

A Plan for the Redesign of Teacher Education

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I. A Proposal for the Redesign of Teacher Education

The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in the United States, released a few months ago in Washington, is but one of the many recent efforts of nations around the world to call attention to the vital importance of education's role in the realization of human potential and in the achievement of a maximum national development. In both developed and developing nations there is a growing concern that education be improved and that there be a continued striving for excellence. It is obvious that any efforts to increase the effectiveness of education in achieving a goal of excellence inevitably must become involved in the improvement of the quality of teaching and the teaching profession.

Emphasizing this concern for the improvement of teaching, the 1983 World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching, meeting in the United States this July, focused attention on the theme, the Redesign of Teacher Education for the Twenty-first Century. Speakers and participants from more than 50 nations discussed the importance and nature of redesign and reform efforts related to teacher education. There was clear concurrence in the belief that the achievement of excellence in education and the expansion of educational opportunities must involve a comprehensive reform of teacher

education that will respond to the challenging needs and problems of our world now and in the years ahead, a reform that will provide the flexibility essential in a world characterized by change, a reform that will offer excellence in education to all children, youths, and adults.

A proposal was made at the World Assembly that the reform of teacher education should be comprehensive, nationwide in scope, involving a total redesign of all programs for the preparation of personnel for the education professions. The term "education professions" is used here advisedly and interchangeably with "teacher education" because it is the conviction of many that any reform or redesign efforts must deal not only with those whom we view as the major resource of our schools, the teachers, but also with those who provide leadership and support services through the specialized roles of administrators, supervisors, curriculum developers, psychologists, and others.

It is the purpose of this paper to develop a series of guidelines that may be used in the reform/redesign of teacher education as a national effort. These guidelines grow out of the accumulated experience of nations around the world in the development of programs for the preparation of teachers and other school personnel, on experimentation and research that has been conducted in varied world settings, on successful models of teacher education now in operation, and on the collective wisdom gained in the many reforms of the recent past focused on the improvement of the quality of the educational experience.

In the development of these recommendations intended to provide direction for the redesign project, it is, as mentioned above, assumed that the effort will be a national one. Thus, observations, comments, suggestions are keyed to the national scene. However, if the effort is located in a different political unit a state, a province, a region—or if it is multi-national involving a number of nations closely linked by cultural and political ties and with common goals, the generalizations are still applicable with appropriate modifications.

II. Prerequisites to Redesign

Recognizing the realities of education and the world scene, it is suggested that prior to the redesign task, three prerequisite conditions be established: (1) the development of a national policy for teacher education, (2) the inclusion of a global perspective in education generally and in teacher education specifically, (3) the concept of a partnership approach to teacher education reform.

1. National Policy

A comprehensive national policy for teacher education is an important and essential foundation for the development of an effective program for the preparation of individuals for the education professions. In many national settings, the responsibility for teacher education is fragmented and rests with higher education institutions, with national and provincial or state governments, with different agencies within governmental structures, with professional organizations and associations, with accrediting agencies, and with others—all operating with varying degrees of independence and with no clearly defined policies to coordinate the vast professional enterprise and to point the way to a level of quality equal to the task assigned by society to the schools. While we cannot state that this description applies in all nations of the world, it is probably safe to assume that in most countries there is a division of responsibility which, along with other factors, points to the

need for a national policy. Such a policy, we suggest, is an imperative need if it does not already exist. The policy must merit the confidence of the public and serve as a guide to all who make decisions concerning teacher education.

There is no intention that national policy be so developed as to restrict flexibility in the development of programs of teacher education, to hinder innovation, to limit opportunity to meet regional and local needs. Not at all. Rather, it is believed that a properly developed national policy provides a broad and effective framework within which efforts to improve teacher education would be facilitated.

2. Global Perspective

Early this year the International Council on Education for Teaching and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education published a joint statement entitled "a Global Perspective for Teacher Education." Included in the document is the following statement indicating for all nations the urgency of an educational system which develops in all whom it serves—children, youth, and adults—the knowledge and attitudes important to life in an interdependent world:

International education is the process by which people acquire a global perspective to explain events in recognition of increasing interdependence of nations and cultures. This understanding is essential to effective citizenship as well as ultimately, human survival.

If we accept the validity of this statement, then all who are involved in a redesign of teacher education must make certain that institutions responsible for teacher education have a commitment to international education as an integral and recognized aspect of their programs and that those whom they prepare as teachers, educational specialists, and administrators have the capacity, the understanding, and the will to develop in youth and adults knowledge and understanding that will help to bring about a world in which people live together in peace and harmony.

The report goes on to say:

International education should be a high priority of modern institutions of higher education and specifically for teacher education. The achievement of a global perspective demands a vision that transcends national and cultural differences. All humanity is a single species, on a single planet, sharing a common future. To mold this common future is today's educational imperative.

We suggest that all who are responsible for efforts to improve the education of teachers and others in leadership roles in our schools place a high priority on the global dimensions of teacher education.

3. Partnerships in Teacher Education Redesign

The redesign of teacher education should be a partnership effort involving all who have a stake in the educational process. Included should be the following: institutions of higher education, the government at both the executive and legislative levels, the schools, the teaching profession, and the public clientele. Among those who comprise the public clientele is the business-industrial community whose productivity is directly linked to the effectiveness of the educational system and the quality of the teachers who staff that system. The acceptance of the principle of a partnership that includes representatives of higher

education, the profession, the government, the private sector, and of the general public would appear to be a critical factor in the ultimate success of a major teacher education reform movement.

III. Guidelines for the Redesign Project

Below we suggest an approach that might be utilized in undertaking a national effort for the improvement and/or redesign of programs for the preparation of personnel for the education professions. It is not a prescription to be followed but rather points out what we believe to be the essential elements of such an effort. It is intended to be a design that is flexible and adaptable to various countries and cultures.

1. Planning the Redesign Project

It is clear that a major redesign of teacher education on a national scale requires careful and extensive planning. Successful outcomes are directly related to the nature and comprehensiveness of the planning effort, to appropriate flexibility as the need for changes in the plan become apparent, and to careful adherence to the plan until completion.

(1) A Partnership Effort. As stated earlier, planning for the redesign project should be a partnership effort involving all who have a stake in the educational process. Those who are to be partner should be identified in the earliest stages of planning and should be involved in the development of the master plan that will guide the redesign effort.

(2) Clarity of Purposes and Outcomes. Early on in the redesign project there should be developed a clear and definitive statement of the purposes of the task and the outcomes anticipated. It is obvious that the major goal is likely to be the improvement of the quality of teaching. However, it is important that there be clear directions delineating the specific outcomes sought and/or expected, e.g. university level training for all teachers, re-education of current teaching staff through a comprehensive training program, differentiated curricula for teachers at various levels and in various fields of specialization, advanced programs for the preparation of educational administrators and specialists, graduate level programs for the preparation of teacher educators, a plan for licensing professional education personnel, a process for evaluation and accreditation of teacher education programs, and others that are relevant and important.

(3) Identification of Issues and Problems. An important aspect of the planning process is the identification of issues and problems to be dealt with, including such matters as: relative roles, responsibilities, and authority of government, higher education, the schools, the profession, and the public in the organization and governance of teacher education; quality standards for selection and admission of candidates for teacher education and the profession; the financing of new and improved programs of teacher education; teacher tenure, remuneration, and professional status; continuing evaluation and improvement of whatever new programs are developed; the place of continued experimentation and innovation; flexibility for higher education institutions to develop their own models and to engage in continuing experimentation and research.

(4) Directing and Monitoring the Project. Essential to the success of the project is the designation of an agency to direct and monitor the entire range of tasks to be undertaken. This agency might be a ministry or department of education, a semi-autonomous research and development organization, or a new entity created specifically for the redesign effort.

In any case, it is important to define clearly the role, responsibility, and authority of such a body and to provide for continuous review and input from an advisory or governing council representing the constituent groups involved as partners. Of special importance is continuous liaison with both executive and legislative branches of the government since their ultimate support and approval will be needed for adoption of the reform proposals.

(5) Estimates of Staff, Time, and Costs. Once the major tasks to be accomplished have been determined, there must be careful estimates of the time span in years from initial planning to completion and implementation, of personnel requirements, of costs, and of sources of financial support.

2. Developing a Teacher Education Model

Central to the entire task of a redesign of teacher education is the development of a number of models, the field testing of these models, and a comparative evaluation of the different models under consideration. Recognizing that the development of teacher education models is an extensive, complex, and difficult task, it may be useful here to indicate the nature of the effort and the manner in which it may be undertaken.

(1) Flexibility and Adaptability. It would appear important in the task of model development to establish two criteria—flexibility and adaptability. To develop models that are rigid and inflexible and that permit little or no adaptation to local, regional, or national needs could make a program of teacher education ineffective and inappropriate for many populations. Cultural differences, regional or local economic conditions, ethnic backgrounds, and other factors are important in the development of primary and secondary school curricula and in turn have a relationship to the programs which are used to prepare teachers who implement these curricula.

(2) Identification of Resources. Cataloging the resources needed and available is an important early step in model construction. Among the essential resources are such items as the multinational literature of teacher education, descriptions of successful programs, case studies of major reform and redesign efforts on a national or regional scale, exemplary ongoing teacher education programs to be studied and observed first-hand, consultant services from leaders and scholars in the field of teacher education. The identification of a comprehensive array of such resources gives almost immediate access to the accumulated successful experience and research in teacher education throughout the world.

(3) Marks of Professional Competence. In the development of models of teacher education it is essential that there be a determination of the marks of professional competence to be sought as outcomes. These competency descriptions form the basis for the academic and professional programs and clinical experiences. While we do not here attempt to specify the competencies required, there does appear to be among teacher educators a consensus that they should include a liberal education, extensive knowledge and skill in the fields of study to be taught, professional knowledge and skills, and a commitment to continued professional growth. This catalog of qualifications is of course incomplete and must be supplemented by specific competencies relevant to successful performance in the setting in which the teacher is to work. A useful starting point in the development of a list of needed competencies is a review of the extensive literature on this topic that has been published in the last decade.

(4) Clinical Experiences. In the teaching profession, as in most other professions, some type of clinical experience or internship is an important element. Studies of successful

programs of teacher education and recommendations from experienced teacher educators suggest that clinical experience begin rather early in the period of professional study, that it include student teaching in a school setting under the direction of experienced teachers, that it continue as an internship following the completion of formal study, and that finally it become an integral aspect of the period of initial employment with careful supervision designed to provide appropriate induction into the profession.

(5) Institutional Environment. The environment in which teacher education occurs inevitably has an effect on those students who are planning to enter the teaching profession. It is important that the university or other institution in which teacher education occurs have a commitment to a program of high quality, a concern for the preparation of personnel for the education professions, an emphasis on research designed to bring new knowledge to the teaching task, and a willingness to develop cooperative relationships with the schools of the region as partners in the teacher education effort.

(6) In-Service Education. Any plan for teacher education redesign must include a plan for in-service education that will bring the qualifications of those already teaching up to the same standard that new entrants to the profession will have upon completion of the newly designed program. Such an in-service program should include not only teachers already in service at all levels, but also educational specialists and administrators, and should be designed to build effectively on prior education and experience. Furthermore, the in-service program should, in addition to upgrading professionals already in service, offer to all staff, current professionals and new entrants into the profession, a program of lifelong education that will make it possible for the schools to meet the needs and demands of a constantly changing world.

(7) Length of Teacher Education Programs. An important aspect of the development of new programs is the determination of the length of training periods essential to the preparation of education personnel with high levels of competence. Experience among nations that have had considerable involvement in teacher education programs suggests that the target goal should be a minimum of university level training for all teachers, with post-baccalaureate education for master teachers, and graduate level training for educational administrators and other specialists. It is recognized that such targets may not be a reasonable initial goal for some nations. However, if this is the case, an intermediate goal may be established with a plan to meet the suggested minimums for teachers and other personnel at such time as it becomes feasible.

(8) Field Testing. Once one or more models of teacher education programs have been developed, an essential next step is field testing, evaluation, and modification up to the implementation phase.

3. Implementation of the New Teacher Education Program

The implementation of the new program is of critical importance to the redesign process and represents an important step in the final determination of the nature of the new model or models. Those models that have been field tested are, in a sense, untried in the larger area of the total educational system. The care with which the implementation phase is developed, the attention to the many details of operation, the concern with the impact of the new program on professionals and public alike, the ability to anticipate problems and to be prepared to resolve them—all these and more must be given consideration.

(1) The Implementation Schedule. Initially, a number of decisions must be made concerning the nature of the implementation program. Shall it be established simultaneously throughout the entire country? Or shall it then be a phased implementation limited to certain institutions or certain regions with a gradual expansion over a period of years? If more than one model is to be used, what procedure shall be used to determine the location in which each program is to be implemented? In responding to these questions a number of factors must be considered: the readiness of institutions to undertake a new program, the capacity of regional schools to provide clinical practice facilities, the availability of trained professional personnel, and the adequacy of financial resources. All these are of critical importance in decisions concerning the nature, extent, and timing of implementation.

(2) Continuing Review and Evaluation. Although there have been extensive pilot operations and field testing, implementation is really an extension of these efforts. Whether the implementation is national or regional, complete or selective, continued efforts must be made to review, evaluate, and modify programs being implemented for the first time.

(3) Provision of Qualified Personnel. Necessary is a careful assessment of the availability of qualified personnel for the various roles required. Included are: leadership staff in government agencies, teaching and administration staff in higher education institutions, field staff for supervised clinical practice, and qualified personnel in the cooperating public schools. Once the appraisal of qualified staff has been undertaken, a training program should be developed to prepare needed new personnel or to upgrade those already in place but with less than the required competencies. In a country where there have been minimal requirements for entrance into the teaching profession and where the number of qualified professional teacher educators is limited, this may be one of the most critical and difficult tasks of implementation.

(4) Development of Instructional Materials. A high priority must be given to the development of instructional material for the teacher education program. Textbooks, monographs, reference materials, audio-visual materials, and other print and non-print materials must be in place at the outset. Any implementation will be greatly handicapped if outmoded materials or materials in inadequate supply are used to prepare and induct new professionals.

(5) Inaugurating the In-service Program. The in-service program should be inaugurated simultaneously with or even prior to the pre-service program. Through an upgrading and retraining of present staff the benefits of the new program can be realized even before the first graduates of the new program enter into their first teaching positions.

(6) A Public Information Program. Throughout the entire redesign effort and especially at the time of implementation, a public information program is most important. Failure to keep all publics informed—the government, the universities, the schools, the members of the profession, other partners in the enterprise, and the general public could have serious consequences. If full cooperation and support are desired, then all those involved and all clienteles must be informed at all times, must have the opportunity to voice both support and concern, and their voices, must be heard by those responsible for implementation and direction. Care must be taken to insure accuracy and realism in terms of anticipated outcomes. Extravagant promises not fulfilled can be damaging even to successful programs.

4. Organization and Administration of Teacher Education

Once a new program for the preparation of personnel for the education professions has been developed and is in place, there must be a structure that will provide for efficient operation and improvement and involvement of all those concerned. In a country where administration of education is located at the national level, administrative responsibility should probably be within a ministry of education or a similar unit of government. In countries where the responsibility for education rests at the state or provincial level, administration of teacher education may properly be decentralized but with some type of national coordination.

Those who have had experience in the operation of massive programs at the national or state or provincial level would probably suggest that efforts be made initially that the new program not add to the bureaucratic nature of government. It should not add another layer in the management of educational programs. It should, if possible, be made to fit into the structure of the current educational system. It should take into account, where applicable, the differing responsibilities of the national, provincial or state, and local governments. It should provide flexibility and innovation in operation without destroying the values of the new program.

Some additional matters that should be taken into consideration are stated briefly below.

(1) A Partnership Organization. Whatever the nature of the organizational structure, there should be appropriate provision for continued sharing and involvement on the part of all the groups previously mentioned as partners in the redesign of the teacher education program. This does not mean that all partners should have direct involvement in the operation of the program. Such a plan would be cumbersome and inappropriate. However, there is a suitable place for the existence and involvement of representative councils in advisory roles.

(2) Policy Development. Earlier in this paper the matter of a national policy for teacher education was mentioned. It is suggested that those responsible for administering the new teacher education program and the advisory councils should continue, even after the adoption of a national policy, to have responsibility for exploring and recommending further policy development and/or policy change.

(3) Financial Support. Financial support and adequate financial controls are an important key to the redesign and implementation of a new teacher education program. Regardless of care and economies planned, it is likely that a new and improved program will be more expensive than the prior program. To create a new and exciting program and to fail to support it adequately would not only be a severe handicap and possible waste of resources already used in the development of the project, but would probably create a skepticism and a lack of confidence in both the new program and in future efforts to improve education.

(4) Research and Evaluation. A major responsibility of the administrative authority in teacher education is that of developing and operating a research and evaluation program designed to continuously monitor the new program and to bring about modification and improvement. Such an effort should be concerned with both pre-service and in-service education for teachers and with advanced programs for administrators and education specialists. It should offer encouragement and support to higher education institutions and cooperating school systems to experiment with new and innovative ideas that hold

promise. Probably such a research and evaluation effort would be established at the national level and at the same time should cooperate with and provide support to local research and evaluation projects.

IV. A Concluding Statement

In this paper we have suggested an approach that might be utilized for national projects for the reform or redesign of program for the preparation of personnel for the education professions. The plan is one that is intended to be flexible and adaptable to the needs and conditions of various regions or countries. The decisions to undertake such an effort and the choice of guidelines for the development of the redesign effort must be made by those in responsibility and authority. However, the decision must, we believe, involve a genuine partnership of government, educational institutions, the education professions, the schools and the public. The effort, if it is to be successful, must be viewed as a major commitment to excellence in teaching and as a long time task that requires support and continued participation of those concerned with improving the quality of teaching and extending educational opportunity to all segments of society. *

Note

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