

# The Trouble With Teacher Preparation

Teachers aren't getting enough of an education to educate others; they need more time in class and exposure to a range of disciplines in a variety of teaching modes.

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## ROBERT B. HOWSAM

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If students are failing to reach attainable goals, it must be because teachers are not capable of teaching well or because schools are preventing teachers from using their talents effectively. That situational variables often handicap teachers is widely recognized and well documented. It is equally evident, however, that not all teachers possess the knowledge and skills needed in their profession. Because this situation does not have to exist, it is nothing less than a national disgrace and its redress should be the top priority in efforts to improve the nation's educational system.

### The Profession of Teaching

The more complex a situation, the greater the need for highly developed talent and preparation for it. When businesses experience difficulty in achieving their goals, they look first at the level of competence of the work force. If the workers lack needed skills, they are given additional training. Unless the problem can be solved by technological changes, no other approach is available.

Not so in education. Those who educate others seem to be the last to resort to training as a solution to problems. The education of teachers remains a low priority in our society.

Teachers have the lowest level of preparation of any established profession. Indeed, the amount of preparation in terms of hours involved is less than in many of the organized trades. While other professions have responded to our increasingly complex society with extended preparation, teaching has remained constant or even declined (Smith and Street, 1980).

The customary pattern of teacher education is two years of professional and specialized academic preparation following completion of general education requirements. Squeezed into the two years is rudimentary exposure to what is in reality two professions. Teachers must be competent in the academic subjects they will teach and they must possess the knowledge and skills of pedagogy. Each of these fields is cheated by time constraints—the pedagogical usually more than the academic.

In an average of 36 semester hours for elementary and 26 semester hours for secondary, teachers must acquire whatever education their profession has to offer (Pesau and Orr, 1980). The figure for secondary teachers is as low as 15 semester hours in one state. Members of no other profession could achieve professional levels of competence under such constraints; neither can teachers.

Further, state higher education agencies, and the colleges and universities they fund and control, consistently allocate the lowest level of resources to teacher education through their funding formula. Pesau and Orr (1980) reveal that the amount received by teacher education for its students per year (\$927) is two-thirds of what the public schools receive a year for each student (\$1,400), and is far below what universities receive for other programs. Thus, preservice teachers are doubly jeopardized: they get the least amount of instructional time and the least amount of money.

There is strong indication that the

public and even teachers themselves do not yet perceive teaching as a profession. Historically, teachers and schools were extensions of the home and the community. Educational needs were met through simple schools staffed by modestly educated people without special training, who presided over the school under close scrutiny and control of the community. Later on normal schools were established by the states to raise the level of education and competence of elementary teachers. The normal schools recognized the rural and community flavor of teaching. They preserved the culture and resisted change, thus reinforcing the relatively closed systems of the society the teachers served.

Around the turn of the present century, normal schools were incorporated into universities or became universities. But unlike the way they treated other professions, the states retained control of teacher education programs and teacher certification. As teacher education was developing, so were the school systems, which also were state and locally controlled. Educated under state control, certified by the state, and serving a state-local system, teachers continued to perceive themselves as employees rather than as professionals. There is inherent conflict between *controlled* employment and professions. Teaching suffers from this relationship.

A severely restricted teacher education process has not succeeded in transforming the historic concept of teacher to that of a professional using

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*Robert B. Howsam is Professor, College of Education, University of Houston, Houston, Texas.*

the highest order of professional knowledge and skill in service to the school, community, and society.

Teachers report that their primary source of knowledge about teaching is their personal experience (Lortie, 1975; Schalock, 1977; Pigge, 1978). They acknowledge little influence from teacher education, other teachers, inservice education, or school-based supervision from principals or others. Further, they eschew principles, theory, and research findings. This attitude is pervasive and stands in the way of efforts to win support for research and development, for improving teacher education and the teaching profession, and for improving the teaching condition.

It is generally recognized that the knowledge and skills base for the teaching profession has developed slowly and inadequately. More serious, however, is the situation that has prevented teacher education from getting the time and resources necessary for effective programs. If teachers aren't effectively prepared, they cannot experience the advantages of being properly educated, and thus they cannot support professional training for others. The problem moves in a circle while the schools suffer. But the schools themselves also contribute—by a low regard for teacher education and by resorting to inservice education rather than demanding better initial preparation. Teachers and teacher organizations have behaved similarly—teacher centers being an example.

#### **Teacher Education**

It is time to lay to rest the notion that there is no "professional culture of teaching" (Howsam and others, 1976). The knowledge and skills



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base for the profession of teaching has been emerging for decades. More important, it has developed exponentially, particularly in the decade of the 70s. During the same period, teacher education programs were ef-

fective when given support. What is needed now is recognition of these developments and action to upgrade the preparation programs across the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of a substantial

professional culture of teaching should not be overstated or misunderstood, however. No responsible professional claims that the profession has scientific or practical rules or a kit of tools teachers can use prescriptively. Indeed, no profession has this. But there is a body of knowledge and a repertoire of behaviors and skills that are vastly more useful than personal experience alone. The teacher has the right and the obligation to possess this "professional culture" and to consciously use it.

Within the organizations concerned with the teaching profession, there is a substantial and growing movement to extend teacher preparation programs by a year or more to improve their quality. The deans of education of state universities and land grant colleges are on record as favoring this development and are actively pursuing it. The National Education Association has in process a position paper that considers similar possibilities. The state of Ohio has provided each of its public institutions with substantial develop-

mental funds for teacher education. Out of all the available evidence, it seems reasonable to hope that in the 1980s the teaching profession will burst its bonds and that its preparation arm—teacher education—will come into its own.

### A Model

Starting with the Bicentennial Commission report of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Howsam and others, 1976), an analytic model of teacher education has been emerging. The model, shown in Figure 1, does not directly address the substance of teacher education, but it does help identify what the components and strategies of teacher education could and should be. It also justifies an extended program.

*Areas of Study.* These are the well-known components of teacher education:

1. Two years of general liberal studies in the academic disciplines required by all institutions, usually

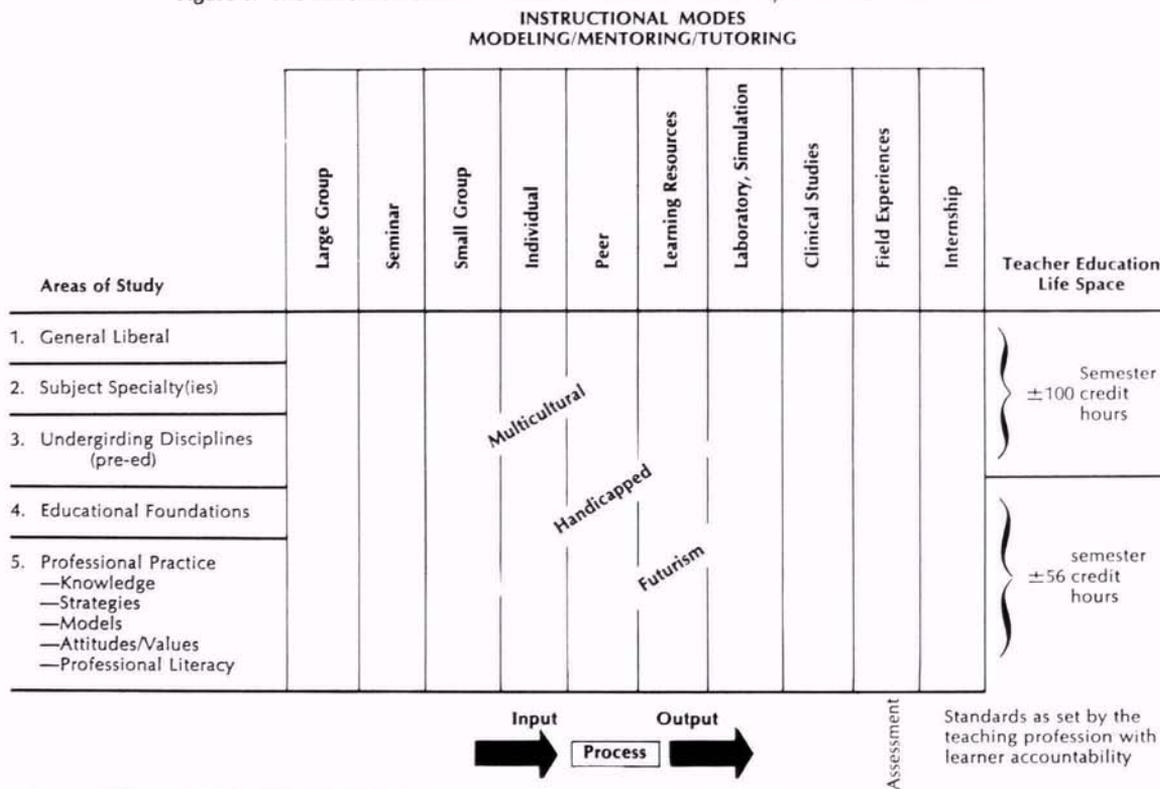
before academic specialization or professional studies begin. These are essential to a broadly educated and cultured teacher. Teachers should have even more study in this area than that required of other students.

2. Preparation in the subjects the teacher will teach. For secondary teachers this will require depth in one or two academic disciplines. Elementary teachers require less depth but a broader array of subjects. In each case the instruction should be related to the school curriculum.

3. Undergirding disciplines. Effectiveness as a teacher and the ability to profit from studies of teaching strategies depend on a background in those disciplines undergirding the profession. Thus there will be study in such disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. These studies, referred to as pre-ed, normally would be taught in the academic departments.

Areas 1, 2, and 3 require approximately 100 semester credit hours in the relevant academic departments. This appears on the right in Figure 1

Figure 1. The Education of Professional Teachers Areas of Study/Modes of Instruction.



under "life space." The remainder of the studies would be the responsibility of the professional school or college of education or pedagogy.

4. Educational foundations. Study of schools and teaching from the point of view of the disciplines provides the theoretical and conceptual base for practice. There should be attention to educational psychology, educational sociology, educational anthropology, and educational philosophy as they enlighten the practice of teaching.

5. Professional practice. This is the specific emphasis on how to teach, or pedagogy. It is designed to provide teachers with the body of applied knowledge and the repertoire of behaviors and skills they need.

*Instructional Modes.* There are two assumptions behind the array of instructional modes shown in Figure 1. First, it is believed that teacher education must "exemplify what it explicates," that it should be a living example of the best in educational practice. Thus the first strategy is modeling, which should apply to program, management, facilities, attitudes, and professor performance. Mentoring is the process of influencing the behavior of others through close personal interest and wise guidance. Tutoring is the usual practice of one-on-one teaching, often by peers.

The second assumption is that it is difficult to change teacher behaviors from those learned via culture and personal experience to behaviors that are more professional. Only the most powerful teacher education strategies are capable of accomplishing this.

Large group, seminar, small group, individual, and peer teaching are self-explanatory as are the use of learning resources and technical systems of instruction, including computers. Laboratory and similar strategies involve small-group interaction with feedback and efforts to attain a behavioral goal (micro-teaching is one of the better known of these strategies).

Although it is one of the most important modes of professional study, clinical study is rarely found in preservice teacher education because of lack of resources. All students should have the opportunity to do complete case studies of individual students or of groups and classes.

Clinical studies in education generally are reserved for graduate students who specialize in clinical work. In other professions, clinical work is a major mode for all students. Pharmacy, for example, requires 1,500 hours of such experiences.

The major forms of field experiences in education are observation and student teaching. Perhaps the greatest need is for more collaboration between school-based teachers and professors in teacher education.

The internship is a year (or more) of initial employment as a teacher with supervision from professionals in the field and from the college or university. It is not the same as student teaching, which precedes it.

*Current Emphases.* Across the middle of the model are examples of emphases in preparation that arise from the needs of the particular times or places. Multicultural, handicapped, and futurism have been chosen as examples of current conditions to which colleges must attend.

*Life Space.* This refers to the instructional time needed by teacher education for an effective program. As shown, the academic areas of study need approximately 100 semester hours. The professional component is allocated 56 hours, of which the internship would receive 6. With this kind of time allocation, accompanied by the resources necessary for use of the modes of instruction, teachers can obtain both a professional level of competence and academic proficiency.

Under this kind of program, new entrants to the profession would possess a bachelor's and master's degree (B.A. or B.S.; M.T. or M.Ed.). After successfully completing the internship they would become licensed members of the teaching profession. Though they would have to keep up to date throughout their careers, they would not be under immediate pressure to continue college studies at night and in the summer. Inservice education would be limited to learning the specific needs of the employing system.

Most important, however, teachers would be competent professionals and perceive themselves as such. They would feel able to take responsibility for school problems and deal with them.

Teachers cannot be hired hands

carrying out rule-directed behaviors under the direction of managers and supervisors. They must be professionally directed and collaboratively oriented. They must possess all of the "professional culture" available prior to entering service. This means strong and relatively protracted preparation.

Upgrade the teaching profession and we upgrade the schools. That is an essential assumption. Also necessary is the assumption that the teaching profession and teacher education could bring it off.

The educational system depends on it. ■

<sup>1</sup> There is ample evidence of these developments and it is readily available. The October 1980 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* presented an array of articles that strongly support this contention. Denemark and Nelli (1980), among others, have studied and reported on the evidence that there is a strong basis for effective teacher education at this time.

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