

A Critical Examination of Teacher Education from the Perspective of Curriculum*

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This paper examines teacher education from varying perspectives educators have of curriculum. Although there exists considerable discussion of teaching practices, it is contended that greater historical and philosophical examination of the beliefs, interests, and intentions that guide practices can foster improvements in teacher education. A traditionalist, conceptual-empiricist, and reconceptualist view of curriculum provides a framework for examining teacher intentions, conceptions of theory, and models of teaching that underlie teacher education programs. Implications of the criticism are the need for greater dialogue concerning the beliefs and academic interests of teacher education, examination of the notion of practice in teacher education, and rethinking the role of teacher decision-making in preservice and inservice programs.

Cet article examine la formation des enseignants à partir des diverses perspectives qu'ont les éducateurs des programmes d'études. La question des méthodes d'enseignement est certes un sujet fortement débattu, néanmoins nous prétendons qu'un examen historique et philosophique plus poussé des systèmes de pensée, intérêts, et objectifs qui sous-tendent ces méthodes pourrait mener à l'amélioration des programmes de formation. La perspective traditionaliste, conceptuo-empiriste et néo-conceptualiste des programmes nous sert de cadre pour l'examen des objectifs poursuivis par les enseignants, des conceptions théoriques et des modèles d'enseignement dont s'inspirent les programmes de formation des maîtres. Il découle de cette critique la nécessité d'ouvrir davantage le dialogue sur les systèmes de pensée et les intérêts professionnels des enseignants, de réexaminer le concept de formation pratique et de repenser le rôle des enseignants dans la prise de décision concernant les stages et les sessions de formation.

During the past two decades there have been numerous efforts to improve practices in teacher education. The commitment to improvement is evident in the time we spend, the experiences we share with others, and the language we use, and reflects our beliefs regarding what should happen in the preparation of teachers. Introducing new courses, extending the classroom practicum or developing some alternative form of teacher education have provided the basis for the improvement in teacher education. Our concerns are often dealt with in practical or administrative ways without questioning (beyond immediate application) the values of the choices we make. Thus, it would seem that our efforts to bring improvement are hindered by the lack of criticism regarding what we do. By "criticism" is meant a probing examination of the underlying premises of programs we offer students and the nature of the improve-

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ments we advocate. Examination enhances awareness of the fundamental beliefs, interests, and intentions that determine our activities in teacher education.

This paper provides a critical analysis of teacher education and outlines some implications for viewing our efforts problematically. Its purpose is to foster an examination that encourages further inquiry of our practices for educating teachers. Since our goal in teacher education is the preparation of individuals to deal with matters of school curriculum, it is argued that what we do is a manifestation of some particular perspective we have of curricular activities. Improvements, therefore, require a sense of educational awareness of the beliefs, interests, and intentions that guide practices in teacher education.

Much has been written on what constitutes the field of curriculum. Emphasis on defining curriculum and establishing models for guiding curriculum development has been succeeded by attempts to theorize the social, political, epistemological, and methodological notions inherent in curriculum thinking. Studies suggest that orientations of curriculum have roots in historical developments (Kliebard, 1975), in social, political concerns (Apple, 1974), and in anthropological philosophical views (Habermas, 1971). Moreover, considerable discussion prevails as to whether the orientations of curriculum can be viewed as competing paradigms (in the Kuhnian sense) or as themes in curriculum studies. Pinar (1975) suggests that most journal articles, which fall within the latter, are intended to outline procedures for curriculum work. Although practical prescriptions based upon theories of learning or instruction, or systemic models, are useful to education efforts concerned with the teaching and administration of school curricula, discussion does not lead to new ways of talking about curriculum. In other words, discussion tends to be concerned with the elaboration of themes rather than the historical and philosophical issues of what we do. If curricular practice is viewed as an idealization of teacher education, then an examination of teacher education programs in terms of purpose can contribute to a broader understanding of what we advocate for classroom teaching.

This examination of teacher education, therefore, is based upon the thought of curriculum scholars described in Pinar's groupings and my personal experience with an alternative teacher education program. My intention for suggesting a framework for criticism (see Figure 1) is heuristic rather than categorization of the plans and efforts of those in teacher education.

TRADITIONALIST VIEW

Much of what we emphasize in teacher education would appear to be rooted in the traditionalist's view of curriculum. The training, for most of us, is a reflection of the traditionalist ideal that Pinar (1977) describes

<i>Views of Curriculum</i>	<i>Intent of Teacher Education</i>	<i>View of Theory and Practice</i>	<i>View of Teaching</i>	<i>Knowledge Background of Teacher-Educators</i>	<i>Features of Teacher-Education Program</i>
Traditionalist	to guide teachers in organizing content and resolving practical issues	atheoretical; interest in helping others with practical problems	present conventional wisdom based upon disciplinary knowledge; unreflective	classroom teaching and subject area specialization	teaching plans emphasizing content and teaching resources; how-to-do preparation of teaching resources
Conceptual-Empiricist	to prepare teachers for rational decision-making processes	theory to practice; interest in prediction or theoretic notion of practical	change in pupil behavior based upon principles and stages of learning; prescribe teacher tasks and decision-making steps	research in behavioral, social science, and communication studies	unit plans emphasizing behavioral objectives and related teaching strategies that focus on student knowledge, skill and attitude development; classroom observations and identification of student competencies
Reconceptualist	to allow teachers to understand and reflect upon the nature of educational experience	theory and practice in dialectic sense; interest in human understanding and social criticism	encourage self-reflection based upon interpretation of class activities; promote experiential meaning of classroom life	study in the humanities, philosophy of social science, and phenomenology	class activities emphasizing interaction; preparation of journal accounts, conduct of classroom ethnographies, and critiques of the school within society

FIGURE 1
Outline of Teacher Education from Three Views of Curriculum

as conventional wisdom of curriculum and teaching, characterized by service to practitioners. Knowledge is not law-like or reflective in nature but exists, rather, according to Kliebard (1976), "as the half-conscious ideals and preferences we have inherited from our professional forebears" (p. 248). Teacher education programs with this curricular orientation appear to stress two conditions. One condition is that a student teacher has strong subject area specialization. A preservice social studies teacher, for example, is required to have a major or concentration in a grouping of history and/or social science courses prior to or concurrent with a practicum of classroom teaching. Concerns of a practical nature then become identified and resolved in terms of those knowledge structures considered important. Moreover, guidance to practitioners becomes premised on subject specialization and an unreflective view of classroom practices. The interest lies in helping others with daily problems rather than in creating theoretical developments in education. Language used suggests that guidance for teachers-in-training adopts an orientation grounded in personal experience supportive of a technological rationale rather than in a philosophical stance and/or a scientific theory. Some traditionalists in education, however, rely on the Tylerian approach (Tyler, 1950) for a theoretical foundation, although its only apparent theoretic quality would appear to be its abstract nature of how curricular and instructional decisions should occur in the classroom.

With strong affinity to the cultural and intellectual ties of classroom practitioners, a traditionalist ideal considers practice in classroom teaching a second major condition for teacher education. The practicum becomes a classroom experience administratively organized in sequence with course work in academic areas of study and in education. The practical experience is not assumed to be part of a relationship between theory and practice. Instead, the issues of a practicum take their cues from the discipline of study or from classroom techniques found useful by educators to whom students are assigned.

Although the interest is directly concerned with providing practical assistance, two major concerns of an apprenticeship approach emerge. First, the decision of what knowledge is important becomes rooted in individual academic training. That is, the decision of what is important knowledge is steeped in beliefs and preferences of academic areas of study. Student-teacher concern of the practicum then becomes "how to make what is taught interesting?" rather than "what is worthy of teaching?" With this emphasis, a practical experience can become instrumental in providing short-term answers to practical problems.

A teacher education program indicative of a traditionalist view of curricular thought emphasizes careful planning of how the knowledge is to be taught. Lessons and unit plans outline the knowledge to be taught and methods for teaching, and document the resources needed to teach the content considered important. Thus, usefulness of such plans is judged

in terms of its practicality for classroom teaching of conventional knowledge.

CONCEPTUAL-EMPIRICIST VIEW

In recent years, the orientation towards social science has strongly influenced educational developments. This emphasis in curriculum thinking, Pinar (1977) suggests, is not simply a sense of educational elitism, but rather "it is an indication of a historical-intellectual shift in the field which parallels in some respects the rise of psychology and the social sciences generally in the university" (p. 4). Conceptual-empiricists see education not as a distinct discipline but as a field of endeavor to be studied according to nomothetic statements of behavioral and social sciences. Using theoretical models of teaching and learning, teacher educators have created programs that stress development of teaching tasks and decision-making processes for classroom teaching.

The conceptual-empiricist view of curriculum appears to be reflected by two different efforts in teacher education. One group of educators (grounded in the empirical methods of behavioral science) has established programs that prepare teachers with the tasks or skills considered important in teaching. Teaching styles and tasks, which often appear as the independent variable of behavior change models, are identified according to principles of learning or stages of human development. Knowing how children learn, it is assumed, will assist teachers in making decisions for establishing an efficient learning situation. Tasks that enhance pupil learning include such teacher skills as the writing and use of clearly stated objectives, the development of teaching strategies related to the goals set and the measurement of pupil achievement. Successful teaching is determined by the completion of identified teacher competencies or by pupil achievement in terms of predefined goals. Although technical means for measuring outcomes is well established in education, what determines success has fostered much debate among educators.

The group of conceptual-empiricists has created a language (discrepancy, teaching tasks, minimal competency, accountability) that conveys a strong guiding interest in educational matters. That is, in addition to identifying classroom knowledge and teaching tasks, the inherent theoretical propositions also stress the testing of nomothetic statements that require a sense of certainty for prediction of classroom phenomena. Teacher education programs emphasize strong causal relationship between the methods courses and the practicum. Moreover, the emphasis on a linear relationship stresses the importance of clearly defined objectives. This is illustrated by the following competency-based teacher education program designed to deal with disruptive youth:

1. Describe the system of courts and legal justice with which alienated students and correctional clientele must deal.

2. Demonstrate skills in using instrumentation and diagnostic techniques common to special education testing.
3. Show competence in individualized instructional skills necessary to aid atypical students to succeed in learning tasks.
4. Analyze personal and individual needs of clients incarcerated, adjudicated, or otherwise categorized outside the mainstream of public education.

(Kersting, 1978, p. 629)

Because of a desire for a strong linkage between theory and practice, the offering of a practicum becomes guided by theoretical notions rather than by sponsor teachers' beliefs and interests, as tends to be the case with a traditionalist view. In other words, theoretical principles of human behavior and not the half-conscious ideals of individuals become the basis for what preservice teachers should do in classroom teaching.

Most successful efforts in creating a practicum closely linked to theoretic positions have been projects stressing problem-solving inquiry skills, and hierarchical stages of human development, such as those advocated by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Efforts require situations in which teachers understand and support the innovative teaching practice. Yet a study by Elliott (1976) of the Ford Teaching Project in England concluded that teachers who understood inquiry teaching were not aware if the notion of inquiry actually guided their classroom practice.

A second group of educators who appear to adopt a conceptual-empiricist view of curriculum are those who premise curricular decision-making on Schwab's (1972) notion of the practical. Schwab sees the practical as a complex discipline concerned with choice and action that leads to defensible decisions. Hence, the practical is not concerned with practice rooted in the traditionalist view or the practice emerging from scientific theory. Although research based on the practical has had only limited involvement in teacher education, Connelly (1972) has conducted developmental work with science teachers on choices in curriculum planning. Research of this nature would appear significant to teacher education for two reasons. First it calls into question the Tyler rationale for curricular and instructional planning. A case study of curriculum development in an art project by Walker (1975) indicates that developers did not work from prescriptive models based on objectives. Instead Walker suggests the concept of deliberation is a more appropriate notion for understanding the actual decision-making process of curriculum development. Situational studies in the British Columbia Assessment Program indicate that objectives (stated either in provincial documents or teacher prepared course outlines) were not considered important by teachers when making decisions about what to teach (Aoki et al., 1978). Of further significance is the possible function of such research as a bridge between the thinking of teacher educators concerned with programs based

upon scientific theory and educators with a reconceptualist view of education.

While on the surface teacher education programs grounded in behavioral change models, decision-making approaches, and communication systems appear neutral or apolitical, a closer examination reveals a strong ideological position. Emphasis on decision-making in teacher preparation would appear more committed to a given form of cultural and political order, rather than to asking questions of the existing social order (Apple, 1974). Focus on the social order, on the other hand, is a basic premise of the reconceptualist thinking of curriculum.

RECONCEPTUALIST VIEW

As yet, the reconceptualist view of curriculum would seem to have little direct influence on the thinking of teacher education. In his edited book of writings, Pinar (1975) suggests the common intellectual interest of the reconceptualist is understanding the nature of human experience (matters of consciousness, intentionality, and politics). Characterized by an examination of what does exist, criticism either focuses on the old or existing social structures, or points towards the creation of new forms. Curricular examination, particularly for the latter, has meant the inclusion of thinking from philosophy of social science, phenomenology, and certain areas of the humanities. In attempting to better understand the nature of what is in classrooms, in schools, and in society, curriculum studies have relied not on observation of phenomena but rather on the intentionality of people, a form of knowing suggestive of a dialectic process between the subjective self and its objectified reality. This theoretical relationship between self and the social world presupposes a process of interactions in which subjectivity becomes objectified as social meanings (Schutz, 1967).

For the reconceptualist, teacher preparation means becoming a teacher. Such consciousness-raising is looked upon as a social act based upon a theoretical stance that daily activities provide a context for subjective meanings that are socially shared and constructed. Teacher education, then, emphasizes knowledge self-reflective in nature, rather than knowledge emphasizing the structure of disciplines or the knowledge dependent on how children learn.

A reconceptualist view of curriculum calls for different modes of teacher preparation. Rather than concentrate on establishing lesson plans with skill-oriented learning outcomes and closely related teaching strategies, programs emphasize planning of activities that enhance student-teacher interactions from which subjective meaning occurs. Ethnographic descriptions and journal accounts of classroom happenings can aid teachers in better understanding the daily activities of a classroom. In addition to gaining understanding of self and the situation in which one teaches, teachers would also question why certain kinds of social and

cultural knowledge are taught in classrooms. A number of educators (Young, 1971; Apple, 1978) suggest that classroom knowledge may be a reflection of ideological interests of social groups for preserving rather than changing social structures. Teacher preparation is not only concerned with making curricular decisions within the existing social system of schools, but also with thought that questions the very existence of that system in order to improve the quality of life in schools. Some educators consider the language revolutionary; others consider it basic to the nature of the relationship between school and society, a concern not of major importance of teacher education premised on the traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist view of school curriculum. In addition to being an intellectual existence, a reconceptualist view is also a political act because of its acknowledged value stance.

IMPLICATIONS

In the analysis, albeit brief, I have tried to reveal how various views of curriculum appear to be reflected in teacher education programs. Focusing on the purposive nature of what we do facilitates questioning of that which we uphold as desirable. Inquiry of this nature generates a number of implications for teacher education.

One implication is that criticism of the underlying premises is a notion uncommon to teacher educators. A number of possible reasons exist. First, teacher education has not been an established area of study in Canadian education. The decision by the Canadian Society for the Study of Education in 1978 (MacIver, 1978) to make teacher education their focus of study would appear to be a positive step in fostering not only elaboration of thematic studies, but also clarify the purposes of theory in teacher education. Second, an examination of beliefs and/or academic interests is often seen as a criticism of individuals rather than a questioning of those views that guide their activities. One example is the belief that helping others is a desirable goal of teacher education. As educators we spend many hours helping students with planning and classroom management. These concerns are immediate and real to preservice teachers. The solutions we provide for practical issues are often based on a personalized approach we as teachers have found desirable or on some prescriptive set of procedures of what should be happening in a classroom. Helping others with practical issues can become objectified as the major concern. Such efforts require considerable support time. Moreover the concern, although contributing to a repertoire of survival skills, would not appear to assist students in acting with an understanding of procedures, or showing a self-inspired sense of confidence in particular educational situations, or, further, asking questions of the social order from which these daily concerns arise. In other words, we need to realize that our commitment to

help others has a utilitarian emphasis rather than one allowing thought and action.

A second implication of the examination is that it questions our perspective of desirable classroom situation for preservice teachers. Often our major concern is for the length of practice rather than for the quality of the experience. A case in point is the desire to extend the practicum. Although the notion of practice is considered desirable in teacher preparation, difficulties arise if we begin to ask what view of practical we have in mind. Are we talking of rules of behaviors that will prescribe what to do in particular teaching situations? Or, are we talking of practical in the sense that it contributes to development of a pedagogic orientation? Or, are we considering practical as an opportunity to solve immediate, short term concerns? Such questions, which reflect the tripartite division of curricular thought, begin to probe the desirability of an extended practicum. In other words, revealing the nature of the teaching experience can lead to a probing of the underlying premises of the preparation itself. This questioning may focus simply on the usefulness of having a student spending more time in the classroom under an apprenticeship relationship with a sponsor teacher, or may focus on a more complex issue, the control by certain groups of the knowledge being taught during the extended time.

A third implication is that the examination of Schwab's notion of practical and the reconceptualist view of curriculum indicates there is need to conduct more inquiry into the significance teachers give to instructional planning. This calls for a case study approach for studying actions of teachers in classrooms rather than model building for prescribing how teaching should be done. Using a variety of ethnographic approaches would appear to be an appropriate means of gaining greater understanding of what happens in classrooms (Van Manen, 1978). Such forms of description can assist pre-and-in service teachers in better perceiving the nature of classroom life.

A fourth implication is the need for educators to listen to what various perspectives are saying so that thought and debate can contribute to new conceptions in teacher preparation. For example, Connelly's (1972) work on teacher deliberation in curriculum planning and Elliott's (1976) experience with a teacher self-monitoring process are important studies for teacher educators. Although differing somewhat in the view of curriculum, such developmental work establishes notions of teacher decision-making that could be beneficial in rethinking preservice and inservice programs.

In conclusion, a careful consideration of the underlying beliefs is needed to clarify what we do in evaluating teachers. Demographic changes in school population, social-political factors, and budgetary restraints would indicate that now is not the time to promote more alternative programs without examining those beliefs of what is desirable in teacher prepara-

tion. Thus, taking stock of our current efforts would be a timely experience conducive to an improvement in teacher education.

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