

Goodlad, John I. *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

John Goodlad's most recent book, *Teachers for our Nation's Schools* has received extensive pre-publication and post-publication coverage. Therefore, rather than provide another general review of the book, this review examines aspects of Goodlad's book that are related specifically to the preparation of elementary school teachers.

# Teachers for Our Nation's Schools: Implications for Elementary Education

David W. VanCleaf

In this book, Goodlad critically examines the quality and effectiveness of our nation's teacher education programs. After briefly describing the historical and social context of teacher education programs, he describes 19 postulates necessary for the preparation of effective teachers. Much of the remaining portion of the text contains anecdotal information and conclusions emerging from his study of 29 of our nation's teacher preparation programs.

The 19 postulates, subdivided into four groups, are essential presuppositions "providing direction without confining the options" (p. 303). The first group focuses on the need for teacher education programs that enjoy a secure, semiautonomous existence within its higher education institution. The second set, which consists of a single postulate, asserts that teacher preparation programs should be "centers of pedagogy" with their own authority, budget, faculty, curriculum, and means for student recruitment and selection. The third set of postulates describe essential program standards and outcome statements for teacher preparation programs. The fourth group of postulates outline the role of the states in governing teacher preparation programs.

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## Book Review

Goodlad's primary conclusion is that we are not preparing the type of teachers that are capable of making needed improvements in our nation's elementary and secondary schools. Goodlad uses two analogies to illustrate this conclusion. First, our educational system is compared to a train that is derailed. Before improving the performance of the train, workers must get the train on the correct track. Similarly, he suggests that our educational system is derailed, but adds that our teacher education programs are not preparing individuals with the abilities needed to improve the quality of the educational system.

The second analogy compares the preparation of teachers today with the process of preparing physicians early in the 20th century. The typical practice of preparing physicians was proprietary apprenticeship processes in which prospective physicians, who were often near-illiterate, attended proprietary schools and worked with mentor physicians who had been trained in a similar manner. Apprentice physicians seldom had access to cadavers, learned primarily through didactic instruction, and had limited induction into the full care and treatment of patients (Flexner, 1910). To improve teacher preparation, preservice teachers must be literate, they must be engaged in a well articulated program of general education courses, they must be trained by professionals who model expected behaviors and methods, and they must be provided numerous opportunities to interact with students and professional educators within the full context of the school setting.

Goodlad identified several key problems that have a direct impact on the preparation of effective elementary teachers. An understanding of these problems is a necessary prerequisite to improving our nation's elementary schools.

Many of the current problems emerge from the structure and level of support institutions of higher education provide for their teacher preparation programs. For example, the quality of teacher preparation programs is affected by the prevailing reward structure in most institutions of higher education. Although faculty are supposed to be evaluated in the areas of teaching, research, and service, the primary emphasis has shifted to research. Faculty members working for tenure and faculty members striving for merit pay increases often spend more time and effort pursuing research activities than improving their teaching. Since teaching is not rewarded as readily as research, prospective teachers often do not receive the quality of teaching necessary for their preparation.

The university pecking order places faculty dealing with academic ideas and preparing high paid professionals on a higher level than faculty members preparing teachers. As a result, teacher education faculty members and their departments receive relatively low status within the higher education setting. This usually contributes to lower levels of monetary support for teacher education programs.

Goodlad also criticized the curriculum requirements for preservice teachers. The preservice preparation programs have poorly conceived curricula that fail to provide their students with the academic background necessary to understand the role of education in a democratic society. As a result, they are sending newly certified teachers into schools who will conform to existing practices. The poorly designed curriculum also fails to prepare the preservice teacher to function as a change agent. The new teacher can teach well in a traditional sense, but is not prepared to assist in the improvement process.

Goodlad identified the need to attract more members from minority groups. He stated that preservice teacher preparation programs are competing with other professions

for individuals who are well prepared for the academic challenges of higher education. However, he indicated that we could expand the field of qualified applicants by offering tutorial and remedial programs that would help intelligent yet academically underprepared members of minority groups develop prerequisite abilities.

While we commit relatively few dollars to the education of preservice teachers, Goodlad pointed out that we train too many people who are not committed to becoming practicing teachers. These individuals either do not seek jobs as teachers, or they quickly leave the profession. If one considers how much is spent to educate the proportionately small number of individuals who are committed to teaching, the cost of preparing teachers is excessive. Goodlad suggested recruiting committed individuals, even if they need remedial help, and closing the doors to those who cannot demonstrate a commitment.

Teacher education units on campuses are also contributing to the preparation of less than adequately prepared teachers. Goodlad found that many teacher preparation programs did not provide sufficient experiences for the students in school settings. Students typically learned about teaching in the college classrooms and did not have opportunities to apply the newly learned ideas in elementary classrooms. Student teaching was often the first significant contact preservice teachers had with children.

Perhaps the most troubling problem is the practice of placing student teachers with unqualified cooperating teachers. Cooperating teachers are seldom selected because they have philosophies and practices that support the teacher preparation program. As a result, student teachers are placed with cooperating teachers who have little understanding of their roles nor the direction needed to ensure optimal student teacher development. Teacher education units must work with local schools and their teachers to develop a cadre of model cooperating teachers.

The student teaching experience and the first year of teaching have been described as period in which the preservice and beginning teachers learn to conform to traditional practice. While the lack of criteria used to select cooperating teachers contributes to this, two other factors also contribute. First, most institutions provide little follow-up support for their graduates. Graduates, once hired, are expected to utilize ideas taught in the college classroom with no support from the teacher preparation program.

Second, preservice teachers need to observe and practice newly learned skills in exemplary school settings, however there is a lack of exemplary programs. One can reasonably ask, How can we train people to become effective teachers if model programs are not available? Again, teacher education units must provide support throughout the induction process.

The negative impact of state regulatory agencies and state legislative bodies also contributes to the poor quality of elementary teacher preparation programs. States have approved emergency and alternative certification programs as a means of circumventing the teacher preparation process. Short-cut programs provide opportunities for individuals to enter the profession who lack knowledge of how to teach, who have little understanding of the challenges of teaching in a democratic society, and who do not know how to work with other professionals to improve schools. Alternative certification options demean the role of the teacher

and minimize the challenges inherent in being an effective teacher.

As you begin reading Goodlad's book, you might consider the characteristics of effective teachers described by Lee Shulman (1987). Shulman stated that effective teachers must have an understanding of the content they teach and they must be able to transform their knowledge of this content in ways that are appropriate for their students. Further, to be effective in the dynamic, complex classroom environment, teachers must make reasoned decisions as they plan, teach, and reflect on the effectiveness of their efforts.

Elementary teachers are unique because they are essentially teachers of the arts and sciences. As such they need an extensive background in the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, and the natural sciences. Effective elementary teachers also need an extensive repertoire of teaching methods that will enable them to communicate their knowledge in ways that are appropriate for their students. And, elementary teachers must continuously reflect on their instructional effectiveness. Goodlad's anecdotal observations indicate that preservice preparation programs do not require students to take a well articulated set of general education courses in the arts and sciences. Further, students are not provided opportunities to communicate their knowledge and apply newly learned practices in elementary classroom settings.

Before elementary teachers can get elementary education on the correct track, they must receive a better preparation. They must have an understanding of the subject matter and they must possess an extensive repertoire of methods for sharing their knowledge to their students. Further, they must understand the nature of the challenges they encounter and critically examine current practices as well as possible solutions.

Goodlad's book presents few new ideas; the problems have been identified by others. However, Goodlad's book has made two important contributions to the current rhetoric about school reform, particularly for the preparation of effective elementary teachers. He reinforces the need for improvements in the teacher education programs and he provides insights missing from other reform-minded publications. It is now up to institutions of higher education to provide the resources necessary to support their teacher education programs. It is the responsibility of preservice teacher education units to examine their programs and improve the quality of the curriculum, the models they provide through their teacher faculty, and the types of professional field experiences necessary for preservice teachers. While Goodlad recommends leaving the specific means of addressing most of these problems to well-qualified faculty and administrators, institutions of higher education are unable to single-handedly improve the quality of teachers. Public schools, state governing bodies, and the public must share in efforts to improve the preparation of teachers.

## References

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- Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1-22.