdly, it settles the question as to whether or not the “non-academic” needs should be handled in schools, and how teachers should be involved in meeting these needs. Fourthly, it clearly puts children and youth at the center of the discussion on the role of the school. The changing role of school is not primarily about efficiency, financing or curriculum—it’s about meeting the needs of children and youth so they can grow and flourish.

How can teacher education create the kind of moral purpose outlined in the Report? For the Faculty of Education, the answer appears to lie in the direction of building a different kind of community. Perhaps the building of community in teacher education has been too narrowly focused to develop the kind of moral purpose envisioned in the Task Force Report. The study of building community within teacher education is a very recent phenomenon (Christiansen and Ramadevi, 2002; Smits and Friesen, 2002), let alone the idea of a “community faculty” that reaches out beyond its carefully-guarded borders. And yet, how will students of teaching identify with a moral purpose if they are not engaged in a powerful way with a cause. Our work with Aboriginal teachers shows us that their teacher education was valued because it engaged them in a moral purpose they could relate to, in this case Aboriginal self-determination (Friesen and Orr, 1999;1998). This was accomplished by building a particular kind of community that valued their history, language and culture by promoting these in course content and practice.

It would appear that our teacher education practices could change for the better if embedded in a community of partners focused on a common moral purpose. However, the nature of the change needs to be carefully thought out to avoid a simple technical-rational solution. Smits and Prasow (2001) state, in a paper dealing with an innovative approach to bridging theory and practice in teacher education field experiences, that the “conception of teaching as practical judgment suggests that teaching cannot be understood only as a learnable set of practices, but rather as a particular kind of experience, one that cannot escape the detour through self understanding, and without the support of the community” (p. 11). They go on to claim that “there is a more encompassing disposition to being teacher—a particularly normative one—that the assumed universality of technical knowledge cannot address” (p. 8). Preparing our students for the New School will not be accomplished simply by adding more information, strategies or classes to an existing program.

A more “realistic approach” to teacher education such as suggested by Korthagen and Kessels (1999) needs to be considered. It would base curriculum knowledge on phronesis or practical wisdom gained from reflection on appropriate experiences rather than on episteme or theory so that self-understanding could develop. The kinds of experiences provided to students to engender commitment to a moral purpose, need to link students not just to school children and youth, but also to minority groups, community agencies, and vulnerable children and youth in the community to nourish practical judgment for professional practice. Faculty, as well, need to link to groups that are not traditional partners with faculties of education to develop practical judgment related to their practices as teacher educators. Faculties of Education too need to be communities with a moral purpose.

The term “Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup>” (Tymchak, 2001b) is used as a notation to capture the expanded role teacher education needs to assume if we are to produce a different kind of teacher for School<sup>PLUS</sup>. It is about developing a moral purpose in a community that is more encompassing and diverse than usually imagined by teacher educators. And it exists in a supportive partnership that goes far beyond the walls of the professional school in the university. Teacher Education<sup>PLUS</sup> is a vision developed as a response to the reality of schools and society. The challenge for the Faculty is to open up the borders to engage in conversation with others, to expand the community of learners, and to allow these conversations to shape our students, our programs, and ourselves as teacher educators.

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Note:

The Final Report, [School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/h/pp/whatsnew.html), can be viewed at the Saskatchewan Education website: <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/h/pp/whatsnew.html>