

CHAPTER 3

Work in Teacher Education: A Current
Assessment of U.S. Teacher Education

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Introduction

For quite some time I have been struck, bemused, and somewhat depressed by the parallels between my work at home and my work in teacher education.¹ At home my wife, Michele Seipp,

maintain a domestic life that nurtures and cares for our children,
keeps the house in working order, prepares food for the table

work and work again. The concept of work is not a simple one. It is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that has been the subject of much scholarly inquiry. In the context of teacher education, work is often understood as a process of learning and development that is shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which it takes place. This view of work as a social and cultural process challenges the traditional view of work as a neutral and objective activity. It suggests that work is always and necessarily political, and that it is through work that we learn about ourselves and the world around us. This perspective has important implications for teacher education, as it suggests that we should not only focus on the technical skills and knowledge that teachers need, but also on the social and cultural contexts in which they will be working. This means that teacher education should be a process of learning about the world, as well as a process of learning about the self. It should be a process of developing a critical consciousness that enables teachers to see the world as it is, and to work to change it. This is the work of teacher education, and it is a work that is never finished.

I first survey and summarize briefly the recent research documenting the obstacles in U.S. teacher education, focusing on qualitative distinctions between work in teacher education and the endeavor of doctoral education. Once I have established that tensions and problems exist in U.S. teacher education, I outline the central explanations proffered for these problems. Here I focus on the recent analyses of John Goodlad (1990), Nona Prestine (1991), Harry Judge (1982), and Milton Schwebel (1985).

"classed" system of labor in schools of education that harms, not engenders, the education of teachers.

In an historical examination of the University of Chicago's School of Education, Woodie White (1982) captures these features of professional life and notes trends that have persisted for the last sixty years. After examining Chicago's School of Education from the years 1909-1929, he summarized his findings in the following manner:

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These brief descriptive reports

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long for some very particular and, at times, immediate, responses. Some balance is needed and called for. In teacher education, training and reflection are required; and they are required in a manner that recognizes the place and importance of each component. In the preparation of teachers, there are issues to examine, skills and behaviors to develop, and norms and values to inspect. Research can contribute, but it is certainly not

experience tends to reject rather than utilize large portions of what went on before it.

For faculty members in teacher education, the levels of uncertainty and ambiguity are generally high and the rewards fairly low. Talking about teaching practice when one's experience tends to be dated (or nonexistent) is not the most comfortable or secure setting for instruction. Teacher education

carried on under fairly amicable and congenial conditions. Faculty members can usually indicate the number of graduate

institutional effort, but the truth of the matter is that it rarely "counts." Assistant professors are informed early on that

custom analysis. *Human Ecology* (1999) 17(1): 1-11

the university faculty "with its time-honored



men. It is recursive, time intensive, and frequently emotional labor. It seems "never-ending" and is emotionally taxing. Domestic labor includes the daily chores of cooking, cleaning (clothes, utensils, and living quarters), and, when children are present, caring for children. Caring for children entails clothing, feeding, educating, and loving them. The "feel" of domestic labor, in this age of the second shift, is work that has to be

need to view it relationally—not simply as tasks that are performed within the home. We need to see it as a production effort that occurs within a social relation. Trying to explain why standard economic accounts do not view housework as productive, Delphy maintains that the

... reason why housework is not considered to be productive and why it is not recognized as work is

is "women's work": It entails care for children and a type of emotional labor for which women are best suited. The argument

is that women know these situations best; they bring a natural talent to situations that require care and patience and an eternal belief in the goodness of the real world. Others simply argue

especially research-based schools, faculty are expected to teach and do "some" service. However, neither teaching nor service

are critically assessed. They rarely constitute the basis upon which people are hired, fired (except for egregious error of judgment) promoted, or financially rewarded. Research in the

many individuals, work around the home is considered a necessary evil, part of our "private lives." It certainly benefits those within the home who eat the meals, wear the clothes, and grow from the nourishment and care that are provided. Those who work in teacher education programs most probably

cannot be excised. Teaching elementary and secondary students is certainly emotional labor, and preparing those individuals to teach at the elementary and secondary level is the closest one gets at the university to the life of the "real" teacher.

There are also parallels between the conundrums and

dominant images of dance. He urged his companions to alter _____ home. When Michele and I have hung on to our empty minds

earner outside the home and a worker and parent inside the home. The variety of the demands seems far reaching and the number unending.¹⁶ When I look around and see colleagues and friends who have eliminated or simplified either their professional or their domestic lives, I can get envious and resentful. My resentment and envy kicks in when my colleagues

lately I have been struggling to find a vantage point that will balance my own desires and deal with some rather strong emotional and intellectual currents; unfortunately, I do not have a clear, resolute vision of what constitutes that perspective. I have had to realize that I need to make some choices about the kind of labor I will perform when I will perform certain types of

changes" in women that tend to keep them in subservient situations. She explains that in the acts of caregiving women are affirmed in some ways and diminished in others. But what goes

experience, or elementary and secondary teachers who are on leave from their schools or on loan to the university for teacher education. The disempowerment that Bartky speaks of—

teacher education tends over time to reduce

agreements to include provisions for any later reversals of

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I doubt the knocks will not be answered. I could be, and I hope I am, wrong. But it seems that while changes in the landscape of teacher education and schools of education are likely, it is difficult to discern the direction and directors of that change.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Michael Dale, Phil DiStefano, Margaret Eisenhart, Ernie House, Ken Howe, Bill McGinley, Pat McQuillan, Ofelia M. ...

"Traditions of Reform in U.S. Teacher Education" in Liston and Zeichner (1990).

10. See Goodlad's discussion that follows on page 152 of his book.

11. For an extended analysis of teaching as work, see Connell (1985).

12. For many people in the U.S., the phrase "domestic labor" has an odd ring to it. Frequently, when I use the term people unfamiliar with labor analysis cock their heads trying to figure out what is being said and what type of picture is being drawn. In addition to this lack of familiarity, the problem is compounded by the fact that the literature on domestic labor is not wildly extensive. It certainly exists and MacKinnon (1989) highlights some of it; however, it is not that extensive.

13. See Hochschild (1989) for further discussion and analysis of

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