

Correspondent: Norman J. Bauer

Teacher Preparation in University or Field?

Dear Editor:

Contrary to the contentions of Professor Campbell,¹ prospective teachers are less likely to be intelligently prepared to work with children if the location for the preparatory experience is shifted from a university base to a field base (public school). Why? Many reasons could be cited. Let me suggest one.

A bureaucratic, industrial model of education has a firm grip on the teachers and administrators in the public schools. This model stresses such notions as efficiency, accountability, performance contracting, measurable behavioral outcomes, systems analysis, career determination, and product (learner) control. The child is perceived as raw material to be shaped in accordance with standardized, assembly-line techniques. Guided by this model, public school personnel throughout our country are engaged, on a massive basis, in the dehumanization of children. What is even worse is that most of these individuals are not aware of the impact of their actions on children.

In other words, the "professionals" themselves have been largely dehumanized. This is further evidence, if any were needed, of the fact that it is quite possible to condition humans to be content while at the same time destroying their consciousness. It would be reasonable to ask how this situation emerged, but that is not my intent. Instead, I wish to state clearly that such institutions and people will not provide prospective teachers with the insights necessary to be able to challenge and substantively reform the system. One consequence of a movement into the field is, however, painfully obvious.

¹ David N. Campbell. "School of Education: Friend or Foe?" *Educational Leadership* 32 (6): 401-404; March 1975.

The prospective candidate shall be inducted into the on-going system, made to feel comfortable in the system, made to feel that the system is the best and only way to handle children, and made to be supportive of the professionals in the field who are engaged in the implementation of the system. The neophyte will, in other words, be induced to accept the status quo; one that has become increasingly dominated by a product-output mentality, by business-oriented administrators and classroom "managers," and one which is extracting a terrible toll on the intellectual potentialities of children throughout our country.

Any large scale use of field-based centers will simply reinforce this condition and make it practically impossible to effect any substantive changes in the ways in which we free the intellectual capabilities of our children. I object to this and suggest that we reexamine several values of a university: its dedication to free and unfettered thinking, its ability to remain enough aloof from the political and social matrix to provide students with clear conceptions of the options available to them in their reflecting and decision making. No public school is supported by such values or has the capability or desire to pursue such ends. For this reason the university represents a far better location for the instruction of prospective teachers.

Many teacher educators have been quite well aware of the obvious "rip-off" of children going on in our public schools and the "mushrooming of evil" which is going to emerge from the implementation of this field-based ideology. They have not, however, raised significant cries of protest to this outrageous movement. Perhaps it is time that this commence.

NORMAN J. BAUER

Professor of Educational Studies, State University College of Arts and Science, Geneseo, New York.

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