

The CATE Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2009-2010

New Learning: A Charter for Change in Education

The College of Education is working to shape the future of education. The efforts are in the preliminary stages, so if you have any transformational ideas that you'd like to be considered, email Hilarie Welsh at welsh2@illinois.edu. She will make sure the information is passed on to the appropriate party. The following information was gleaned from the website <http://education.illinois.edu/newlearning/>.

Educators agree that the resources currently invested into education are not sufficient to produce satisfactory outcomes for today's economy, society and for a large proportion of its citizenry. Economists agree that applying more private or public resources to education will provide greater employment and general economic multiplier effects than almost any other investment.

However, not all educational investments are the best educational investments. In this moment of tremendous change, investing in old ways of doing education may not be the best way to use hard-won personal and public resources.

Initiated by experts in the College of Education, at the University of Illinois, this Charter outlines a ten point plan for doing things differently—and better—in education. The document is both idealistic and pragmatic. Its vision is nothing less than a transformative one. However, for each of our agenda items, we suggest ways in which the transformations needed are practicable and achievable.

This Charter is a response to the momentous and turbulent changes of our time—a time when we need more education, everyone agrees, but as we argue here, not more of the same.

We recognize the role education plays in providing a foundation for economic prosperity and social well-being. There is an urgent need to revitalize the bricks and mortar infrastructure.

More broadly and deeply, we need to create the human capital needed for America's economic growth and broader development in vastly different conditions to those of the twentieth century, when our schools of today were created and our teachers of today were trained. Our education system requires nothing less than a transformation if it is to serve our social and economic needs into the future.

The University of
Illinois at Urbana-
Champaign
College of Education

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A note from the editors:

In each upcoming newsletter we will focus on a research method or a research specialization area. For this issue, we chose to document Interpretive Methodology, Ritu's research specialization area.

-Ritu Radhakrishnan and
Hilarie Welsh

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Interpretive Research

Interpretive research assumes that experiences in reality are socially constructed; the researcher becomes the interpreter of these experiences and has the potential to interpret the reality. Some of the interpretive frameworks that researchers use include critical theory, feminism, action research, cultural studies, and postmodernism in general. The intent behind this research perspective has less focus on strictly gathering data and building theory. Instead, the researcher's perspective (either historical or philosophical) helps to guide the empirical inquiry not only to verify theoretical claims, but also to understand ideological situations in hopes of improving situations.

Interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive researchers seek to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them. However, sound interpretive research *must* include evidence. Data may include artifacts, including historical and political documents, curricula, and text. The knowledge an interpretive researcher gleans comes from examining research methods in context. For example, interviews are social interactions in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a number of selves (and in which power may be more or less shared). The interviewer need be neither "objective" nor "detached," but should rather be "engaged." Engagement implies a willingness on the part of the interviewer to understand the interviewee's response to a question or prompt in the wider context of the interview(s) as a whole (Willis, 2007).

The interpretive research approach is often employed when the researcher seeks to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice. However, it is understood that the researcher can never assume a value-neutral stance, and is always implicated in the phenomena being studied.

Willis, J. L. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Our Visiting Scholars

The Indonesian visiting scholars are sponsored by the Indonesian government. Their universities are members of the USINTEC (US/Indonesia Teacher Education Consortium), for which Dr. Marilyn Johnston-Parsons is the Institutional Director at UIUC. As part of this project, several university Presidents from the USINTEC institutions visited the campus to plan future initiatives, including a plan for dual masters degree program.

The visiting scholars are lecturers in state universities in Indonesia: Padang, Jogjakarta, Malang, and Bandung. Some participants are working on their dissertations, and some are professors conducting research or working on a book. Some of the participants' areas of research are English teaching, teacher education, mathematics, science, Islamic studies, evaluation, etc. The participants are involved in attending lectures, workshops, school visitations, cultural visits to historical places in the US (Springfield; Washington, DC; New York). They also actively use the resources available in the library for their research projects.

Some of the visiting scholars mentioned that they were enjoying learning about the U.S. educational system and cultures. They appreciated their school visits and are impressed to see the classroom settings and the support the kids have in their schools.

The scholars noted that although our cultures and educational systems differ in many ways, the struggles and issues within teacher education in the US and Indonesia share similar challenges.

We'd like to extend a special thanks to Sari Amalia, CATE doctoral student and Graduate Assistant for the Indonesian Project, for helping us learn more about this program! You can learn more about USINTEC at www.usintec.org.

Qualifying Exams

Qualifying Exams are an important benchmark for all Ph. D students. Here are some inside tips from former CATE student, Wayne Journell, Ph.D.

1) The true first step for your quals begins well before you are even ready to take your quals (if you are taking quals next week, I apologize). The key to not freaking out about quals is making sure you are organized. There is no doubt that you will be well-read in your content by the time you are ready to take them, but that does no good if you are scrambling for sources—trying to remember specific quotations and articles, etc. I strongly recommend annotating everything that you read that you think might be useful to you down the road (I used something similar to the annotation format in 550).

As the quals approach, you then want to have a conversation with your advisor, letting them know that 1) you are ready to do your quals and 2) making sure that they know your specific areas of interest and what you would feel most comfortable writing about. They will let you know whether they think you are ready and discuss possible topics with you.

2) Other than that you should expect your advisor to do the following:

--Come up with the two questions (one general and one specific to your area of interest)

--Explain to you the guidelines that you are expected to follow

--Help with the selection of your readers

--Help ensure that your readers actually read and evaluate your quals (remember, professors are busy people with lots of responsibilities, as I am finding out!)

3) Unfortunately, I don't think you really can prepare for quals *per se*. You either know the information or you don't (which is really the purpose of quals). You definitely want to be organized and try to choose a time to write them that doesn't involve you having to write 5 other papers for your classes. I would also brush up on your APA so you can, perhaps, minimize errors while you are writing so that you don't have to spend time proofreading for editorial things.

4) The process is different for everyone depending on your area of concentration, your advisor, and your personal preferences. Some people choose the option of doing a timed, 3 hour writing without access to any notes, resources, etc. I honestly don't know of anyone at IL who chose to do that; I think some departments made students do that though. My experience was that my advisor sent me the question and I had one week to write a paper using whatever resources I had at my disposal. Obviously, this sounds better, but one would also expect to be graded "harder" than someone who was in a timed writing session without any resources, so there is a little bit of a trade-off. But I think I still would prefer that option. Some people do both questions at one time, but I did my two questions over the span of several weeks.

5) Other than what I have already listed, the only tip that I would give is not to get too stressed out about it. If you have done diligent work as a doc student up to that point, you should not have a problem.

Wayne graduated from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2009. He is currently an Assistant Professor and the Secondary Social Studies Program Coordinator in the Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Education

We Want to Hear From You!

Do you have suggestions for the next CATE newsletter? Would you like to submit an article for publication?

What events would you like to see planned for CATE students? A social? Brownbag seminars? Send us your suggestions!

CATE would like to extend an offer for you to present your data or research ideas in a "Fat Data" Session. This gives grad students and faculty the opportunity to receive feedback about their current projects. Contact us to schedule a time to present your research!

E-mail us with your comments and suggestions!

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Make sure you get your copy of the 6th edition American Psychological Association (APA)

Important Dates:

February 15, 2010

Curriculum & Instruction Assistantship Applications Due

February 22, 2010

College of Education
Graduate Student
Conference (COE GSC)
Proposals due

March 18, 2010

Brown Bag-
Discussion on Qualls &
Prelims

April 9, 2010

College of Education
Graduate Student
Conference

Champaign-Urbana in the Winter!!

Looking for ways to get through the cold, snowy winter months? Here are some fun things to check out during the winter months in Champaign.

- Krannert Center for the Performing Arts: www.krannertcenter.com
- Check out the local libraries
- Visit ARC and CRCE to get a break from the cold
- Check out a concert at the Assembly Hall: <http://www.uofiassemblyhall.com/>
- Parkland's Planetarium: www.2.parkland.edu/planetarium/
- The Virginia Theater: <http://www.thevirginia.org/main.htm>
- Roger Ebert's Film Festival: April 21-25, <http://www.ebertfest.com/>
- Boneyard Arts Festival: April 15-18, <http://www.40north.org/events/festival.html>
- Interested in getting together a C&I or CATE Intramural team? Email Ritu at radhkr1@illinois.edu.

Also:

- Find a friend with a fireplace
- Keep the ice scaper for your car handy: Equip your car with warm weather gear, blankets, a flashlight
- Enjoy comfort food by forming an ongoing potluck
- Try ice skating
- Have a snowball fight

*Thanks for the tips, Dr. Daniel Walsh

Take a picture to capture your fun Winter moments. We'd love to feature you in an upcoming newsletter!