

Teacher Education: For What?

By John I. Goodlad

I.

We all know that teacher education is a process of preparing people to practice teaching (or pedagogy), just as medical education and engineering education are processes of preparing people to practice medicine and engineering. Knowing this, it appears logical for us to turn next to compendiums of what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to teach well and, of course, to the standards we should set for such teacher learnings.

It follows, then, as perfectly natural that we should turn to conference programs and immediately find panels, consortia, and presentations on topics such as "Constructivism versus Behaviorism" and "Stages of Professional Development from Novice to Expert." Teacher education is so obviously a given in our lexicon of understanding and meaning that we are able, with great assurance, to address matters of doing it well.

John I. Goodlad is a professor emeritus and co-director of the Center for Educational Renewal in the College of Education, University of Washington, and president of the Institute for Educational Inquiry, Seattle, Washington.

But is it? I can think of few, if any, human "practices" that are the object of such varied perceptions and assumptions with respect to their purpose and nature. How, then, can there be any productive discourse regarding the knowledge and skills teaching requires and any meaningful standards regarding the efficacy of its conduct? Each of us can make of teaching what he or she wishes and put the results

beside all other constructs as having at least equal validity. Great fun, but hardly the way to ground a profession in mission, principles, and concepts. Perhaps this is why there has been such a push of late (by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, for example) for making of teaching a profession—something I've thought I've been in for over five decades.

II.

I have a very low-grade addiction to purpose, especially to precise, narrow, exclusive purpose. I do make statements of intent, like "going for a walk" or "going fishing." But these, usually, are metaphors for some more encompassing immersion in the practice of living. On occasion, a walk has taken me only a few hundred feet because of a rich, multi-sensory aesthetic context. "Going fishing" is a placeholder for eschewing almost all responsibilities for a few hours in a boat, on the water, with bird and animal life.¹ A ten-pound salmon is a rare but always welcome dividend.

And so, in teacher education, eras of behavioral objectives, proficiencies, and standards have passed me by. Yet, I am exceedingly uncomfortable in a national surround of conferences, publications, burnout, and both school and teacher education "reform," in the absence of purpose beyond the acts of participation. To give direction to our steps as teacher educators, an identity to our profession, and richness of meaning to our metaphors, surely there must be a destination worthy of our efforts. Goodness knows, few people labor with greater selflessness.

Our comprehensive study (conducted by colleagues and me in the late 1980s) of a representative sample of teacher educating settings in the United States revealed no such destination or destinations. Early on, in conceptualizing the inquiry, we reviewed a miscellaneous array of university bulletins, catalogues, public relations documents, and the like to determine the kind of information each institution chose to provide. Usually, there was a brief history, a description of the geographic context and campus features, some demographic data, and perhaps something about endowments and other financial resources, followed by a list of key administrators and organizational units. Then came the programs and course offerings of schools and departments. But, with the exception of church-related colleges, there was virtually nothing about mission beyond self-congratulatory rhetoric regarding the nature and status of the most prestigious specialties. Presumably, being an institution of higher learning speaks for itself and requires no further justification or elaboration.

It is reasonable to assume that the categories of description of the various schools and departments would mirror those of the overall institution—and, with respect to teacher education, they did, and again the void in purpose or mission. Since the courses offered in the specialties, particularly the preparation of secondary school teachers, were quite similar from setting to setting, one might assume considerable inter-institutional agreement on intent—to the extent of there being no need to state

Teacher Education: For What?

it. (More on this point later.) But our doubt was sufficiently shared and great enough to cause us to identify the common omission as a domain for on-site inquiry.

While designing this study of the education of educators, we were engaged in implementing and popularizing the concept of school-university partnerships for simultaneously renewing both schools and the education programs of their stewards.² Since our earlier study of elementary and secondary schools had raised in our minds serious questions of what we as a people and as educators have in view for their mission,³ the probability of a similar void regarding the mission of teacher education suggested to us a rough ride in seeking productive symbioses in the merging of the two cultures. One colleague's conclusion that neither school reformers nor teacher education reformers had spoken of the other in reports dating back to 1890 added a few loud clangs to the warning bells.⁴

Our conceptualization of the study of the education of educators took a philosophical turn. We began to write and exchange working papers on such themes as what a profession is and what it means to be a professional (from our ongoing inquiry into the development of other professions⁵); education, teaching, and teaching in schools as a special case of teaching; and what teaching and teacher education as moral endeavors required of teacher preparing institutions regarding their moral responsibility to both society and future teachers. Either live up to this responsibility or don't do it at all, we said. We formulated more than two dozen questions to be answered in determining the degree to which an institution of higher education appeared to be living up to its necessary commitment.

These research questions pertained to the status of teacher education in institutional priorities, the existence of an identifiable faculty group embracing the full curriculum necessary and planning together a coherent curriculum tied to a mission, serious attention to student recruitment and advisement, collaborating schools providing the necessary practice, and more. Central to our inquiry was, of course, interest in seeing whether there was clear articulation of mission and programs tied coherently to that mission. We designed questionnaires and interview protocols geared to about two dozen such questions.

Our findings were and are disturbing. The most coherent programs were in small institutions and tied to theories of learning. The best of these eschewed extended student practice in the schools for fear the good work of the university faculty would be undone there. With a few notable exceptions, the many future teachers we interviewed could not remember classes in which they discussed such matters as the public purpose of schooling in a democracy and what this implied for education in matters of civility, *civitas*, and equity. And, when they did recall some such discussion in a class or two, they could not recall ever returning to the issues later in their programs. For the most part, their attention was focused on the management of groups of students in classrooms. But they thought the matters we raised were important and that attention to them might have heightened their already quite high belief in the importance of teaching as a profession.⁶

Many of their professors agreed. Some expressed strongly the view that teacher education had slipped too far toward the mechanisms of teaching and too far away from a philosophical grounding in ethics and education as a moral endeavor. However, said some, these are weighty matters for people so young!

III.

It became apparent before we were half through our scheduled nine months of visiting teacher preparing settings that these findings were becoming virtually predictable, regardless of the institution and its demographics. Our reflections on the patterns as they unfolded steadily reinforced the hypothesis that had emerged from our earlier documentary studies: The enterprise of educating teachers for our schools lacks a mission. When and where programs have such—and I assume there to be examples—they are the happy consequence of dedicated faculty groups recognizing the need and successfully meeting it. A couple in our sample came very close.

One is led to wonder about the extent to which programs in an array of fields, including those intended to provide general or liberal studies for an educated citizenry, possess little more in purpose than transmitting knowledge of a subject matter. One's thoughts stray even to medical education, and one wonders how much students and faculty are driven by a clear mission of keeping the populace healthy and ensuring the well-being of patients above all else. The public relations blitz of the health management organizations provides little confidence that the strides of the medical profession in recent decades toward health service and health maintenance are continuing apace.

The mission of teacher education, like the mission of other human service professions, arises out of a social, community context—in teacher education's case, out of what our schools are for. This is, of course, a hotly contested arena. Little wonder, then, that the past separation of "town and gown" offered a relatively safe haven for teacher education, as it did for higher education as a whole. The closer teacher education could attach itself to the core of the university, the safer it would be from public intrusion. The passage of a teachers college to state college to state university was a reason for celebration with each transition. However, this rite of passage brought status to the institution at the price of loss of status to teacher education, and no doubt contributed to the gulf between the schools and the education of their teachers now recognized (at long last) as needing to be bridged.⁷ There is currently relatively widespread agreement among improvement-minded groups of teacher educators that producing better teachers to ensure better schools requires a close collaboration of universities and school districts in developing partner or professional development schools.⁸

But for what? Partnerships are formed to bring together the total array of resources thought necessary to a shared purpose. The shared mission of the

Teacher Education: For What?

partnership for teacher education arises not out of teacher education but out of schooling. Why do we and must we have schools? And what makes teaching in schools a special case of teaching for which careful, systematic professional preparation is essential? These are the questions that began to preoccupy our thoughts and conversations as the prevailing absence of a mission for teacher education became more and more apparent.

IV.

Conventional interpretations of democracy have given alarming credence to the misbegotten notion that one opinion is as good as another and, worse, truth is what most people agree it is. This conventional wisdom has placed advertising at the heart of the cacophony of teaching that determines truth, and the god of economic utility⁹ that drives the corporate world has become the main harbinger of truth. Not surprisingly, the almost-unchallenged, most-articulated mission of the schools is become the processing of the young to provide for the nation's human power needs.

This is not where our reflections and discussions led us. Rather, we perceived the school years as providing our young with a carefully guided passage from the narcissism of childhood to a level of self-transcendence embracing the whole of humankind and the habitat of which it is a part. During this passage, the student is enculturated in the symbiotics of human interaction and community building on which a democracy depends. In recent writing, I refer to this process as the development of democratic character.¹⁰ Critical to this development is a comprehensive introduction to the disciplined inquiry that marks reliance on the human conversation rather than authoritarianism and force in maintaining civil societies. The private purpose to which the narrative of economic advancement appeals will be attained by only a few people in societies devoid of public purpose. Sustaining and, indeed, extending the embrace of public purpose is the overarching mission of our schools.

The schools will be weak instruments, however, if their teachers are prepared primarily in the mechanics of presenting information and managing classrooms. They must be deeply immersed in the meaning of democratic character and the knowledge domains of the human conversation. More, they must possess the caring pedagogical skills, traits, and dispositions that guiding self-transcendence of the young requires. They must, too, be vigilant stewards of schools that model the qualities of civility and *civitas* desired in the young.

V.

With the full data bank from our research before us and a great deal of reading, writing, and conversing behind us, my colleagues and I laid out an agenda for schooling and teacher education in a democracy that articulates both a four-part

mission and a set of conditions necessary to its fulfillment.¹¹ In thrusting this agenda into the public domain, we were aware of the growing status of private purpose in politically driven school reform. We also were aware of the considerable local turmoil with respect to the condition of schooling and the many aborted efforts to design and implement changes.

Another part of the misguided conventional wisdom pertaining to the meaning of democracy is belief in the intellectual self-sufficiency and financial insufficiency of groups convened to find solutions to their problems. Give them a little money—the more the better—and they will come up with good things. What they often lack, however, is awareness of necessary knowledge and ideas not represented in the group, awareness of where such might be obtained, and the discretionary time to seek out and seek again in an ongoing process of inquiry. (Seymour Sarason has pointedly noted this lack in political leaders advocating specific school reform.¹²) Consequently, the productive democratic process envisioned often turns out to be rancorous and nonproductive.

Our own experience in educational change told us, however, that even a rather rudimentary agenda, especially when seen to be catching on elsewhere, can make a substantial difference when brought into a group's awareness and conversation. Groups do not need to generate the ideas, but they do need to see merit in ideas not their own if they are to pursue them diligently. It soon became apparent to us that the then-embryonic Coalition of Essential Schools was catching on because it had an agenda and the concepts of that agenda clearly connected with what teachers saw their work to be in the schools.¹³ Later, we were able to discern the power of agendas in other school renewal initiatives catching on in schools and their communities,¹⁴ quite in contrast to the growing picture of failure on the part of school reform proposals generated in political arenas far removed from the schools.

We realized, too, that university-based teacher educators, like the rest of their colleagues in higher education, are initially ill-disposed to follow the educational maps of their own kind located elsewhere. And so, we were caught off guard when our invitation to take on our Agenda for Education in a Democracy was oversubscribed. There were far more applicants than places we could support in our National Network for Educational Renewal.

I think there were four primary reasons for this. First, the Agenda was undergirded by a series of reasonably well-known research studies on educational change, schooling, and teacher education. University people are notorious for their distrust of highly touted reforms or advocacy of panaceas not grounded in inquiry. Second, the Agenda was loaded (perhaps dangerously) with intellectual demands and potential implications. This pushed many of those interested in inquiry into their own fields in order to tease out these implications. Third, although the Agenda was and is non-negotiable, its implementation is open to many alternative routes. Fourth, a public and political demand for critical attention to teacher education was beginning to emerge. This last heightened our interest in securing the attention of

Teacher Education: For What?

teacher education settings likely to engage in renewal of their programs with or without membership in the National Network for Educational Renewal. Today, there are many such.¹⁵

The narrative connecting affluence and personal worth currently has high visibility in the culture of the United States. It is profoundly influencing expectations for and the Geist of our schools, lowering the visibility of alternative narratives more reflective of individual responsibility to the common good. Nonetheless, in a book of the late 1980s, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. anticipated for the late 1990s the stirrings of a shift toward contributing to public purpose as a more humanly satisfying endeavor.¹⁶ Just as humans grow weary of a long period of sacrifice—as in the years of depression and then war from 1929 into the late 1940s—and then turn toward personal gratification, so do they begin to look for something more fulfilling as narcissistic reflections come to appear empty.

If Schlesinger's cycles of change turn out to be prescient in regard to their timing, perhaps we are at the edges of an era when more people will look to our schools for civilizing the young according to our most auspicious formulations of social and political behavior. For want of any better description known to us, our *Agenda for Education in a Democracy* refers to this as democratic character and places its development at the core of the mission for schooling and the education of its stewards.

Notes

1. See the concluding chapter of John I. Goodlad, *In Praise of Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997).
2. Kenneth A. Sirotnik & John I. Goodlad (eds.), *School-University Partnerships in Action* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).
3. Reported in John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984).
4. Zhixin Su, *Teacher Education Reform in the United States (1890-1986)*, Occasional Paper no. 3 (Seattle, WA: Center for Educational Renewal, University of Washington, 1986).
5. Roger Soder, *Professionalizing the Profession: Notes on the Future of Teaching*, Occasional Paper no. 4 (Seattle, WA: Center for Educational Renewal, University of Washington, 1986).
6. For a report on these and other findings, see John I. Goodlad, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990).
7. The concept of school-university partnerships, regarded as innovative a decade ago, is now commonly seen as a necessary building block in strengthening both schools and teacher education programs.
8. The extensive literature includes whole books devoted to the subject, such as Richard W. Clark, *Creating Real Professional Development Schools* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, in press); Marsha Levine & Roberta Trachtman (eds.), *Making Professional Development Schools Work: Politics, Practice, and Policy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997); Russell T. Osguthorpe, R. Carl Harris, Melanie Fox Harris, & Sharon Black (eds.), *Partner Schools: Centers for Educational Renewal* (San Fran-

- cisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995).
9. A theme powerfully developed in Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).
 10. Goodlad, *In Praise of Education*, pp. 125-31.
 11. The components of this agenda are described in considerable detail in John I. Goodlad, *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994) and then further explicated, with case studies of their use, in Wilma Smith & Gary D Fenstermacher, *Leadership for Educational Renewal* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, in press.)
 12. Seymour B. Sarason, *Political Leadership and Educational Failure* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998).
 13. For the first major publication regarding the Coalition's agenda, see Theodore R.Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).
 14. For example, the school renewal initiatives directed or inspired by James Comer, Howard Gardner, Carl Glickman, Henry Levin, and Theodore Sizer, to identify several of impressive durability.
 15. In the early stages of research to be reported later, Eileen Wright of our staff finds active engagement in the Agenda in at least ten states beyond the fourteen where settings of the National Network for Educational Renewal are advancing it.
 16. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Cycles of American History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1986). See especially Chapter 2.