

## Summary of the round-table discussion

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The articles published in this special edition are based on presentations given at an international conference, “Rhetorical Education and the Democratic Mission of the School: Preparing Students for Academic and Civic Life,” which took place at Örebro University in October of 2017. The conference concluded with a roundtable discussion in plenary session. Six featured speakers—Cheryl Glenn, Speaker Deborah Brandt, Debra Myhill, Richard Andrews, Janice Bland, and Jessica Enoch—were asked to draw on their experience of the conference, and of the workshops in particular, to identify challenges and opportunities for teacher education and areas of research that hold promise for enhancing the democratic impact of secondary school. These speakers had also conducted workshops focused on pedagogical applications of their presentation topics. In-service teachers participated in addition to teacher educators and researchers in teacher education. A summary of the key points raised in the roundtable discussion follows.

Question 1: What are the challenges and opportunities for teacher education and language and language arts teaching in secondary school today?

Cheryl Glenn: There are two main challenges/opportunities. One is to include rhetoric in teacher education. Few scholars currently working in teacher education in Scandinavia have a research background in rhetoric. Nevertheless, the mandate of teacher education is to prepare teachers to work with existing curricula, which now (in the Scandinavian context) includes rhetorical content and learning goals in both the English and Swedish subjects. Scholars of rhetoric should therefore be invited to teach in teacher education in cooperation with the English and Swedish subjects. Teacher education would be enriched by taking a multi-disciplinary approach to language and language arts teaching and learning. The other challenge/opportunity

is to collaborate with schools. Rhetoric is now included in the national curriculum for upper-secondary school for English and Swedish throughout Scandinavia. However, school teachers in these subjects have rarely studied rhetoric themselves. They therefore do not know what rhetoric is, much less how to teach it. One way to support teachers would be to collaborate with schools in educational events, for example, by organizing multi-school conferences on selected rhetorical themes of education, agency, deliberation. Other ways to support teachers include promoting teacher-action research and offering teachers opportunities to develop their rhetorical competencies through continuous education. Teachers benefit from contact with rhetorical scholars in higher education; researchers benefit from gaining insight into the challenges and opportunities created by adapting rhetorical education to secondary school.

Deborah Brandt: Rhetorical education must be relevant to our times, and it must be socially responsible. Rhetorical education has a rich history, which can be modified and updated for the twenty-first century. Rhetorical pedagogy and educational designs can be adapted to Language Arts education in many productive ways. However, rhetorical education today must be relevant to our times. It is therefore important to present rhetoric to students as a skill set that enables them to take purposeful action, rather than as inert knowledge. It is also important to promote ethical communicative practice, focusing attention of the ends of rhetoric as well as rhetorical means.

Debra Myhill: Focus on transfer into classrooms. Rhetorical education is a strong framework for promoting the language arts. However, the reality of classroom practice is often different from what one might expect. Teacher education therefore needs to focus on how rhetoric is transferred into the classroom, addressing pedagogical issues such as the adaptation of materials and pedagogies, curriculum progressions, and rhetorical metalanguage. It should also find ways of promoting the voices of pre- and in-service teachers who work with these challenges.

Richard Andrews: Open up rhetorical education to the community. Rhetoric can be taught in school, but rhetorical engagement goes beyond the school environments. Get students out into the community where they can study democratic engagement on site and engage in issues as active agents. Bring the community into the classroom through digital, online media. Students can also be encouraged to make their own schools more democratic through deliberation and rhetorical listening.

Question 2: What areas of research hold promise for enhancing the democratic impact of secondary school?

Debra Myhill: Conduct empirical research proving the efficacy of rhetorical education and analyze/evaluate implementation strategies. There is a need to prove the efficacy of rhetorical education in order to establish its place within language arts teaching, which is best done through empirical research. How effective is rhetorical education in improving learning outcomes? Is there evidence that rhetorical education enhances language arts learning? Is there evidence that it promotes democratic empowerment across student groups? Gather the expertise needed to take on these questions by creating multi-disciplinary research teams. Bring together researchers of rhetoric, literacy, and education and collaborate with teachers to research the implementation of rhetorical education in secondary school.

Deborah Brandt: Articulate a developmental theory of rhetoric. It is not possible to teach the language arts without a developmental theory of learning. How do children and teenagers deliberate? How do they develop their rhetorical abilities?

Richard Andrews: Conduct case studies of rhetoric across the curriculum. Although rhetoric has its home in Language Arts education, it also has trans-disciplinary applications. There is a need to study the disciplinary commonalities and differences of all subjects in secondary school, for example, through case studies of language development and rhetorical learning across the curriculum. To create a context for this research, a concrete goal may be to associate rhetorical education in Scandinavia with the National Writing Project in the US, which is informed by the principles of rhetorical education and extends across several educational disciplines and contexts, including secondary school.

Jessica Enoch: Case studies of student responses to rhetorical education. There is a need to study student responses to rhetorical education in specific contexts. How does rhetoric work in bilingual and multilingual classrooms? How do students in these contexts carry emotion with their rhetorical practice, for example, when they speak in public?

Janice Bland: Extend the reach of rhetorical education to primary school. Although rhetoric is associated with advanced literacy—developing abilities such as public speaking and textual analysis—empowerment begins in primary school. Further research is needed to explore how

rhetorical pedagogy might supplement adjacent pedagogical fields in primary education: for example, critical literacy, creative writing, learning strategies, multi-modal literacy, and L2 language learning.

In addition to the above, the roundtable discussion identified a number of development areas in both teacher education and pedagogical research. However, discussants viewed these challenges as opportunities. The interest of rhetorical education is its potential to produce enabling democratic experiences. Glenn reminded the assembly that Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the art of finding things out and getting them across to an audience.” To paraphrase Simone Weil, rhetorical education can release students into language as critical consumers and conscientious producers of purposeful language. Rhetoric is a plastic art that will continue to flourish in the twenty-first century and enrich all the disciplines.