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Review Essay

The Rocky Road to Reform in Teacher Education

John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik, eds. *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, 340 pp.

John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik, eds. *Places Where Teachers Are Taught*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, 411 pp.

John I. Goodlad. *Teachers For Our Nation's Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, 411 pp.

In 1908, the Carnegie Foundation asked Abraham Flexner to make an evaluation of the 155 Schools of Medicine then existing in the United States and Canada. Flexner visited each school and rated it according to quality of instruction, facilities, curriculum, financial stability, and priorities. He was severely critical of what he found almost everywhere except in a few universities, such as Johns Hopkins University, which followed the German pattern of rigorous scientific training.

In 1910, when the Flexner Report was published, the results were immediate and dramatic. Some of the shabbier institutions, which accepted students straight out of high school and gave them M.D. degrees after only one or two years, were forced to close. Others began extensive revision of their policies and curricula. Admission standards were raised and faculties upgraded. Medical schools became more closely associated with universities, as well as with hospitals. The quality of medical care improved; the prestige of physicians rose dramatically.

In 1950, when Flexner was in his eighties, an official of the Ford Foundation asked him whether a Flexner Report on teacher education might get similar results. Flexner was dubious. He pointed out that the number of colleges preparing teachers was ten times the number of medical schools, and that no one investigator could visit them all. While the goal of medicine is to keep people alive and well as long as possible, the goals of education are more diverse and have not been agreed upon. Although it is agreed that

medicine rests upon a foundation of anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry, the foundations of pedagogy are much less clear. The meager results of all the waves of critical attention that have engulfed the schools since 1950 seem to justify Flexner's judgment.

This criticism has provided endless copy for the press. The repeated charges that schools have become a disaster area have alarmed parents and have lowered the morale of teachers, who find it difficult to take pride in their profession when they read in the evening papers that the schools are failing and teachers are incompetent. (American teachers who are troubled by all the criticism might find solace in learning that they are not alone. An editorial in *The Economist* [August 18, 1990, p. 15] says, "The English are simply no good at education. England provides a smaller proportion of its population with higher education than Korea and allows a higher proportion to drop out of school than any other European community except Portugal. In tests of mathematical proficiency, British children lag by as much as two years behind young Germans and Japanese. And school leavers who hope to repair the damage by taking vocational training will find that that system, too, is a mess.")

The only legitimate purpose of criticism is to stimulate reform. Is there any evidence that forty years of criticism of American schools has led to an improvement in educational quality? If we are to believe the criticism of recent years, the answer seems to be a firm NO—the quality of education has continued to decline. In 1985, the authors of *A Nation At Risk* repeated many of the charges leveled thirty years earlier by critics such as Arthur Bestor, Mortimer Smith, Bernard Iddings Bell, Mortimer Adler, Rudolph Flesch, and Admiral Hyman Fickover (without giving the earlier writers any credit) and then concluded, "A rising tide of mediocrity in the schools is threatening the security of the nation."

Educators can, of course, cite examples of recent improvements in some schools, but if there is any truth to the charge that there has been little overall improvement, it may be because the critics have had much less familiarity with the nation's schools than Flexner had with the medical schools. While Flexner had visited every medical school, most of the critics of education had visited only a few located in one small region. Most had never been inside a teachers' college. Their proposals for reform have been too vague to be of value.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, which wrote *A Nation at Risk*, was more broadly based. The eighteen members came from different parts of the country and from many walks of life. But although it was called a "Blue Ribbon Committee" by the press, most of the ribbons had not been awarded for their intimate knowledge of the schools or of the nature of teacher education. The lone public school teacher in the group must have been overwhelmed by the prestige of all the CEOs, university presidents,

science professors, governors, and school board members sitting around the table with him. Representatives of colleges of education were conspicuous by their absence. Most members of the commission were unfamiliar with the complexities of educational statistics. They just accepted the statistics and test scores handed to them without evaluation or interpretation. It was inevitable that such a group would make blunders, when they attempted to evaluate the quality of education being received by 50 million children taught by 2.4 million public school teachers in the schools of 50 states, each with its own system of education.

The authors of the three books under review do not make the errors of interpretation committed by previous critics, because they are insiders. They have taught in a wide variety of schools and colleges all across the nation. John Goodlad is the quintessential professional educator. He has taught at every level from the first grade through graduate school. His Ph.D. in Education is from the University of Chicago. From 1967 to 1983, he was dean of the College of Education at the University of California: Los Angeles. In 1989-1990, he was president of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, a post that continued to bring him into contact with leaders in the field.

In 1985, Goodlad recruited Kenneth Sirotnik and Roger Soder as colleagues in creating and naming the Center for Educational Renewal, located at the University of Washington in Seattle. These three books are the most recent results of that collaboration.

The Moral Dimensions of Teaching may seem a surprising title for a book published in 1990, but it would not have surprised our ancestors. Plutarch said, "The very spring and root of honesty and virtue lie in good education." John Locke said, "It is virtue...which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education." Even as recently as the nineteenth century, educators never doubted that teaching has a moral dimension.

The twentieth-century acceptance of relativism, with its rejection of absolutes, has led many educators to believe that they have no right to make value judgments—that they should just present the facts and let children make their own judgments. Even teachers of courses in sex education seem reluctant to make moral judgments—even to point out the obvious fact that a boy who spawns a child has some moral responsibility for the welfare of that child, regardless of whether he was married to the mother.

The editors of *Moral Dimensions* reject that permissive view. In their preface they say:

Teaching the young has a moral dimension simply because education—a deliberate effort to develop values and modes of behavior as well as skill—is a moral endeavor.... All cultures seek to ensure that the young will learn whatever values, rituals, skills and modes of behavior are deemed to

be in the best interest of the group or the whole.... In the United States, this is done primarily through a system of compulsory schooling...until the Twentieth century the goals set for this system had far more to do with educating the young for economic and civic responsibility than with educating them for personal development and freedom.

This statement sets the tone for the entire book.

In addition to the three editors, six other professors of education and a free-lance writer contribute chapters: Barry Bull, Christopher Clark, Walter Feinberg, Gary Fenstermacher, Hugh Sockett, Kenneth Strike, and Bruce Thomas.

On first reading the title of this book, any reader is certain to ask, "What are the moral dimensions of teaching?" Sirotnik, in his concluding chapter, comes closest to an answer, when he asks, "What could be more central to education generally and to public schooling particularly than moral commitments to inquiry, knowledge, competence, caring and social justice?" But are knowledge and competence really moral dimensions? Samuel Johnson observed, "Knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." A safe-cracker may be highly competent at what he does. Caring and social justice are better examples.

Perhaps because of the inevitable ambiguity of the word "moral," most of these writers seem to talk around the subject instead of coming to grips with it. But each has something significant to contribute: Fenstermacher says that teachers may serve as moral agents and moral educators in any of three ways: by teaching morality directly—telling children what they ought to do, by teaching about morality in courses in comparative religions, civics, or sex education, or they may undertake moral education by acting morally—as models to be emulated. Of these three, Fenstermacher much prefers the third. "Neither of the first two forms has the potential to shape and influence student conduct in such educationally productive ways as the third."

Feinberg offers a critical evaluation of the moral implications of recent books, such as Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*, and E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*. Strike discusses the legal and moral implications of widely divergent cases, such as teachers who are members of the Ku Klux Klan and those who are practicing homosexuals.

To me, the most interesting chapter is Soder's, "The Rhetoric of Teacher Professionalization"—a chapter that would stand alone as a superb article in a professional journal, but seems a bit out of place in this book, because it goes far beyond the moral dimension and discusses many other aspects of professionalism.

Places Where Teachers Are Taught is a brief history of teacher education in the United States, based on case histories of twenty-nine institutions, which members of the team had visited. In the public category,

they selected four major research universities, five major comprehensive universities, and seven regional universities, which have grown out of normal schools and teachers' colleges. In the private category, they chose five major universities, four regional universities, and four liberal arts colleges.

In their introduction, and again in the final chapter, the editors comment on "four recurring themes that appear to be common across institutional and state contexts":

- loss of identity accompanying the shift to research orientation,
- the search for prestige,
- the intrusion of external forces, and
- market competition.

The shift to research orientation that began a century ago, when Johns Hopkins University, University of Chicago, and other American universities began imitating German universities, is now extending itself into liberal arts colleges and the universities that were once teachers' colleges. This makes it increasingly difficult to use the promotion process for rewarding superior teaching and encourages professors to neglect their teaching in order to have more time for research. (I might add that it results also in a great deal of the trivial research that clogs our libraries.)

The search for prestige is a closely related theme. Administrators, as well as faculty members, know that the status of an institution within the community of scholars rests much more on published research than on quality of teaching. The intruding forces come from within the university as well as from the outside. Competition within the university is for resources, faculty positions, space, and a decent place at the high table. Institutions also compete with each other.

In their concluding chapter, titled, "Beyond Reinventing The Past: The Politics of Teacher Education," Soder and Sirotnik reexamine the "Enduring Themes" and then offer a list of proposals for strategic action:

Schools of Education...must lay claim to their rightful share of the higher education pie...must create their own rules, grounded in the multidisciplinary nature of education...must take the lead in forming a coalition of professional schools within the university...(and) must demonstrate that there is, indeed, something in the idea of pedagogy through their development of exemplary programs in preparing teachers, administrators, and other educators...they must provide pedagogical training for university instructional staff (other professors and teaching assistants) to put to rest any lingering notions that all one has to know to teach is one's subject matter.

These are high aspirations, difficult to achieve in any university. While I

personally agree that college teachers could profit from some knowledge of educational psychology and of the history of education, it surely will be difficult to convince research professors of that fact. Perhaps a really outstanding professor of education, who has already gained the confidence of academic scholars in other fields, should make the attempt with a closely reasoned essay in *The American Scholar*, or *Science*. If the essay is placed in a journal of education, it will be read only by other educators and will accomplish nothing.

Anyone interested in the history of higher education will find these case histories fascinating, even if he or she has no interest in teacher education. They reveal the vast complexity and variety of higher education in these United States.

Teachers For Our Nation's Schools is based on the findings of an in-depth study of 29 of the 1300 colleges in the United States, that prepare teachers for the public school. Because they had been promised anonymity, the colleges are not named. We are not told whether they are the schools, whose histories were recorded in the previous book, *Places Where Teachers Are Taught* (where they are named), but they are drawn from the same categories.

Information was gathered from interviews, observations, and documents, and from responses to questionnaires returned by 3,000 students and 1,217 faculty members. This adds up to an enormous amount of data.

In the course of his discussion of findings, Goodlad offers many observations that are well worth quoting:

Throughout the history of our public educational system, making sure that we had enough teachers has taken precedence over making sure that we had good ones.

The designation of schools as a major, if not the major, instrument in solving our social and economic problems is unrealistic and dysfunctional. Schools can only educate.

The sure way to fail at educational reform is to ask of schools what they cannot do. Schools are only part of the educational system. They can only supplement homes, religious institutions, and all the rest.

Throughout their studies, the investigators found evidence of what Goodlad calls "prestige deprivation"—the fact that professors of education and the courses they teach are scorned by academic professors outside their discipline, and sometimes by students. Although most violent in the research universities, where "education" is near the bottom of the totem pole, this prejudice can be found throughout academe. It should be traced to its roots in order that these roots may be eradicated.

Even where the bias is most rampant, one often finds one professor of education who rises above it—when I was a graduate student at Ohio State, Boyd Bode was such a man. He often was invited to sit in on the doctoral orals of students in other disciplines because of his breadth of knowledge and acknowledged wisdom. Case histories of such individuals might reveal how they differ from other professors of education, and offer a clue as to the solution.

Goodlad offers a list of nineteen "Postulates," each opening with "Problems for the education of educators must...." He refuses to list specific courses to be required, and says that there already has been too much of this from accrediting agencies. Instead of a brief summary of conclusions and recommendations, his concluding chapter is a 70-page fictional account of the college of education he would like to see emerge between now and the year 2000.

In this utopian institution, all freshmen and sophomores planning to become teachers will enroll in seminars titled, "Introduction to Teaching." These groups of no more than fifteen will visit schools in the community and then come together for social gatherings and panel discussions. Thus, the student will become a member of a cohort group that will reinforce his interest in teaching, Goodlad says, since "Many freshman have planned for years to become teachers, the socialization process cannot begin too soon." He adds, "Most of the students in our sample were strongly committed to teaching as a first career choice. Most had been criticized by friends, family members, and even teachers and professors for making this choice." If all professional courses are postponed until graduate school, they may lose interest in teaching. The more formal professional program will begin in the junior year.

Educators, such as the Holmes group, as well as those who have supported the Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) programs, surely will object that this early introduction of professional studies leaves insufficient time for liberal education and subject-matter mastery. But what Goodlad has in mind is a college in which liberal education and professional preparation are so thoroughly intertwined, that no line exists between them. His utopian college "seeks to combine the ideal teachers' college with the ideal liberal arts college." Every academic professor will teach in such a way as to offer a model for excellent teaching of his subject. Every teacher of educational psychology, or of the history and philosophy of education, will contribute to the student's liberal education. The most significant characteristic of the plan, "...is a unified faculty embracing the several parts of a teacher education program. Its members are responsible for the whole; there is no other group to blame for deficiencies and shortcomings."

Half a century ago, these were the goals of some of the best of our small

colleges of education. (I began my college teaching in such a college in Bellingham, in 1939.) Such single-purpose teachers' colleges are long gone and cannot serve as models for the twenty-first century, but perhaps we should take a closer look at the Teachers' Universities in China to see how others are approaching the same goal.

If I were planning a college, such as Goodlad has in mind, I would recruit people like Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov for my science teachers, Leonard Bernstein for my music teacher, Lawrence Cremin or Diane Ravitch to teach the history of education, and someone like William James to teach both educational psychology and the philosophy of education. (I assume that I would have a multimillion dollar grant from the Ford Foundation.) These men and women have demonstrated knowledge of both what to teach and how to teach it effectively.

Perhaps all this is just an idle dream, but let us dream on. Something good just might come of it.

Reading this book has led me to one conclusion that Goodlad may or may not have intended: a major research university, which is striving to become "world class," is a poor place for a young man or woman who wants to teach in a public school. The entire environment is hostile to teacher education. Classmates who are planning to become lawyers, physicians, or business executives will look down on anyone content to accept the modest salary of a teacher. Academic professors will be scornful of professors of education and will say to students, "You are too bright to be a teacher." And the professors of education in such a university, who have been selected for their research talents, rather than for talent as teachers, will be rapidly shifting their attention away from beginning teachers to those who want to get out of the classroom and into administrative offices.

A candidate for teaching will find a more congenial environment in one of the less prestigious regional universities which have grown out of teachers' colleges and still take pride in preparing teachers for the public schools. But these, too, fall short of Goodlad's goal.

Although the style used and the choice of publishers suggest that these three books are intended for professional educators, it is to be hoped that they also will be read by boards of regents, state and national legislators, editorial writers, and other opinion makers who play a role in determining the future of educational policy.