Improving Teacher Education[1]

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Paradoxes in American Education

Think for yourself *but* know what the books say

Education for all *but* we value excellence

We value originality *but* ideas must be disciplined to evidence

We want to be concerned about every student *but* we tend to be insensitive to cultural differences

We are aware that your ministry will be in other languages and cultures *but* we insist on good English in your papers

Propositions for Improved Teacher Education

Teaching should be seen as a clinical practice.

As a clinical practice, teaching must be improved through evaluations of empirical evidence.

Adequate professional training of the teacher must provide a clinical style (learning from doing) to constitute the basis for continued improvement.

If we are to expect future teachers to adopt, adapt, and use creative alternatives to "teaching is telling," we *must* use creative alternatives in teacher education.

Fallacy: Teacher education is a once only task.

Observations: Beginning teachers are rarely able to do well in truly difficult assignments. Teachers who excel are constantly improving. In-service education is becoming more common. The educational level of teachers is increasing.

Problem: Can a systematic "learning from experience" style become a basic aspect of teacher preparation?

Hypothesis: The essence of teaching as a profession is the process of continued improvement on the basis of clinical experience.

[1] Ted Ward. Improving Teacher Education. Unpublished document, 1970

Fallacy: Teachers will be less important in instructional systems of the future.

Observation: Teachers over-react when they think something can or will replace them. Some tasks are currently performed by teachers are not worthy of professional persons. Newer instructional procedures demand more specialized and more precisely trained human resources.

Issue: What is the role for teachers in the instructional systems of the future?

Hypothesis: Teachers will always be needed, though the roles they play in the instructional system will most certainly change.

Fallacy: Improving teachers is the best way to improve schools.

Observations: Teachers are often unable to put into practice what they already know. Changing any one part of a system usually demands changes in other parts. Failure to improve instructional materials restricts improvement of teachers. Human and technological components must be coordinated to be effective.

Problem: What is the best way to improve schools?

Hypothesis: Improving teaching is the best way to improve schools.

Fallacy: The major need in education is more money.

Observations: Workable new ideas are more scarce than money. Additional money is typically used for more of the same.

Issue: Can the need for improvement and the need for efficiency be seen as parallel problems?

Hypothesis: Significant improvement in education can be made within tolerable cost increases.

Fallacy: New media will revolutionize education.

Observations: Media development seems well ahead of the general pace of educational development. New media are hardly revolutionary, since they are barely accepted into education! When media changes are the only changes, nothing much happens.

Issue: How can new media become a resource for educational improvement?

Hypothesis: Media provide better ways to communicate, to input information, and to provide stimulating learning experiences. Men and women committed to do efficiently these things will revolutionize educationCnot the media themselves.

Fallacy: Change-agents are the answer!

Observations: Those who actually control things are those who change things!

Issue: Can outside-the-system pressures become the basis of constructive change?

Hypothesis: Change comes about after persons inside a system recognize the need for change.

Fallacy: New information will produce change.

Observations: Many people are not affected by facts. Professional people seek information. Information must be used. Information about what others are doing often is a substitute for careful study of local needs.

Problems: What is the role of information in educational improvement?

Hypothesis: On the basis of information—reliable, retrievable, relevant information—professional educators can produce instructional improvement.

Fallacy: Change = Improvement

Observations: Improvement demands change, by definition. Not all changes qualify as improvements. "Change for the sake of change" is a dangerous game. Failure to evaluate changes constitutes professional negligence.

Issue: Can "the urge to change" be converted to a professional force?

Hypothesis: Improvement in education depends on careful, insightful planning directed toward evaluated needs.

What are the exciting trends in teacher education?

Earlier practicum experiences

Clearer relationships among courses and other experiences

Recognition of the behavioral basis of teaching and teacher education

Assertion 1: Any teacher education program can be seen as being built on one of these positions.

Positions regarding the basis of teacher education

1. *Doing* makes a teacher ("apprentice" model)
2. *Knowing* makes a teacher ("intellectual" model)
3. *Being* makes a teacher ("self-realization" model)
4. *No one knows* what makes a teacher ("nihilistic" model)
5. *Doing, Knowing, Being* makes a teacher ("clinical" model)

Assertion 2: The teacher education graduate must be ready to meet expectations that are beyond his or her control.

Behavioral demands upon the new teacher

- To act according to peer and supervisory expectations (within tolerances)
- To act above the restrictiveness of expectations (within tolerance)
- To act upon combinations of new and old ideas
- To change behavior on the basis of evaluated experience

What are the cognitive and affective learns required for each of these behaviors?