

UPDATE: THE AGENDA FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY PROJECT

Robert Pines

Two years ago, Montclair State and the fifteen school districts which constitute its "Clinical Schools Network" were selected as one of eight original pilot sites in the nation for John Goodlad's "Agenda for Teacher Education in a Democracy" project. The project, which seeks the simultaneous renewal of teacher education and the schools in accordance with a series of presuppositions or "postulates," is directed by the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington. It is also sponsored by the Education Commission of the States and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Since its inception in 1987, the Clinical Schools Network has been supported by our Institute for Critical Thinking. The Network incorporates the theme "teaching for critical thinking" as a distinctive and consistent vision of teaching and learning upon which to construct a program for both the preparation and professional development of teachers.

Our approach to Goodlad's reform agenda was initially organized around the work of three task forces which my colleague (Dean of the School of Professional Studies) Nick Michelli charged with respectively addressing (a) the status, prestige, understanding and structure of teacher education at Montclair State, (b) the collaboration between the College and the public schools, especially the urban schools, and (c) curricular and faculty renewal. Each issue was inspired by a combination of Goodlad's postulates. The task forces were constituted by almost 75 persons who represented our arts and sciences and professional education faculty members, our school-based or clinical adjunct faculty, administrators from our Clinical Schools Network, our undergraduate and graduate certification candidates and the Department of Higher Education. Dean Michelli also established and has chaired a steering committee to oversee the Goodlad project. Its membership includes our Associate Provost, Dr. Greg Waters, Dean Vaughn Vandegrift, Dr. Bob Perlett of the Parsippany-Troy Hills school district, Dr. Mark Weinstein of the Institute for Critical Thinking and myself.

On the occasion of John Goodlad's visit to Montclair State last spring and his commencement address to the graduating class, the chairs of the three task forces reported on the completion of their assignments. In turn, those reports inspired the next phase of our work, which took place during four all-day meetings this January. Fifty persons representing the task force constituencies and two of John Goodlad's senior associates in the Center for Educational Renewal, considered the implementation of the task force recommendations which, for purposes of examination, were organized around five issues. They were:

- (a) Enrollment Management: Shaping the student body through the admissions process,
- (b) Restructuring the Teacher Education Program to culminate with a "Professional Year,"
- (c) Extending the Professional Development School model,
- (d) Examining the governance of the Teacher Education Program and
- (e) Revising curricula in undergraduate and graduate-level professional education programs to reflect a commitment to teaching for critical thinking, the moral dimensions of teaching, enculturating students into a political and social democracy and promoting stewardship of best practice in the schools.

Each issue was examined from the perspective of a series of questions which the working groups were requested to specifically address. Thus, for example, the group which focussed on the admissions process in teacher education considered how aspects of it could be standardized across all of the academic majors in which students seek certification. The possible restructuring of the Teacher Education Program around a "Professional Year" was considered from the standpoint of scheduling considerations and course credit allocation. Those who were asked to make decisions about the extension of the Professional Development School model within the Clinical Schools Network were first asked to define the PDS concept with respect to its objectives, organizational patterns and programmatic elements. Curricular revision with respect to critical thinking, moral obligation, enculturation and stewardship, was analyzed with specific reference to the GER, major, and professional sequence courses in which those issues are presently emphasized or should be included. Related pedagogical decisions in connection with "best practice" were also discussed, as they are currently being made, for example, in the courses "Teaching for Critical Thinking," "Teacher, School and Society" and "Teaching of Physical Education."

At a culminating plenary session, the several working groups summarized the challenges they had confronted and the decisions they had made in connection with the particular issue they had addressed. Those decisions, as they will be formally reported to the steering committee of the project and others on campus and in the Clinical School Network, will inform both changes within our Teacher Education Program and a schedule for implementation.

[See Inquiry (8:2), October '91, for more on the Goodlad Postulates and implementation of his educational renewal ideas on our campus. -Ed.]
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