In order to measure teacher performance adequately, two compelling changes must occur in teacher education . . .

IT SHOULD be obvious that the effectiveness of teachers is important in terms of the degree to which education as a social enterprise is able to play a significant role in social change. Teachers are front-line practitioners, and their collective competence or incompetence unquestionably helps to determine the strength of the impact schools have.

It should be equally obvious that any effort to achieve quality in teacher education is going to involve screening. The idea of seeking quality implies a selection process in which decisions are made and the qualified are retained and the less qualified rejected. Screening, if based on valid measures of teaching competency, can have a significant role to play in the improvement of teaching.

Screening in teacher education is usually interpreted loosely as encompassing all procedures used to select and retain those students who show promise of becoming acceptable teachers, and to eliminate those who do not have this capability.

**Traditional Screening Procedures**

Teacher education programs usually exert some screening effort at four points in a typical four-year preservice sequence. These are at the time the student is (a) first admitted to the institution, (b) admitted formally to professional education, (c) admitted to student teaching, and (d) approved for graduation and certification. In addition, most institutions claim that ongoing selection processes are in effect which function informally through advisement and counseling activities.

Criteria for initial admission to an institution are usually the same for a prospective teacher as for a student in any other program. Requirements for admission to both teacher education and student teaching consist of a minimum academic average, appropriate recommendations, and the completion of required course work. Often, minimal physical and mental health standards are stipulated. Graduation is approved upon successful completion of student teaching and academic and professional requirements.

In evaluating student teaching some attention is given to screening in terms of teaching competency and professional skill and potential; but at all
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other points in a conventional program screening is largely a matter of academic average and relatively subjective decision making. In spite of these selection hurdles, teacher education is not noted for its high attrition rate.

Many institutions have attempted to objectify the screening procedure. Formal admission committees are often established. Criteria are developed but are often general. The whole process reflects a chronic inhibiting factor in education and that is the inability to define precisely what is meant by teaching competency. Moreover, it is often argued, even if this could be accomplished, effective screening requires that the various components of competency must be identified and classified.

Furthermore, a pervasive concern of teacher educators has been to determine the relationship of competency to personality characteristics. This is a knotty problem. Educators are far from agreement on whether or not, for example, the outgoing, accepting, and empathetic teacher is more successful than the reserved, somewhat rejecting, and nonempathetic teacher. Some research has been done in which the results of some kind of personality inventory were compared with teaching success as measured by various procedures. Getzels and Jackson (4) provide one of the best summaries available of these studies. They conclude, in part, that:

Despite the critical importance of the problem and a half-century of prodigious research effort, very little is known for certain about the nature and measurement of teacher personality, or about the relation between teacher personality and teaching effectiveness. The regrettable fact is that many of the studies so far have not produced significant results.

There is probably no area in teacher education that is more fraught with hazards than this one of relating personality characteristics with teaching competency. Currently, it takes a courageous screening committee to discontinue a student in teacher education for purely personality reasons, assuming adequate academic performance. It just is not done. Moreover, a realistic view of the situation tends to predict that it will be a long time until the public, the teaching population, and even teacher educators will be convinced that the presence or absence of certain personality factors represent valid reasons for discontinuance in teacher education.

Screening today works reasonably well in terms of easily identifiable factors such as academic achievement,
physical health capabilities, and program completion records. The relationship of these to actual teaching power, however, is not firmly established.

**Implications of Studies**

What is needed in teacher education is intensified research activity directed toward the analysis of teaching behavior and procedures for applying these findings to the screening process. There is evidence that interest in these areas of research is indeed increasing. For example, at the 1967 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association at least fifteen studies were reported which dealt in some way with this subject. A few years ago this would not have been true.

The Seminar on Teaching, in May 1965, cosponsored by the NEA's Center for the Study of Instruction, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (10), is another example of significant interest. The work of persons such as Medley and Mitzel (6), Bellack and Davitz (2), Flanders (3), Perkins (7), Ryans (8), Amidon and Hunter (1), and Smith and Meux (9), to mention only a few, represent encouraging efforts that should lead to a growing mass of research which teacher educators can use in their attempts to objectify the evaluation of classroom performance.

Other current research efforts which show promise of contributing significantly to the evaluation process in teacher education are those having to do with adopting simulation as an instructional and evaluative medium. Interest in these investigations and experiments was stimulated primarily by the continuously vexing problem colleges have always faced in finding easily available classroom situations in which to attempt to integrate theory and practice in preservice teacher education programs.

The research seems to indicate that simulation may offer partial alternatives. It is impossible here to mention all the individuals pursuing this type of study, but the contributions of Twelker (11), Kersh (5), and Vlcek (12) are typical of what is rapidly becoming an active area of experimentation.

Both of these approaches grew out of compelling concerns teacher educators have felt for new instructional approaches to teacher education, and for establishing theories of instruction which can supplement or even take the place of the traditional theories of learning long used as a basis for methods instruction. Both these efforts, in addition to strengthening teacher education in a broad sense, provide techniques and data which may be used in new approaches to screening. Space limitations of this article preclude detailed discussion of these concepts, but the suggested references may be helpful.

**Implications for Screening**

The most exciting implication of studies in the analysis of teaching and the use of structured observation and simulation procedures is the opportunity this may provide for screening based upon performance. Not only will this help to objectify the screening process, but it will help to make this a more continuous process that is a part of the entire professional sequence of teacher education.

Basing screening on performance will also make unnecessary further attempts
to resolve the problem of the relationship of personality characteristics to teaching competence. If the ultimate goal is a competent teacher, and if decisions concerning competency can be made objectively on the basis of teaching behavior, then is it really necessary to verify precise relationships between personality factors and teaching competency? If personality factors do influence teaching success, they will presumably function in the behavior of the teacher.

Put in another way, the test is in the actual performance of the teacher. If, therefore, in the case of a given individual, certain personality characteristics do affect teaching negatively and if these characteristics are present in the individual, then one can assume that his performance will be revealed as inadequate by the more sophisticated procedures that hopefully will be developed. Hence there will be no need for arguing the case on the basis of personality factors. Selection and screening will be on the more tangible and acceptable basis of behavior and performance.

The rapid development in recent ten years of new kinds of media provides new tools for use in these new procedures. The compact and increasingly less expensive television recording units are probably the most useful. Here at last is a tool that allows the observer to record a given teaching span for reviewing, analysis, editing, and whatever other use might be suggested. It also offers the teacher an opportunity to observe himself.

Thus, both in terms of evaluation and screening, and in terms of guidance in learning teaching skills, the teacher educator and the teacher have a procedure available that was unheard of a few years ago. The prospective teacher now can even engage in structured observation of himself. He will have available accurate feedback of his own performance. The growth potential of this possibility is one of the most exciting that has ever been available to teacher educators.

Implications for Teacher Education

If current interest in teaching behavior continues and if eventually there become available to teacher educators techniques, instruments, and evaluation indices that have been shown to be valid in terms of their capability to measure teacher performance, two compelling changes must occur in teacher education.

First, the elements of behavior that the research will show to be significant must become the heart of the preservice program. Second, students must start "teaching" children early in their four-year sequence so that the new observation procedures may be used for selection-screening and diagnostic purposes. This does not mean that the present professional courses that are a part of most teacher education programs are wrong or obsolete. It does, however, suggest that from the very beginning of the professional sequence, courses should involve students with learners in classroom situations.

Furthermore, focusing the teacher education curriculum around teacher behavior may achieve at last the professionalization of teaching. For decades writers on the subject of what constitutes professionalism have frequently
emphasized among other things that a true profession must be characterized by evidence of specialized skills which must be learned and which are based on knowledge requiring substantial ability to understand. Furthermore, these skills must be sufficiently esoteric that only those individuals who have had the appropriate education and can demonstrate these skills will be recognized as members of the profession. The analysis of teaching behavior and the extensive use of fully developed procedures for recording, measuring, and evaluating professional skills should move teaching closer to recognition as a mature profession.

As this paper probably demonstrates, it is difficult to extract screening and selection processes from teacher education and deal with them in isolation. However, the fact needs to be emphasized that within the total program there must be a central core that is uniquely teaching oriented, and that this must be based, at least in part, upon behavioral skills. Screening then becomes a matter of continuous evaluation of performance. It is possible that this will prove to be one of the critical and most significant developments in the history of teacher education.

References


