
On Teacher Education: A Conversation with John Goodlad

John Goodlad discusses his comprehensive plan for reforming undergraduate education, abolishing state-mandated courses, and, especially, creating unified faculty groups that devote primary attention to teacher education.

RON BRANDT

You say that teacher education programs must be completely redesigned. What sorts of changes do you have in mind?

Several very basic ones. First is an organizational change. The several groups that contribute to teacher education programs should be put into one faculty. In the past, we've given a lot of lip service to this idea, but the arts and sciences faculties have participated very little and our data show that the people in the field—the so-called clinical faculty or cooperating teachers—don't really have much voice in planning the teacher education program, either. So the first major change is to put all those groups together with equal authority.

—those who teach education courses, those who teach the content, and those who supervise the student teachers.

Right. The second major change has to do with the way we place student teachers. Often they're placed with individual cooperating teachers in schools a very far distance apart and sometimes so far from the university that supervision is necessarily minimal. The result is that student teachers become clones of their cooperating teachers, which means we are perpetuating present practices. The idea that all

student teaching or internship work should be in a school—a professional development center—that is operated by both the university and the school district—is a so very major one.

A third major restructuring has to do with the relationship between theory and practice. Now, in teacher education programs, very much as in the schools themselves, lecture is the dominating instructional practice. Perhaps some



field experience accompanies it, but rarely are the two joined. That should be reversed in two ways: first, through case studies, and second, through field observations that become the subject matter of discourse. In other words, we should put the analysis of practice first and bring the theory and principles to it, rather than teach the theory and hope the students will see the relationship.

How did you decide that these sorts of changes are needed?

The research we conducted points rather painfully to incoherent programs not tied to a mission, with no basic principles of curriculum guiding them, no organizing themes or elements. One cannot find a faculty group devoting primary attention to teacher education except in small liberal arts colleges. Teacher education, no less than the schools, requires reconstruction.

The studies you've done paint a very negative, discouraging picture of American education. A lot of elementary and secondary educators argued with the descriptions of typical classrooms in A Place Called School, saying that not all schools are the boring, joyless places the book describes. Have some teacher educators objected to your book, claiming that you didn't pay enough attention to innovative teacher education programs?

Yes, a couple of the reviews said that. One reviewer writes that he's been traveling around the United States and has seen all kinds of exciting things. I think it's alarming that someone's casual travel would be used to refute the most careful, comprehensive study ever done on the subject. We have 1,800 hours of

interviews. We have observations, we've analyzed documents.

And it's interesting that you mention people saying that about *A Place Called School*. Out of the hundreds and hundreds of letters I received following publication of that book, only one said, "You've got it wrong."

With respect to the new book, I so far have none. The responses I've been getting are like one last week from a Missouri professor who said, "You didn't visit our place, but I'd swear you did." Or Dick Andrews, the dean at Wyoming, who told me he kept his wife awake reading in bed one night, laughing because "You weren't here but everything you say is here."

Of course there are some good things going on here and there, but nobody's put it all together.

Some of the most prestigious universities are moving in the direction of a fifth-year program for students with a bachelor's degree, but you question that.

I don't think it's going to be the prime model. We interviewed bright, eager young people who have wanted to teach

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since they were in the fifth grade. They went to college because they wanted to teach, and they resent the fact that nobody seems to care; they aren't even identified as prospective teachers. And yet that's where most future teachers are going to continue to come from.

It's interesting to note the number of people who have come forward in support of undergraduate teacher educa-

tion in the last year or so. I think they were just waiting for someone to give a public endorsement, which we did. My argument for it is that the teaching profession is unique in that its subject matter as a whole is the subject matter the student is studying all the time. In other words, the major subject matters of teacher education are the organized fields of knowledge that we teach at all levels. Therefore, it makes sense for the student to begin to think about teaching the subject matter while he or she is encountering it in college.

But what bothers me most about the post-baccalaureate route is that in many places, bachelor's degree people are being allowed to have a brief introduction to pedagogy and then are being cloned out there with mentors—the very people who some of us think ought to be doing a much better job. And the candidates aren't even being required to be tested to determine whether they know their biology or their history or whatever. We're letting a lot of people come out of business or the military who took a math or science degree 20 years ago, and assuming they have



about everything they need to teach.

That's the alternate certification model that some people in high places are advocating as an innovative way to improve our schools.

It's been touted in every reform era in teacher education since 1892. But it flies in the face of reason.

You called for complete removal of state-mandated course requirements, substituting instead a variety of examinations. How would that improve the situation? What kinds of examinations do you have in mind?

Well, I'm simply calling for the same thing that we have in law and medicine. First, the state would grant a license based on passage of an examination the state considered appropriate. It ought not to be believed that this would predict teaching success any more than the bar exam predicts success in the courtroom. But it would be a check of minimum competence, a check on criminal record, on some ethical considerations, and so on. And it could be constructed by a professional standards board representing the profession and the public. Having such an exam would simply communicate, "Look, we're not going to let just anybody into teaching."

Second, there would be a planned program combining university work and field experience that would lead to a certificate of completion. But it's only a certificate of completion like a law degree or an M.D. degree at a university. The certificate still doesn't entitle you to be a lawyer or a doctor; then you go pass that bar exam or licensing exam.

Third, there would be the usual kind of accrediting body such as prevails in medicine and law. Of those three ingredients, one gets at the accountability of the state, another the accountability of the faculty, and the third accountability of the profession for assuring that its

programs meet professional criteria. I'm calling for practices that are routine in law and medicine that should become routine in the teaching profession.

You emphasize that the extensive changes in teacher education you envision can come about only with very wide support: university presidents,

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boards, and so on. Given the history of the ridicule and neglect that has characterized teacher education, why do you think that this can come about?

Many people are pessimistic about that, but there's been a turnaround in recent years. As Burton Clark points out in his excellent book *The Academic Life*, the walls of academe are crumbling. People are looking over the walls now and raising questions they never raised before. In fact, higher education could be in for as bumpy a ride in the '90s as the schools were in the '80s. Legislators and taxpayers are beginning to ask what the universities are doing. They're asking what they're doing about teaching, for example. Legislators are asking, "What are you doing for my constituency?" They are not as excited

about their university being world-class as university presidents are.

I think that all these pressures coming from the outside are going to force people on the inside to make changes they might not otherwise have made. The 20 to 50 flagship universities might not make these changes, but that's not where most teachers are being prepared anyway. What I'm talking about are the remaining 1,250 institutions where teacher education is an important function but is not adequately recognized.

Much of what we've talked about focuses on the universities, but most of our readers are practicing educators concerned with operating schools. In what way are they involved in your efforts to reform teacher education?

One of the gratifying things that has occurred in the last few months is the number of requests for information that have come from people in the schools wanting to put pressure on their universities. And indeed at one of our pilot sites, the initial contact with us came from a collaborative of school districts who then negotiated with a local university.

I'd say, in fact, that any teacher education program created or conducted without the collaboration of surrounding schools is defective. And I mean collaboration where the schools are equal partners. School people need to bring pressure on the universities. They need to insist, "We want to be part of this; we're going to be in on it." After 10 years of work, with over a dozen school and university partnerships, starting at UCLA, I can say that in such partnerships it is just assumed that the school will play a very significant role and that school people will be teacher educators. □

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