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Luncheon Address

Why Johnny Can't Teach What Johnny's Professors Should Do

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The debate about teaching and the efficacy of teacher education is not new. Over the past century a number of reports have emerged calling for changes in how teachers are prepared and how universities endeavor to ensure teacher quality. Examples include the Commonwealth Teacher Training Study, 1929; the Commission on Teacher Education created by the American Council on Education in 1938; the New Horizons for the Teaching Profession, 1961; Educating a Profession, 1976; B.O. Smith's Design for a School of Pedagogy, 1980; and A Nation Prepared for the 21st Century, 1986 (see Edelfelt and Raths, 2000). These reports collectively describe the journey of teacher educators and of those outside education in their attempts to create better teacher preparation practices. Unfortunately, those attempts, individually and collectively, have failed to achieve their lofty goals; they have failed despite the reasonable validity of two assumptions: (1) teachers do make a difference in what and how much students learn and (2) teacher education can make a difference in preparing teachers for classroom practice.

The first of these two assumptions is questioned by few people. Thanks in part to the recent work of William Sanders, those both inside and outside the profession quickly concede that the quality of a teacher influences the level of student achievement (Archer, 1999). Sanders, however, is still largely silent on the characteristics of that "effective teacher." He confirms that such teachers exist and he plans to disaggregate achievement data to see what operational evidence of effectiveness can be discerned from the quantitative data he has collected, but specific characteristics have not yet been identified or defined (Sanders, 2000). Quite likely those characteristics will not be forthcoming from Sanders or other Sanders-like researchers because quantitative measures are unlikely to reveal the qualitative characteristics manifest in the behaviors of effective teachers. Teacher effectiveness will also, quite likely, not be readily identified or engendered by those who subscribe to programmed approaches (such as Direct Instruction) that offer "teacher-proof" excellence. In Starnes' (2000) words: "If we have one article of faith, this is it: Effectiveness cannot be found in the mediocre sameness that grows out of programs that require lessons, teaching strategies, and materials to be precisely executed in order to maintain integrity. If only it [effectiveness] were that easy!" (p. 114).

The second assumption regarding the effectiveness of teacher education is more contentious. True, many who have devoted their lives to preparing teachers would declare the assumption valid; they might even cite reasonable support for reaching such a conclusion (see Berliner, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Equally true, many outside the academy (and even some within its walls) would suggest that smart people with a few pedagogical "tools" can accomplish as much if not more than any fully certificated teacher, which is why some urban districts are initiating their own alternative programs. Indeed, Berliner (2000) describes the likely rationale for alternative approaches as grounded on one of his 12 teacher education slurs: "All you need is subject matter knowledge; the rest is a waste of time" (p. 358).

Any validity associated with the claims of critics, and some clearly exists, is in large measure due to three conditions of current professional preparation practices. These conditions not only mitigate the potential effectiveness of what teacher educators do individually, but they significantly "cloud" what is accomplished collectively.

Condition 1: Teacher education as it exists in most teacher preparation institutions lacks structural coherence. Over a decade ago Barnes (1987) published a paper on thematic programming in teacher preparation in which she argued for using themes as conceptual threads to hold preparation programs together. The theme woven throughout a program provided conceptual and practical coherence. Barnes wrote:

> The idea that the purpose of initial teacher education programs is to foster the development of grounded schema for teaching requires rethinking both the content and the processes used in teacher education. Clearly programs designed to achieve would not offer an array of unarticulated courses and field experiences. Rather, they would provide a set of coherent coursework experiences and utilize management practices carefully to monitor the cumulative impact of the program on learning to teach (p.14).

Since Barnes wrote those words over a decade ago, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) adopted the notion of program themes. Many institutions went through the "adoption" motions and some, no doubt, with considerable seriousness of purpose, actually changed their approaches to teacher education. Unfortunately, what often emerged from "reforms" were pedagogical sound bites that faculty could use to describe

their programs, with results such as teacher-as-decision-maker or teacher-as-reflective-practitioner or teacher-as-critic-of-society. In fact, many institutions created themes without really changing programs. Their intentions were not dishonest, just disingenuous. The result was the same: programs continued to exist that lacked conceptual coherence throughout the range of field work and classroom-based experiences provided to and for prospective teachers.

Condition 2: Teacher education practices often result in training regimens or decoupled practices but not professional education experiences. This condition is particularly problematic because it reflects the schism that exists between the world of schools and the world of academe. Some higher education institutions are in tune with what is happening in K–12 schools, perhaps too much so. For example, when K–12 schools expressed an interest in Canter, some higher education institutions incorporated assertive discipline in their preparation experiences. Examples of this uneasy alliance abound: Whether education schools want reading materials or character education, a cottage industry of providers all too often emerges (it is, after all, the American way) and many teacher educators "buy" the programmed approaches to teaching for everything from phonics to values.

Some teacher educators too fully embrace the world of praxis and when this occurs, the result is teacher training, not teacher education. (An aside: From my perspective, teacher training focuses on the skills of teaching without reflection on contextual questions; teacher education fosters critical reflection on how and when to use a variety of skills in particularized classroom contexts.) Other educators, paradoxically, are almost totally out of touch with what schools look, feel and sound like. They read about schools, study the literature on schools, but they reject the notion of getting "down and dirty" in schools. They emphasize critical reflection without sufficient attention to praxis.

Aristotle's "the mean" may have as much relevance for teacher preparation as it does for teaching a virtue such as "self-discipline." Institutions that become pawns for what schools want and offer teacher training programs are just as problematic as those who adhere to a "hands off" view vis-a-vis what schools need in terms of practical assistance. What must occur and has not, at least to a sufficient degree, is *critically embracing* current educational practice. Let me provide an example.

The use of systemic reform models to effect change in schools is now common throughout the United States. At least 24 distinct reform models have been developed and are being disseminated to more than 8,000 schools (Traub, 1999). Those models focus on either those of teaching specific teacher skills (e.g., Direct Instruction) or on the transformation of a school's culture to foster a more dynamic learning environment (e.g., Accelerated Schools). Unfortunately, schools are adopting Direct Instruction, Success For All, Core Knowledge and a wide variety of other systemic reform options with little or no input from those within higher education in general and teacher education in particular. Many of these systemic models have their own training regimens (e.g., Edison Project and Core Knowledge)—the "training" descriptor is used intentionally because teachers are taught to use a narrow range of skills and to embrace them somewhat uncritically. The marginalization of traditional teacher education occurs because preservice teachers have little or no exposure to any of the models, except perhaps, to have them held in disdain by those within the higher education community.

Those who believe in the systemic reform models want smart people they can train; they imply that this can best be done by decoupling the certification process from colleges and universities (Kanstoroom and Finn, 1999). The training model is anathema to most teacher educators and it should be because of the absence of critical engagement with specific pedagogical skills so that preservice teachers know how and when to use specific teaching approaches or strategies. Training without critical engagement results in semi-professionals who lack an objectivity about and thoughtful understanding of professional practices. The disdain of many traditional teacher educators toward popular reform "packages" results in the functional decoupling of teacher education programs from K–12 schools, so much so that preservice teachers have neither the exposure to nor the critical disposition for thoughtfully examining popularized systemic reform practices.

Relationships with the field of practice are necessarily tenuous. Too close and training emerges; too distant and decoupling is engendered. At present, teacher education institutions vacillate between the two and because of an inability to find "the mean" and create educated teachers, those in K–12 schools and those interested in the politics of education are unable to see the value added of what preparation programs do to instill professional dispositions in prospective teachers. Understand that if we do our job of teacher education correctly, the critics will still not be assuaged, but at least our graduates will be more professionally equipped to use and defend what they have learned in preparation programs.

Condition 3: Disruptive technologies are emerging that threaten the educational status quo of teacher education because programs refuse to change. I began this paper by outlining the myriad historical efforts to reform teacher education–lots of reports, lots of recommendations and limited change. Social and political conditions are now different. Hill (2000) citing Christensen's work describes how descriptive technologies emerge to "offer simpler, cheaper and more user-friendly ways of accomplishing some goal" (p. 52). For years teacher education constituted a monopoly. Many complained, some threatened, but few had the political clout to force changes that offered to engender a real difference in program practices. In large part, the lack of change occurred because viable options for critics to explore simply did not exist. That circumstance is no longer

true. The market force approach is about to influence teacher education just as it has K–12 practices.

Some systemic reform model architects are developing their own teacher training programs and many larger urban districts are creating credentialing programs of their own. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 16, 2000) described the intention of the Edison Project to open a teacher training unit to ensure an ample supply of qualified teachers for Edison Schools. Other for-profit entities (University of Phoenix and Sylvan Learning Systems) are also emerging and attempting to enter the "teacher training" market. Quite candidly, teacher preparation is business, big business, and as entrepreneurs discover the market possibilities for teacher training (which can be done relatively cheaply) the impact on those of us who are teacher educators and who have grown accustomed to threats but felt certain that strong words would not create concomitant action may find the new millennium "interesting."

Those in urban leadership positions are especially concerned with the capacity of traditional teacher education to deliver thoughtful, effective classroom professionals. Part of the highly publicized Houston Public Schools' success is because of alternative certification programs. Some who have studied the efficacy of alternative certification (AC) suggest that AC teachers actually perform better than those from traditional programs. Kwiatkowski (1999) citing Stoddart writes:

> The alternative route candidates are also more likely to hold high expectations for low-income and minority students than the teacher education graduates and to take more responsibility for students' academic success or failure.
>
> The university-certified novice teachers found it difficult to relate to students who were different from themselves. They emphasized the difference between themselves and the low-income and minority students they were teaching. Most held a "cultural deficit" perspective on student achievement and believed that their poor and minority students' lack of enriching life experiences made it difficult for them to function as autonomous learners or understand higher-order concepts (p. 226).

Hill (2000) asserts that disruptive technologies are a threat "because established providers cannot incorporate them" (p. 52) and, I would suggest, fail to fully understand what their success connotes about weaknesses in extant teacher education practices. Those weaknesses, whether the putative "low quality" of teacher education students or the apparent "mickey mouse" nature of some courses within education units (which is another of Berliner's "slurs") are also program opportunities. As any strategic planner readily shares, successful future programming is highly dependent on accurately assessing extant threats and weaknesses. Let me indicate where two opportunities rest. Those opportunities are significant because they can reinforce the process and complexity of teacher education and potentially offer the value-added dimension that so many seek to establish.

Opportunities for Value-Added Change

Part of the historical weakness of teacher education can be attributed to the splintered nature of professional efforts. In a sense, entrepreneurialism has compromised the creation of truly professional education. In *Educating a Profession*, Howsam, Corrigan, Denemark, and Nash (1976) articulated salient differences between professions and semi-professions (see Figure 1), and the many attempts by those in teaching to more clearly move from the latter to the former, a circumstance incidently, that is of concern to teacher education critics because of the potential that professionalism holds for enhanced regulatory behavior. Some 25 years after the Howsam, et al., report was written, limited progress toward professionalism has been made but a host of political and social realities now further threaten movement toward ensuring that teachers who walk into classrooms possess the requisite professional credentials and dispositions to ensure that students can learn and that they can critically examine personal and professional decisions when their students do not achieve. Taking some necessary next steps will require further reforms in how we think about and structure teacher

Characteristics of a Profession

1. The profession collectively, and the professional individually, possesses a body of knowledge and a repertoire of behaviors and skills (professional culture) needed in the practice of the profession; such knowledge, behavior, and skills normally are not possessed by the nonprofessional.
2. The members of the profession are involved in decision making in the service of the client, the decisions being made in accordance with the most valid knowledge available, against a background of principles and theories, and within the context of possible impact on other related conditions or decisions.
3. The profession is based on one or more undergirding disciplines from which it draws basic insights and upon which it builds its own applied knowledge and skills.
4. The profession has agreed upon performance standards for admission to the profession and for continuance within it.
5. Preparation for and induction to the profession is provided through a protracted preparation program, usually in a professional school on a college or university campus.

Characteristics of Semiprofessions

1. Shorter training periods.
2. A less specialized and less highly developed body of knowledge and skills.
3. Markedly less emphasis on theoretical and conceptual bases for practice.
4. More subject to administrative and supervisory surveillance and control.
5. Less autonomy in professional decision making with accountability to superiors rather than to the profession.
6. A preponderance of women.

Source: Howsam, R. B., Corrigan, D. C., Denemark, G. W., and Nash, R. J. (1976). *Educating a profession*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Figure 1.

education within higher education. I suggest but two reforms that necessarily should result in value-added outcomes.

Reform 1: Create specialized or "tracked" programs that force institutions to move beyond generic programming. I refer to specialization beyond traditional licensure and certification tracks. Institutions should begin to think about special student populations and particular classroom contexts (urban students, Catholic schools) and orient their programs to educate prospective teachers for those particularized settings. If this occurs, teachers could be prepared in specialized ways (with pedagogical skills and critical perspectives) and employers could more nearly meet the specific educational needs of students who are part of their programs.

An example illustrates this approach. For some time Notre Dame has been offering a program called the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE). Until recently, Notre Dame was "beyond" teacher education, but when it became reinvolved it did so by "tracking" students for Catholic schools. We spun the ACE concept off at the University of Dayton and conceptually expanded it. The program (Lalanne) offers some special seminars and mentoring support for students seeking an appointment after graduation as a Catholic-school teacher.

Now imagine Lalanne or ACE-like programs for urban or rural schools. Programs could develop one of more context foci and employers would know more clearly what they are "buying" when they employ graduates. More importantly, program graduates would have the more specialized professional skills that employers require for value-added classroom practice and they could learn those skills in ways that suggested their strengths and limitations with particular student groups. Employers might still do some *training* for reform models such as Success for All, but they would have an educated teacher who knew how such a model "fit" for urban students and would appreciate its appropriateness and limitations for urban students because he or she would more fully understand the urban context.

This approach would partially solve another problem that Cochran-Smith (2000) notes:

> Demonstrating that teacher education is "effective" and "value-added" assumes some kind of answer to the question of what it is teachers need to know and some kind of answer to the question of what teachers' learning does or should look like....there is not agreement in the community of educational researchers and teacher educators about how to pose these prior questions, let alone about what their answers should be (p. 18).

The lack of agreement is, in part, because teacher education tries to be all things to all people. Teacher educators now prepare students for "everywhere." Specialization won't solve the problem, but it should make the problem more manageable. In turn, specialization makes it much more likely that teacher educators could assess whether graduates are succeeding (by more focused assessment) and can, in fact, enhance student learning when they begin professional practice with urban or rural or Catholic students. This practice is not unlike what occurs in other professions. Lawyers go through law school but seek specialization for corporate or real estate law. Teachers would not only seek licensure specialization but would also have focused preparation for particular contexts.

Reform 2: Develop programs that are more coherent internally and externally and that result in teachers who are leaders of learning. Accomplishing this will not be easy. It necessarily demands some compromise of the academic freedom that faculty so value as members of the academy. I would argue, though, that quality professional preparation programming compromises, to a degree, a measure of a teacher educators' right to academic self-direction. Institutions have a responsibility to offer programs, not courses. Those in the arts and sciences can offer the latter; those in teacher education must proffer the former. Further, professional programs must transcend personal interests and accommodate program specializations. Of necessity, what we do in higher education needs to be relevant to what is expected in K–12. Professional teacher education fosters preservice teacher acquisition of a "body of behaviors and knowledge and a repertoire of skills needed in practice of the profession" (see Figure 1). That can only occur if a K–12 and higher education nexus is maintained.

The misalignment of the K–16 curriculum is not new and efforts by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) suggest that many within teacher education recognize the need for enhanced alignment. I am arguing, though, for an alignment that really changes the way we teach teachers. Such alignment would place incredible demands on all of us who prepare teachers to ensure that what we do conceptually fits and is more than personal convictions about what prospective teachers need. Clearly, the two are not mutually exclusive. Equally true, all too often faculty members act as independent vendors who dispense "ideas" without understanding the interaction effects those ideas may have on prospective teachers' pedagogical dispositions. Just as a pharmacist knows the interaction effects of drugs, those of us in teacher education must know how what we do contributes to the professional health of our students in ways that makes them more effective teachers. If we create truly aligned programs, I'm convinced that some courses will go; others will be added, and most will be modified. Students who go through such programs, though, will feel the value added even if they cannot prove it empirically. At the present time, most of our graduates can neither feel it nor prove it; they neither feel nor can they prove it because alignment is absent. In essence, there are two forms of alignment that need to occur. One is a form of K–16 alignment that NCATE and INTASC emphasize as they work with learned societies. Another type is alignment within our programs so that faculty speak a similar professional language.

At the University of Dayton we are attempting to foster alignment by structuring our teacher education curriculum around PRAXIS. That does not mean that all faculty mindlessly buy into the PRAXIS model; rather, PRAXIS is used as the foundation to anchor the program language and critiques of practice. I'm convinced that the model a program uses to foster alignment is less important than using some model that all faculty embrace—the model represents the conceptual and practical equivalent to Barnes' (1987) theme concept.

If external (K–16) and internal (teacher education program) alignment occurs, prospective teachers can then enter the classroom ready to serve as leaders—leaders of learning, their own and the students—because they will more clearly see the integrated and interrelated nature of professional knowledge. Part of the reason alignment has not been viewed as problematic previously may be because many who argued for professionalization viewed teaching as a clinical profession that delivered services to those who could not provide such services for themselves. Schlechty (1997) argues that such an orientation resulted in a wrong-headed mindset about what type of profession teaching should be (i.e., a clinical, service-based profession similar to medicine). Unfortunately, the focus on "service delivery" focused on preservice teachers' learning sets of skills (e.g., using different teaching strategies) rather than an understanding how "they must assess their own success through [the achievement of] others" (p. 185). For that outcome to occur, prospective teachers need a wholistic and more critical sense about what the curriculum is and what learning looks like. Teaching is not keeping students busy or on-task. It is, instead, leading students to learn and good teacher education, not teacher training, programs are capable of fostering such professional ability.

Conclusion

These two reforms are not pie-in-the-sky hopes; they are real possibilities. To occur, though, will likely mean that some institutions should be closed and all the rest of us focused on knowing more clearly what makes each distinctive: programs that are specialized in nature and that result in educating teachers who can lead student learning. It likely will also mean that teacher education will become more expensive. Good professional development costs money. Good teacher education does, as well. Indeed, I am convinced that we will not have to force some institutions to close (though we may need to encourage them!). Good professional education programming will cause many to suggest that the cost of high quality is not worth the effort to achieve it.

If we institute the right reforms, we will solve several (not all) of the problems now outlined in the reform literature. That literature calls for better recruitment (now we will know why we are recruiting) and enhanced alignment (now we will know that the "language" of our particular program is spoken by all throughout the professional education experience). The right reforms will not ensure that Johnny Can Teach, but they should put teacher educators a step closer to preparing professional classroom educators who enter the field with value-added skills.

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