

Moving Forward in Teacher Education

Increasing respect for education leads to closer scrutiny of the agreements upon which preparation for teaching is based.

THE PEOPLES of our world want education as never before. The drive for education in all countries—from the most primitive to the most advanced—may well prove more significant than the twentieth-century explosions in both knowledge and technology. This drive for education has led to widespread examination of the institutions and processes through which education has been and is being conducted.

In the United States the focus of attention immediately following World War II was on elementary and secondary education. The spotlight soon spread to include teacher education. And the beam of light most assuredly is to penetrate all of higher education.

The swinging spotlight usually illuminates only part of an issue or problem. Consequently significant educational issues frequently are distorted and oversimplified. The solutions posed suffer as a result.

Those of us who have lived for at least a decade or two with teacher education know that its problems are not simple. Adequate solutions to these problems demand not only ideas but also the application of untold energy over prolonged periods of time. The

tasks of human engineering before us are, indeed, formidable.

It is unlikely that more than a very few of the current critics of teacher education will move with us into these demanding tasks. Their central interests and their primary satisfactions lie elsewhere. We must accept the inevitable: when the tumult and the shouting die those who are now committed and who will commit themselves to teacher education as a career will be the persons to provide the working ideas, the human energy and the engineering skills necessary to continuous improvement in teacher education programs.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the inevitable is that many critics who merely pointed a finger will take credit for the ideas that are to motivate effort. Nonetheless, these critics often have performed a service. Had the spotlight searched more broadly and deeply, it would have revealed long-standing professional concern with problems attracting the critics. But many problems were lying dormant; some had been disposed of inadequately; and others were being subjected to unimaginative scrutiny. The critics from without often helped the self-critical from within to

shake complacency, to lay bare inadequacies and to pose novel, often exciting, new approaches. Partly as a consequence, the teacher education plant is sprouting new foliage. There were times, though, when some of us feared that the plant could not survive such frequent and prolonged tearing at its roots.

Thanks to the efforts of dedicated professionals—many of whom were personally subjected to scathing, vitriolic attacks—teacher education generally resisted ill-conceived proposals. The notion that high school teachers need know only the subjects they teach did not receive widespread acceptance. Similarly, the idea of replacing professional studies with on-the-job internships did not catch hold. And assorted proposals for quick training of college graduates often disappeared before they were implemented. Nonetheless teacher education programs of the future are likely to be characterized by greater attention to what teachers are to teach, longer and more carefully planned internships, and more experimentation with a variety of patterns for getting the job done. In effect, teacher education is proving itself to be strong enough, sound enough and resilient enough to withstand unjust criticism, to retain practices of proven worth, and to incorporate valid proposals for change.

Agreements as to Program Development

It is unlikely that educators would agree on the specific details of teacher education programs for the future. This is probably all to the good. But there are some broad agreements, such as the following, that are likely to guide program development in the years ahead:

Effective teacher education demands the closest cooperation among persons

representing different kinds of talents. The resources needed are rarely found in any one person or, for that matter, in a single college department. Teamwork is required. The team consists of members of the department of education, members of other departments, and representatives from campus or cooperating public schools. The team remains the same at both pre-service and in-service levels but major responsibility shifts from college to school system as the beginner moves from student to teacher status.

Within the college, team membership is broadening. What the teacher is to teach is taught by specialists in the fields. But, in the future, these specialists more and more will organize their material for the purposes they seek to serve. What is good enough for the future specialist is not necessarily good enough for the teacher. Content, usually, is organized for its own preservation, not for instruction. It must be reorganized for learning and, therefore, should be reorganized for teaching. We ask of the specialists not that they "water down" their subject matter for teachers but that they pay continuing attention to the modifications necessary to effective learning. In so doing, they will meet the needs of future teachers and, at the same time, no doubt will do a better job of educating future specialists.

Increasingly, departments of education are seeking for more effective means of synthesizing the so-called foundations of education. The future teacher must integrate those bodies of lore fundamental to understanding the role of

JOHN I. GOODLAD is professor and director, Center for Teacher Education, The University of Chicago, Illinois.

education in societies and to making intelligent professional decisions. Direct experience in a laboratory or public school is helpful in effecting such a synthesis. But the professor of education is not necessarily the best person to teach "method." He may have been an excellent teacher of the fifth or tenth grade ten years ago but in all probability his touch with children or adolescents is gone.

A third team member is needed. The person best equipped to teach method is the first-rate practising teacher. Early in the preparation program, the prospective teacher should be assigned as an aide to a superior teacher in a campus or nearby cooperating school. Each of several such assignments should be of several weeks' duration. First participation should be to gain the experimental background necessary to understanding the school as an institution. Later participation should be to develop the concepts, skills and attitudes basic to effective teaching. It is essential that the future teacher have some specific responsibility from the beginning, ultimately assuming full-time conduct of a class.

It takes time to produce people who are well educated, professionally competent and dedicated to teaching as both a way of life and a means of improved living. We must identify future teachers early and provide them with the guidance necessary to intelligent decision making. The future teacher should be ready to declare his intentions by the end of the sophomore year and such a declaration should not separate him from the main channels of the liberal arts curriculum. The student may decide to by-pass the college's program for teachers but he should be fully prepared to accept the consequences. Some

of our curtailed programs for liberal arts graduates seem to rest on the assumption that to delay the decision to become a teacher is to acquire automatically the concepts, skills and attitudes necessary to teaching.

Certain traits—both appropriate and inappropriate to teaching—develop over the years from infancy to adulthood and are not modified significantly through teacher education programs. Consequently, much energy has been and will be devoted to the isolation of those traits that are modifiable through education from those that are not. We can anticipate, then, both greater rigor in guidance processes and greater clarity in stating the goals and learning activities of teacher education curricula. Teacher preparing institutions are likely to exercise increased care in determining who will and will not enter the program. Furthermore, those admitted may be expected to take varying periods of time for completing the program on the assumption that they will vary in their readiness to progress in it.

Increasingly, pre-service teacher education programs are being recognized as only beginning preparation to teach. The newly graduated teacher is not yet a teacher and he, more than anyone else, knows it. He is still in need of guidance, assistance and supervision. Here is where the preparing institution and the profession must join hands. Too often, the profession blames the college for inadequate preparation and the college blames the receiving school system for inadequate orientation of the neophyte. Neither is wholly to blame for the situation that frequently prevails; both are at fault, however.

It simply is too easy for the institution to say, "Well, this young man has rough edges but they'll soon wear

smooth with seasoning." Perhaps, but often they don't. Institutional recommendation should mean more than that the student has passed through the program. It should mean that he possesses in high degree those competencies the program sought to develop. The recommendations for certification should be withheld until the institution satisfies itself in this regard. Similarly, it is too easy for the school system to assume that it has no responsibility for teacher training. And so, it fails to provide the setting in which even the best beginners can succeed.

Final responsibility for admission to teaching rests with the profession itself. The teacher preparing institution is responsible for determining whether or not the neophyte possesses adequate understanding of what he is to teach and an adequate synthesis of the art and science of teaching. Awarding the bachelor's degree should indicate only that the prognosis is good—that the institution is reasonably sure that a successful teaching career is to follow. Then, major responsibility for supervision should shift to the profession itself.

The young graduate should enter teaching in a kind of resident status, half-way between student intern and full-fledged professional standing. His residency should be under the guidance of a professional career teacher possessing unusual skills in assisting others. During a period of not more than three years, the beginner would have an opportunity to try several kinds of teaching positions, searching always for the one most likely to be personally satisfying and rewarding. Meanwhile, studies under the guidance of the preparing institution would continue.

It is conceivable that some young teachers would be guided out during

the residency period. Some having to leave for personal reasons would be given the opportunity to re-enter in later years. Three significant decisions would mark completion of the three-year period. First, the young teacher would know with considerable certainty whether or not teaching offered him a lifetime challenge. Second, the institution would be able to determine the adequacy of the young person's intellectual synthesis and, if satisfied, would award the master of arts in teaching degree. Third, the profession would be able to determine the adequacy of teaching skills and attitudes and, if satisfied, would admit the teacher as a full-fledged professional "with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereto appertaining."

Teaching increasingly is becoming a profession. Nobody becomes a professional by calling himself one or by joining a professional organization. The fundamental criterion of a true profession is that it rests upon a body of facts, principles and theories that can be learned only through a prolonged period of preparation. A professional is one who makes his decisions on the basis of a body of professional lore. There are still those among us who express contempt for theory, who consider it fashionable to profess ignorance. "I'm a practical schoolman," some say as if to suggest a wisdom that is acquired through osmosis.

There is an intimate relationship between the practical and the theoretical. All decision making demands recourse to theory. Decision making in education is so complex that we frequently fall far short of our aspirations even with best possible recourse to theory. What hope is there, then, when the de-

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tion from the field of the behavioral sciences with which we must come to terms. Does it take the place of the approach I have described, or is it supplemental to it? Here is one of the problems we must consider as we face toward the future.

I hope that by posing these issues, I have made it clear that the double-barrelled question of what constitutes significant learning, and how it is to be achieved, poses deep and serious problems for all of us. It is not a time when timid answers will suffice. I have tried to give a definition of significant learning as it appears in psychotherapy, and a description of the conditions which facilitate such learning. I have tried to indicate some implications of these conditions for education. I have, in other words, proposed one answer to these questions. Perhaps we can use what I have said, against the twin backdrops of current public opinion and current knowledge in the behavioral sciences, as a start for discovering some fresh answers of our own.

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cision making process is accompanied by contempt for theory?

To be a successful teacher is to understand basic principles underlying knowledge, those who are to acquire knowledge, and the processes through which knowledge is acquired. To be a successful teacher is to exercise skill in organizing knowledge and in guiding the pursuit of wisdom. To be a successful teacher is to value self and others. To be a successful teacher is to respect the knowledge, skills and values upon which one's special competence depends. To know, to do, and to value in these ways is to be a professional. The preparation of professionals in sufficient quantities is the continuing goal of teacher education.

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