

The Work of Teaching and the Challenge for Teacher Education

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American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
61st Annual Meeting • Chicago, IL
February 7, 2009

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Core argument

- We urgently need to improve all students' opportunities and learning.
- This requires skillful teaching.
- Teaching is intricate work, and not natural, and needs to be learned and, hence, taught.
- Seeing teaching as skilled, high-precision work, that is not a matter of personal style and preference, is to acknowledge its professional nature, not to repudiate its "creativity."
- We need a reliable system of preparing many ordinary people for expert practice.

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The case for detail in teaching practice

1. Teaching is intricate work: inefficient to develop by chance and through individual experience
2. Detailing the work of teaching can give credibility to the level of skill involved in doing it
3. Much about teaching is predictable
4. The scale of the occupation: many people must teach; need to provide equitable opportunities to learn: how to do this reliably

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Toward a curriculum and pedagogy for teaching practice

1. Focus on "high leverage" resources for practice
   - Decide on the core **practices** beginners should master
   - Choose the core **content knowledge needed for teaching** (topics, skills, ways of working and thinking)
   - Identify **professional and practical foundations** that orient teachers' role and practice
2. Design system of professional pedagogies
   - Close modeling, training, coaching, study of records of practice
   - In virtual, designed, and real school settings
3. Develop system of practice-centered assessments for entry, progress, key transitions, and exit, keyed to practice that impacts pupil learning

(Ball, Sleep, Boerst, & Bass, 2009; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, & Shahan, 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009)

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Challenges of centering teacher education on practice

1. Widely held view of teaching as uncertain, artistic, and unable to be specified
   - Resistance to seeing teaching as high-precision work, requiring high levels of skill
   - View of detail as "prescriptive" and as de-skilling professional work
2. Lack of an adequate knowledge base about teaching practice
   - Inadequate language (in English)
   - Difficulty parsing the work into basic elements
3. No common K-12 curriculum in the U.S. and lack of agreement about what to make coreProblem of expertise and tacit knowledge
4. Lack of people prepared to teach practice
   - Unspecified professional group, with no preparation for the work
5.

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Resources for centering teacher education in practice

- Our past history of microteaching and competency-based teacher education
  - Analyze similarities and differences
  - Integrate subject matter knowledge for teaching, skills, discretionary adaptation and judgment
- Progress made on content knowledge for teaching
- Other professions (Grossman)
  - Developing an agreed-upon curriculum of practice
  - Broadening idea of "clinical" and ways to structure and support it
  - Attention to relational work

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Summary

We need a system of initial and continuing teacher education that can reliably help prepare ordinary people for effective professional practice in teaching.

- Doing that requires
  - Basing teacher education on the *work of teaching*;
  - Focusing developmentally on the highest-leverage practices;
  - Emphasizing the *performance of teaching* in the curriculum and in assessments.

This must draw on past accomplishments and progress. But it will also require significant change.

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