

Public Education and the University¹

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This paper summarizes briefly the historical and tenuous relationship between the public schools and the university. It presents several assumptions concerning what teacher education is and what it might become. Its central conclusion is that teacher preparation should be, foremost, concerned with the development and reinforcement of one's humanistic concerns; secondly, because the process of teaching requires a kind of pedagogical artistry that may be stifled by the drudgery of thoughtless or boring experiences, teachers should be given opportunities to explore and evaluate the basic pedagogical premises, theories, methodologies, and techniques that the literature and clinical experiences make available. That is, for example, curriculum should be studied from an historical rather than a prescriptive perspective. Lastly, basic to this preparation should be deep and continuous clinical involvement which permits the teacher to develop skills as an observer and interpreter of human behavior.

Introduction

As long as there are people, there will always be teachers. However, schools of education—their earlier forms and their current derivatives—are relatively recent developments. Further, it is neither clear how such schools will continue to exist, nor is there broad agreement even among their various constituencies that they should. Albeit very briefly, the above summarizes the history and uncertain future for schools of education.

To the extent that there is a good deal more evidence that children learn than that teachers teach, there is similar evidence that we know more about teacher behavior than interventions shaping their behavior. Essentially, teacher education programs have not demonstrated their effectiveness in preparing teachers; this is possibly related to the consistent inability of special organizational, curricula, and methodological attempts to develop superior learning environments for children.²

From the very beginning universities have influenced teacher education.

In ironic ways they are responsible for the creation of what were once called normal schools, that provided professional personnel for the state bureaucracies, who now manage the Education Industry, who have a warm-cold, on again-off again relationship with universities, who seem to care and not to care about what occurs in the Education Industry.

Perhaps it would be profitable to review the history of American teacher education *before* we attempt to grapple with the infinitely more complex general problem.³ During the early decades of the nineteenth century, private individuals interested in public education imported lecturers from abroad. This led to the establishment of teacher-training seminaries, the forerunners of our later public normal schools. The period between 1830 and 1865 witnessed the inauguration of several influential trends in teacher education, some of which are still being debated with no less heat (and probably no more data) than the original polemics which launched public normal schools, teacher institutes, state and county supervision of schools, examinations to certify teachers, professional teacher associations, graded school systems, mass dissemination of textbooks and other educational materials, and a lengthening of the school year. Today—this very day—we are still debating where teachers should be prepared; the benefits of state versus local control of schools; the value of examinations and other means for certifying teachers; the roles of professional teachers' associations (and their relationships with the labor movement); the desirability in ungrading schools; and the process versus content argument *vis-à-vis* national curricula, conglomerate-produced materials, and the preparation of teachers as creators rather than implementors of educational environments. The following is obviously not original but, at least in this case, *apropos*: "The more things change the more they remain the same."

The normal school emerged in this country because of an unprecedented need for teachers and because no other agency could or would prepare teachers. Essentially, the universities turned their collective physical and ideological backs on this problem. Before the creation of normal schools, and in various ways to this day, both public and private universities for many years implicitly assumed that teaching is an occupation that requires little professional knowledge or preparation. Such beliefs directly led in 1848 to the development of the Oswego Normal School, an institution clearly outside of traditional higher education. Eventually, the normal schools—originally locally supported—became state-sponsored, and these evolved to become teachers colleges, and now state universities. During that long process from local normal school to

state university, the established private and land grant universities did not silently observe such developments. Several prestigious universities organized their own teacher education programs. Others merely continued to note and criticize the curricula, faculties, and student bodies of the normal schools which they, by default, created many years earlier. To this day, there remains an uneasy relationship between state departments of education and universities, in general, and between state universities, who evolved from the normal schools, and private universities, who entered the business in order to rescue American Education from those normal schools.

Appreciating this history may illuminate factors which gave rise to whatever wariness now exists between state departments of education and universities and, similarly, between local school systems and universities. We in the universities continue to express surprise, if not anger, with each demonstration of suspicion from the schools when, since the beginning, the relationship was always strained and sometimes strange.

In essence, the university abrogated its right to lead Public Education to a better future when it denied responsibility for its creation and early development. When Public Education was in its infancy, we in the universities did nothing to support that great movement. We refused to prepare teachers; we refused to consult with the schools; we even rejected the idea that teachers profit professionally from a higher educational experience. Two major reasons that universities are now so fulsomely involved in teacher preparation concern economics and opportunity, factors in which we have been accused of having unusual, if not unnatural, interests.

Stated as simply as possible, universities have neither historical nor moral claims to the Education Industry. Whatever prerogatives we now enjoy are of dubious lineage.

Assumptions

Deliberations concerning the future for teacher education are a trap. Such exercises do not, on the one hand, easily resist the urge to be fashionable while, on the other hand, they deny the larger community and the multiple constituencies schools of education must serve. In essence, the redesign of teacher education should first proceed from thinking differently about the problem before attempting to do something in

response to it. Or, as Szent-Gyorgye said, "Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought." That is my primary assumption; the following are variations of that single theme:

1. Within broad limitations, one curriculum design, administrative organization or pedagogical method, is as good or as poor as another, and, I contend, teacher preparation curricula should not be excluded from this assumption. Stated another way, whatever the design may be, there is no guarantee that it will be either proper or improper, good or bad. The words used about a curriculum are far less useful in estimating the chances for the program to succeed than evidence concerning the thoughtfulness that is invested in preparing the program plan and the degree to which the program is inductive, open, and receptive to the needs students and faculty members have in understanding themselves as learners capable of changing. Stated yet another way, it is assumed that significant sources of independent variation do not obtain from either organization, curricula, or methods, but rather from what we term "process variables."

2. The responsibility for preparing teachers and allied professional personnel does not reside exclusively in the college, or department of education, or, for that matter, in the university. The entire university or college, not only its specialized schools and departments, must be concerned with the preparation of teachers. Further, teachers and other educational personnel do not receive all of their professional preparation during either the undergraduate or graduate periods. Teachers, as all professionals, require continuous self-appraisal, retraining, and in-service opportunities for growth. Lastly, the community that supports the Educational Enterprise and the consumer who deals with its services have more than peripheral responsibilities and rights in regard to the selection, preparation, and certification of teachers.

3. A broad liberal education is crucial to adequate teacher preparation. There are two essential qualities that seem to be characteristic of good teachers: an interest in learning for the sake of learning, and an interest in people. Insofar as the former is concerned, it is my contention that schools of education often preclude possibilities that students will either develop or maintain convictions that learning can be its own reward. Not far from the surface of every educational argument is that single block of ideological stone—the no-option, no-alternative, slot machine of one system. It is found in children's classrooms because their teachers found it in theirs. Within the flexibility of a system that encourages almost infinite varieties of methods and curricula, that fosters open schools contiguous to traditional schools, and both free schools and

special schools, is a repressive tradition that demands allegiance to one generalized commandment: Children cannot change remarkably; teachers cannot; no people can. Hence, a sameness of purpose and values is the mortar that binds and strengthens the Educational Monolith. In the elementary classroom the child who remembers well scores well; and in the college the student who consumes the professor's words and values is the progenitor of Teacher of the Year. Teachers are trained, not educated, to be implementors, not creators, of curricula. The result has been the development of enormous educational supermarkets, franchised monoliths that "sell" curricula, methods, organizations, and materials to technician-educators who buy one product this time and another next, not having to think seriously about either the children they teach, the educational setting, or themselves as human beings with needs and capabilities for changing.

4. The clinical orientation is an indispensable part of the teacher preparation program. As we have said elsewhere, preparing the teacher as an applier of psychological principles rather than as a technician or imparter of knowledge is not likely to take place in any marked kind of way by merely increasing the amount and variety of information (i.e. liberal arts, child psychology, science) which teachers may need. We must not confuse what a teacher knows with how she applies such knowledge. In agreeing with the general desire that the preparation of teachers be more concerned with the breadth and depth of liberal arts and science background, it would be unfortunate to assume that, by rectifying any deficiencies we may possess in those areas, the effectiveness of teacher preparation has thereby been eliminated as a problem. As the liberal arts form a foundation for the theoretical study of education, the clinical experience—ranging from observation and student teaching through long-term internships—has potential to provide an environment for dynamic learning by bringing theory to life. It is assumed that crucial to the preparation of teachers is maximization of the possibility that a teacher's practices harmonize with principles of learning and development.

There may be a basic core of professional knowledge and activities common to all teachers, regardless of their specific specializations. This core might include proper attention to the study of philosophy and the behavioral sciences as well as specialized professional skills, techniques and content. However, I believe that both the so-called liberal arts (e.g., psychology and philosophy) and the professional courses (e.g., curricula and methods) should be taught from a historical context rather than a prescriptive one. That is, curricula, methods, media, and social organiza-

tion might best be studied and understood from perspectives of what was accomplished rather than what must be attempted. This approach seems less restrictive and promises greater discovery and innovation than the traditional prescriptive "best method" strategy. As mentioned earlier, I believe the literature in pedagogy and psychology confirms this position.

6. Attracting intelligent, interesting, and humanistic kinds of people for the various fields of Education probably has more to do with the development of effective teachers than how the preparation program happens to evolve.

7. Embedded in much of the above is the assumption that no one group owns the schools—be they elementary, secondary, or higher schools. Conversely, more than pupils are entitled to learn in the schools. In fact, it is assumed that teachers not only share ownership in the schools but have a responsibility to participate as learners in these environments. It appears that only in the universities do teachers have opportunities and responsibilities to learn and develop in the school community. The irony is that these same university teachers seem to believe it is logical to prepare public school teachers as technicians (which university professors disdain) and as selfless servants to those for whom the schools were created, the pupils (which university professors would deny as roles for themselves). It is assumed that teacher preparation in the university will proceed with greater facility and productivity if teacher educators deal with their students in ways which reflect the historic professorial conviction that not only are teachers the most important group in the university, but universities can exist (and have) without any group but teachers. Simply put, elementary and secondary teachers should be prepared for responsibilities as equal owners of the schools.

Strategies and Tactics

So far, I have presented certain assumptions which may be important to consider in the design of a teacher education program. As was mentioned, I believe one strategy for implementing a program is more or less as good as another. The central factor is concerned with how the university pursues its mission in a thoughtful way, developing its own unique style to meet its special needs and interests. Similarly, my general bias is for groups within the university to form around not only past histories but new interests and experimental realignments.⁴ We should not expect, nor

should we even encourage, programmatic similarities from college to college, or department to department, or group to group. Although it may be appealing, a reliance on either past history or the weight of authority has little value in a field that has yet to clarify its basic influence.

Therefore, insofar as tactics are concerned—e.g., who are selected for programs, who teach, course sequences, course credits, field experiences, length of program, depth of program, cognate areas—these are matters that must be left to the wisdom of those to whom we entrust such programs. On the other hand, several hypothetical general strategies might be identified and, secondly, a few illustrative tactics may facilitate communication:

1. The university teacher preparation program must include many diverse elements, both from within the university as well as external to it. Again, the question here revolves around, "Who owns the schools?" Such issues as support of schools, teacher certification and program accountability will not be adequately discussed, much less settled, until teacher preparation extends beyond the school of education and its select laboratories. There are several tactical possibilities for enhancing university-wide and community-wide interrelationships. Two examples may be: (1) the development of community school-based teaching centers which may deemphasize or soften the narrowness of traditional university departments and categories; and (2) the implementation of differentiated staffing patterns, e.g., appointment of graduate faculties, greater utilization of technicians for routine tasks, and appointment of clinical professors for on-campus and off-campus practica, clinical supervision and demonstrations.

2. There should be a disproportionate allocation of program support and resources. It must be considered a "given" that there will always be a discrepancy between needed resources and available resources. Therefore, the school of education should deliberately allocate its limited wealth disproportionately to, first, build on strength and, second, eliminate those mediocre programs whose futures promise little more than continued mediocrity. Schools of education, as all human service agencies, cannot deliver everything to everyone. None has either the talents or interests to conduct high level programs in all areas. Consequently, a school must select carefully from among those areas where there is reasonable expectation for contribution to society and continuation of program support. Tactically, this may require the development of university centers for research and/or teaching, with resource allocations to those centers (and correspondingly less to traditional departments) that make demon-

strable contributions to our knowledge, teaching, and community life. It is expected that the centers will garner the bulk of a schools' graduate assistants as well as facilities, equipment and other resources. This strategy in shifting support concentrations from traditional departments to centers for research and/or teaching will certainly weaken the concept of the former and enhance the development of the latter. Further, it will probably promote the development of temporary short term professorial appointments, differentiated staffing, and educational research (possibly the greatest current weakness and a potential strength of most schools of education).

3. If the aforementioned strategies survive, then we may have a chance to design what is now fashionably called competency-based teacher preparation. However, a curriculum not bound by time in program or specific course requirements requires a clarity of purpose, as assignment of resources, an accountability model, and a movement from tradition that mere desire or words will not provide. For we have yet to comprehend the difference between teachers with stipulated certified competencies and competent teachers. And, if history repeats itself, this bad will have its brief moments and then be ignored away to be replaced by the next "rip-off."

Conclusion and Implementation

The prepotent objective in preparing teachers should be with the development and reinforcement of their humanistic concerns. Teachers should be, first, humanists. Their central interests should be with people, and such strong natural convictions that most teachers have when they enter preparation programs should be preserved and enhanced. For, although behavioral scientists and doctors can protect and prolong one's life, they can't make life worth keeping.

Equally important, the process of teaching requires a kind of pedagogical artistry that may be stifled by the drudgery of too many thoughtless courses, mindless activities, and boring experiences. Therefore, while teachers should be given opportunities to explore and evaluate the basic pedagogical premises, theories, methodologies, and techniques that the literature and clinical experiences make available, equal attention should be directed to the creative needs teachers have for self-expression and the development of original teaching styles. As mentioned earlier, teachers in

training should be given sufficient opportunities to struggle to understand themselves as learners. They should be given encouragement to develop their own—not imitative—styles of teaching and interacting. They should be given opportunities to become creators, not merely implementors, of educational environments. Insofar as the university is concerned, their major interests in teacher preparation should be the degree to which teacher creativity (not merely technical competency) is developed and enhanced.

Lastly, basic to this preparation should be a process of clinical involvement which permits the teacher to develop skills as an observer and interpreter of human behavior. Rather than a continuation of lifeless lecture courses or trivial and unrelated discussion groups, a significant portion of a university student's program might involve one in a psycho-educational experience which prepares a person to observe, to discover that what one sees and what one infers must be held separate, or an already complex task becomes unmanageable. This clinical training may help to remedy the kind of "slot machine" education—normative teaching—that practically all children are continually exposed to and practically all teachers universally support.

To begin to implement promotion of the above objectives, we might first develop a better understanding of our mission, both in its historical context and in how that mission functionally affects practices. Possibly, we will conclude that a school of education should not be beholden or accountable to a state department of education; certification should not be our main business!

Secondly, we must deal better with the assignment of our resources and, to further this end in the broadest feasible psychological-social context, we should include direct consumers of our services (college students) as well as consumers of our students' services (children and their families) in decision making responsibilities related to program priorities and allocations of resources. Not only violins, but french horns must be included in the orchestra.

We should experiment with new, innovative teacher preparation models if we are to implement the concept that professors and university students, both, are integral parts of the university learning environment; and we, the professors, must also be involved as learners in such settings. Therefore, for that reason—if for no others—competency-based teacher preparation programs, research and teaching centers, programs without walls, individualized instruction, and differentiated staffing models should be examined carefully.

There should be greater efforts toward faculty-student collaborations. Centers for research and/or teaching may help to promote truly meaningful collegial relationships. More modest measures might include a specified regular period every week when each faculty member is in his office or home (hopefully with a coffee pot percolating), where students and colleagues are invited to visit for discussion and interchange.

Every member of a college faculty should spend a portion of his time in either teaching, research, or observation and supervision in the schools. No school of education faculty member should be exempt from this responsibility. Further, it would be of major consequence to the college, and all who are involved with it, if faculty members—all faculty members—spent some portion of their time in the public schools or clinics each week.

Lastly, although we are members of a university faculty, there is not sufficient university work taking place. We are terribly busy, but unfortunately not very many of us are busily involved in research and dissemination. For several reasons this is indefensible, and, frankly, unpardonable. It is not enough to be a good teacher or a good clinician. First, teaching is rarely judged objectively and, second, it does not have very much to do with either research or research supervision—other than the probability that research experience positively influences teaching performance. We must engage in more deliberate efforts to promote scholarship for the sake of scholarship, and scholars for the sake of the university.

If it is going to satisfy us, the future for teacher education in the university is one we in the university must deal with, one that should not be left to the state department of education or those who prophesy economic or political pulls and fortunes. And our future will unfold, not only from what we do, but from how we think differently about the creation of environments that permit maximum freedom, yet demand unusual responsibility.

People, obviously professors included, must contend in various ways with three human traits: our preoccupation with self-serving and self-justifying activities, the ease with which we are embarrassed, and our sense of privacy and distrust of public exposure. I had to deal with such problems as I wrote this paper, for such things as “truth” lie not only in facts or even in mere accuracy, but in how the whole of a work permits one to see the truth; the words themselves are almost as nothing. So, while it would have been O.K. not to have attempted to set these ideas about the university down on paper, once I decided to write about such matters I had to remind myself not to persecute the “truth” because I might be

uncomfortable with the responsibility. It wasn't an uncomplicated assignment.

Footnotes

1. I am grateful to Professors Frank Garfunkel of Boston University and Seymour B. Sarason of Yale University, and to many Syracuse University colleagues and students for the stimulation and encouragement to pursue the ideas embedded in this paper.
2. Readers interested in the almost ancient, still fascinating process-content argument may wish to examine our chapter (Burton Blatt and Frank Garfunkel, “Teaching the Mentally Retarded,” in the *Second Handbook of Research on Teaching*, edited by Robert M. W. Travers, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1973. pp. 632–656.
3. Our book (Seymour B. Sarason, Kenneth Davidson and Burton Blatt. *The Preparation of Teachers: An Unstudied Problem in Education*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962) discusses this history as well as several more current matters relating to teacher preparation.
4. However, I am not advocating what Warren Bennis described as temporary systems. Certainly, we need more flexible, problem-solving, adaptable, tradition-breaking ideological and task-oriented groups; this is exactly the reason for my recommendation! However, stability and the development of deep and enduring productive relationships are, at least, equally crucial. What I am advocating is greater opportunity for students and faculty to meaningfully participate in shaping their university environments. Options must increase, and participants must be encouraged to seek and develop those collaborations that make most sense for them, for their interests, and for their futures. How else can we create a community of scholars that exists beyond our words or fantasies?