

THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN TWO ACTIVITY SYSTEMS  
ON CHANGING PRESERVICE TEACHERS BELIEFS  
ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND PUPILS

A Dissertation

by

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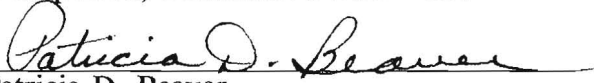
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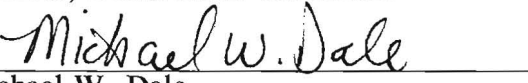
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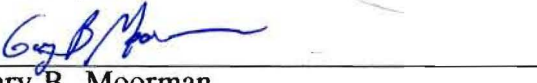
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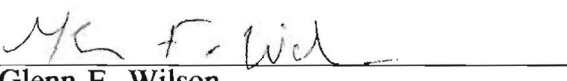
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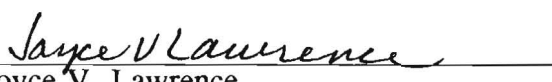
  
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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN TWO ACTIVITY SYSTEMS  
ON CHANGING PRESERVICE TEACHERS BELIEFS  
ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND PUPILS (May 1997)

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Teacher education programs are designed to help prospective teachers (PSTs) develop proficiency in teaching before entering the classroom. Educational researchers have found that PSTs antecedent beliefs about teaching, learning, and pupils greatly impact their faith in the relevance of teacher education coursework.

The problem presented in this study is based on the research findings that PSTs have flawed attitudes and beliefs about teaching, learning, and pupils and that these beliefs are hardy and highly resistant to change unless deliberately challenged. This study relates the idea that a first strategy in teacher preparation should be to make PSTs beliefs prominent as properties of preservice programs and concrete objects of inquiry arising from concrete contexts involving interaction with pupils. The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of participation in an Introduction to Teaching course and its technologically rich laboratory component, the Fifth Dimension, on

changing PSTs attitudes and beliefs. This study: (1) explores PSTs existing beliefs about teaching, learning, and pupils; (2) confronts these existing beliefs as flawed; and (3) intervenes to change these beliefs. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is used as a framework to design the teaching course and lab and explain the changes in PSTs beliefs.

This qualitative study investigates changes in PSTs attitudes and beliefs about teaching, learning, and pupils through analysis of an open-ended pretest and posttest ten item belief survey instrument, fieldnotes of lab experiences, and notes conferencing. Data uncovered mechanisms of teaching and learning, endemic to the principles of CHAT, used by PSTs in the activity systems that were created to instantiate these theoretical principles. There are three overarching conclusions obtained from this study: (a) PSTs existing beliefs about teaching, learning, and pupils are similar to those found in the literature; (b) these beliefs are not impervious to change; and (c) an intervention can be designed that is effective in changing these beliefs. Finally, this study provides evidence suggesting that PSTs who are able to reflect positively and apprehend success in their theoretically grounded educational experiences are more likely to continue to have good reasons to put them into practice.