

HOW DOES TEACHER EDUCATION NEED TO CHANGE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF AMERICA'S SCHOOLS AT THE START OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

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Gross, Martin. (1999). *The Conspiracy of Ignorance: The Failure of American Public Schools*. (291 pages). New York: HarperCollins. \$25.00

Shen, Jianping. (1999). *The School of Education: Its Mission, Faculty, and Reward Structure*. (161 pages). New York: Peter Lang. \$34.95

Jacobson, Stephen L., Emihovich, Catherine, Helfrich, Jack, Petrie, Hugh G., and Stevenson, Robert B. (1998). *Transforming Schools and Schools of Education: A Vision for Preparing Educators*. (143 pages). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. \$22.95

A new mission for public education has been defined during the last part of the 20th century. Spurred by the erosion of the United States' ability to compete in international markets, task force after task force outlines new educational goals designed to create the highly skilled labor force necessary for the 21st century.

If our standard of living is to be maintained, if growth of a permanent underclass is to be averted, if democracy is to function effectively in the new century, our schools must graduate the vast majority of their students with achievement levels long thought possible for only the privileged few. The American mass education system, designed in the early part of the [20th] century for a mass-production economy, will not succeed unless it not only raises but also redefines the essential standards of excellence and strives to make quality and equality of opportunity compatible with each other. (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986, p. 3)

At the same time that academic standards become more demanding, the sociocultural, economic, and political contexts influencing

education are becoming more complex. Our K-12 population is becoming increasingly diverse. It is expected that in the year 2000, one out of every three Americans will be a member of a minority group, and children from minority groups will actually constitute the majority of enrollment in 23 of the largest 25 U.S. cities. Moreover, by 2020, minority students will comprise 46% of the national student population (Holmes Group, 1995). English is a second language for many of the students coming to schools, and the cultural norms of these students and their teachers differ. Large numbers—7.1 million—of our children live in poor communities. In 1995, 20.2% of all students and 42% of African American students were living below the poverty level (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1997; Neisler, 1999). The mission of public education is further influenced by social and political movements occurring in American society such as policy that favors equity in educational opportunity by ethnicity, gender, and ability/disability. The new mission of public education is to educate a cross-section of children, many of whom would previously have dropped out, and to bring them up to world-class standards using complex teaching strategies and curricula that are not only motivational, but that connect to the real lives and needs of all students.

To educate all students, teachers need new skills. As a diverse student body redefines normative learning, new teaching skills are required for a teaching force that is homogene-



ous in many social, economic, and political regards. These teachers must learn to teach in ways that are not normative for them. The Holmes Group (1995) explains that "understanding and respecting differences across socioeconomic status, values, communication styles, norms, languages and dialects are important to students' learning and development. Educators in the most pluralistic society . . . cannot be without such knowledge" (p. 41). There are numerous responses to the need for teachers to teach in new ways that respond to the new mission. Egbert emphasizes that content must be taught differently; it must be integrative, flexible, and interdisciplinary. And Ravitch (U.S. Department of Education, 1993) calls for complicated algebra-, geometry-, calculus-, and physics-based problem solving. She concludes that we are in a new phase of American education where we expect all students to learn, as we have not done in the past. Based on only these examples, it is clear that schools of education must change to align with the new mission (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Holmes Group, 1995; Judge, 1982; Kramer, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

Because teacher expertise contributes significantly to variances in K-12 student achievement (Grant & Murray, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997), it is logical that reform in teacher education continues to be hotly debated. Hence, three new books contribute to this conversation. In *The Conspiracy of Ignorance*, *The School of Education*, and *Transforming Schools and Schools of Education*, Gross; Shen; and Jacobson, Emihovich, Helfrich, Petrie and Stevenson respectively offer suggestions for the reform of schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) to meet what each perceives to be 21st-century standards. The authors approach teacher education reform from different perspectives. Gross, in nonacademic best-seller journalistic style, magnifies the public perceptions of the ills inherent in what he labels the "current chaotic crisis." Shen's in-depth analyses of survey data illustrate how education professors are equally displeased with the current structure and practice within schools of education. The changes within one school of education have been

meticulously documented by Jacobson and colleagues. However, none of the authors reference either the context or new mission for 21st-century schools.

Gross assumes that the mission of schools is the same as it has long been and recommends we return to educational methods of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. However, in the 1950s, only 50% of 17-year-olds graduated from high school (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Furthermore, it was not until 1975 that the public decided to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. If Gross is satisfied with education as it was in the 1950s, he is not concerned about the total population of students enrolled in U.S. public education today.

Gross asserts that the education establishment is an unscholarly, anti-intellectual, anti-academic cabal that can best be described as a conspiracy of ignorance, one with false theories and low academic standards. He offers evidence of our failing schools through examples such as "45 percent of all the 13,000 Ph.D.s in the hard sciences—physics, computer science, mathematics, chemistry, and engineering—are awarded each year to non-Americans" because American public schools are inadequately preparing our students (p. 7). Gross's argument, lacking any consideration of the mission of most major research universities to attract international students, who often pay full tuition, may be wrong.

Gross further alleges that our public school students are less well educated today than at any time in history. Although he provides a review of current test results, he offers no research concerning educational achievement in the past. Nor does he confront the findings of researchers such as Berliner and Biddle (1995), who indicate the exact opposite. They explain that when the data are controlled for inequity of educational opportunities, for childhood poverty, mortality and abuse, and for lack of health care, welfare, and preschool education, there is evidence that U.S. schools are doing as well as they ever did.

What Gross does provide is 11 chapters of indictment against the education establishment followed by 19 reform recommendations. For

this review, I include only the 7 recommendations related to teacher preparation, most of which are supported by prior findings. I include citations of exemplary research following several of the recommendations. Gross recommends that we

1. Raise teacher licensing exams to the achievement level of 3rd-year college students (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1990).
2. Close all undergraduate schools of education (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Holmes Group, 1995; Lucas, 1997), then create 1-year graduate programs that admit only college graduates with at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA). (The average GPA for those enrolled in teacher preparation programs is 3.31 [National Center for Education Statistics, 1993].)
3. Eliminate the false doctorate, the Ed.D.
4. Increase the number of alternate certification teachers.
5. Return to the traditions of education methods of the 1930s to 1950s rather than use new unproven theories.
6. Discontinue "Ed Psych" courses, the false science of which can lead undergraduates astray. The inaccurate information contained in them, Gross suggests, leads teachers to adopt a social work/psychology model and detracts from their true role as instructors of the young (Kramer, 1991).
7. Name a new type of superintendent trained in scholarship and not in education so that public schools can rival private schools.

On the surface, each of Gross's recommendations has merit. For example, he raises the critical question, "How should superintendents and principals be educated and certified?" Gross suggests that the superintendent earn a Ph.D. with mastery of a foreign language plus strong scholarly content outside of education. This school manager should be hired having completed "the prosaic courses in educational administration" (p. 232). Although many districts do hire superintendents and their deputies using these exact criteria, it is not clear to what extent this is the norm and what other criteria are relevant. The superintendent's job is also highly political; what type of education leads to proficiency in this arena?

Gross envisions a limited role for the superintendent: to improve the curriculum, teaching, and learning. He prefers more democratic and inclusive school boards that would limit the

political nature of the superintendent's job. However, other reformers (e.g., Jacobson et al., 1998) relocate the locus of democratic participation to the individual school. This move requires much more collaborative decision making, involving the superintendent, teachers, parents, community stakeholders and, possibly, students. The principals and superintendents engaged in the creation of democratic schools also need a complex set of management skills. Gross's failure to examine the complexity of the superintendent's job is repeated in his treatment of many of his recommendations. Because of this superficiality, most of the suggestions are not useful for the redesign of SCDE's teacher preparation programs.

Nonetheless, what is useful about this book is its illustration of the extent to which Gross and segments of the American population feel that they are outside the education establishment. However, we may ask whether the establishment keeps them outside, or if they are keeping themselves out by supporting nondemocratic school structures. Gross urges the public "to break out of its lethargy and its unjustified faith in the establishment" (I would add all establishments), "and become knowledgeable about schooling" (I would add government, publishing, and the news media), "much as they are about business and home buying" (p. 254). This last phrase about home buying is also indicative of the limited perspective from which Gross has written this book. Only 58.9% of U.S. housing units are owner occupied (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999). He is writing for the middle and upper-middle class citizens/parents who demonstrate dissatisfaction with many public schools by supporting charter schools and school vouchers after their flight to suburban school districts failed to garner the quality education that they sought.

In addition, these parents may be concerned about their children getting good jobs or about socioeconomic factors such as the shrinking middle-class, the growing underclass, or the widening gap between the rich and everyone else. The middle class may view its decline as related to poor education rather than to larger market-economy factors. New research on per-

formance on high-standards tests by socioeconomic class is needed to explain the extent to which such an assumption might be true. The poor have never been able to force significant change in the education system, but motivated middle-class movements could indeed close schools of education and create any number of alternate certification routes. Done without a clear mission or clear goals, as rebellion rather than expert redesign, our K-12 students could be in a far worse position than they are now.

The discontent with American education that resonates in Gross's work is echoed in Shen's research findings. Whereas Gross suggests that professors in schools of education foster untried or ineffective theories and strategies onto public education, Shen offers a very different analysis. He explains why education faculty are not applying their expertise to work in public schools, work that might result in a better public perception of the faculty's accomplishments and of the value of its knowledge base.

In *The School of Education*, Shen provides a thorough analysis of the complexity of the history, structure, goals, and reward system of schools of education and of the lives of the faculty who educate the nation's teachers. In the first third of the book, Shen interprets the history of schools of education, retracing the development of pedagogy as science and as art, finally offering a three-tier model of teacher knowledge. Subject matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge form the first level, followed by the pedagogical content knowledge level. The third level is knowledge of context, which includes knowledge about students, community, district, and school. He suggests that a central focus on pedagogy is necessary if schools of education are to become professional schools. Like schools of medicine and law, they need a clearly defined body of technical knowledge.

Shen goes on to explore the history of the status of schools of education and their faculties, finding that low status is attributable to an ambiguous mission. This ambiguity emanates from a lack of academic rigor, the percentage of faculty not engaged in teacher preparation (as high as 36% in research universities), lack of

experience or certification in K-12 education, the low percentage of education faculty holding Ph.D.s (50%, 31% with an Ed.D., and 19% without a terminal degree), and the integration of other professional programs such as counseling into the mission of the school of education.

Although his points about the ambiguity of mission are plausible, his argument that SCDEs never had a clearly defined mission except as normal schools is less convincing. Whether the call for action is reclamation or construction, Shen's data and analyses do indicate the need for both a clearly defined mission and a requisite technical knowledge base for SCDEs.

In the remaining two thirds of his book, Shen analyzes survey data collected by Goodlad as part of the Study of the Education of Educators (SEE) (for details of the institutional analysis of SEE data, see Goodlad, 1990; Sirotnik, 1990). The data used by Shen were written questionnaire answers from 948 tenure-line education professors from 24 institutions ranging from research universities to liberal arts colleges. The research questions focus on the conflicts that effect faculty involvement in public education.

Shen finds that the traditional reward structure at research universities impedes faculty engagement in activities that they feel would enhance the preparation of teachers. Teacher educators want to work in schools; yet, they state that they are penalized for doing so. Faculty participants suggest changes to the tenure and promotion criteria to reward rather than restrict the type of applied research that has been suggested by Boyer (1990). Shen concludes his recommended responses to the data with a quote from *Tomorrow's Schools of Education* (Holmes Group, 1995) that clearly states the urgency and necessity for both a clearly defined mission and faculty participation in K-12 education:

Ambiguity surrounds the purpose of schools of education. Many of these institutions have been less than clear about their missions. The confusion arises, largely, from the tendency of many schools to support too many different programs and to invest too little in work with the schools. As a consequence, a disproportionate number of faculty members separate their work from that of the elementary and secondary sector. Many professors go about their teaching and research with hardly a nod toward the

public schools, seldom if ever deigning to cross the threshold of those "lowly" places. Such attitudes transmit an unmistakable message. The people most intimately responsible for children's learning in elementary and secondary schools are not sufficiently valued by the education school. Schoolteachers and young learners, who should be the focus of the education schools' concern, are kept at arm's length. They are a sideshow to the performance in the center ring, where professors carry out their work insulated from the messiness and hurly-burly of elementary and secondary education. (p. 17)

Since the publication of the Holmes report (1995), several states such as Massachusetts have begun rapid implementation of high academic standards that were previously thought impossible for all students. The role of SCDE faculty in school-based research of these reform efforts is more critical than ever.

Although Shen draws a different picture than the one Gross uses to depict SCDE professors as part of the education establishment, they both illustrate how education professors are not intimately involved in educational reform initiatives in public schools. Gross uses this information to suggest that the education of teachers be conducted outside of the university. In contrast, Shen recommends a restructuring of the mission and reward structure within the university.

Beginning where Gross and Shen leave off, *Transforming Schools and Schools of Education* by Jacobson, Emihovich, Helfrich, Petrie, and Stevenson chronicles one school of education's efforts to renew and reshape its work. These authors, unlike Gross, recognize the disconnect between the SCDE and the school. Therefore, they examine how to define a mission that would align the work of education professors with work in the schools.

Published under the auspices of the Holmes Partnership (previously the Holmes Group) and the University Council of Educational Administration, the book explores educational change through an examination of how schools are governed, how faculty in schools of education approach their work, how teachers and administrators are prepared and how they work, how schools of education do and could work with schools, and how K-12 teachers and the university conceptualize and utilize research.

Each author examines the school of education reform efforts from a different perspective: Helfrich as a school superintendent, Petrie as a dean, Emihovich as a teacher education preparation program director, Stevenson as an educational researcher, and Jacobson as a director of a school administrator program. Collectively, they offer the following recommendations for SCDEs as they reexamine the social contract with public education.

First, Helfrich echoes one of Gross's concerns about teachers' unions being more concerned about teachers than about student learning. In contrast, he recommends that the development of a shared vision inclusive of all stakeholders garners support for, rather than resistance to change. His recommendation for a shared/partnership vision reverberates throughout the book. Next, Helfrich describes key events in each of three phases of his 13-year school-improvement effort in the Kenmore Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District. Unfortunately, but characteristically, the university faculty provided little help in the beginning, even when presented with specific requests. Helfrich lists these as missed opportunities against which he persisted until a leadership program was initiated. Following is a neat list of the strategies that he suggests are applicable to reform throughout the education system, including within SCDE:

- using an outside consultant;
- conducting a 2-day retreat;
- exploring and presenting options to principals, teachers, staff, and parents;
- recognizing and supporting emergent leadership in each group;
- building trust;
- investing in teacher expertise;
- creating a 3- to 5-year improvement plan;
- creating teams with leadership and decision-making responsibility for specific goals;
- shifting top-down decision making to be more collaborative, while still retaining prerogative to make top-down decisions when needed;
- supporting low-risk decision making during early stages even though the endeavors are unrelated to teaching and learning;
- conducting joint brainstorming sessions between union officers and top administrators;

- providing stipends for enhanced understanding of improvement efforts;
- applying for excellence awards, the receipt of which enhance morale; and
- making improvements tailored to unique situations.

Second, in making recommendations, Petrie's reflections on the culture of the modern research university as unsupportive of faculty work in schools substantiate Shen's findings about the lack of faculty involvement in broader educational reform efforts. It is interesting to read Petrie's account of how difficult it was to get faculty engaged in working with Helfrich. Based on those experiences, Petrie advocates that SCDEs reconceptualize some cherished educational ideals: "the generalizability of research, the nature of research findings in professional fields such as education, accountability, and the prospects for 'going to scale' with educational reforms" (p. 25). He adds that "education is ineluctably, value laden and context bound" (p. 42). Consequently, Petrie recommends that each SCDE design a unique partnership vision that places schools at the center of its practice. Part of the vision is a mission statement, accountability criteria, and faculty reward structure jointly defined by the stakeholder community.

Third, Emihovich discusses the effects of organizing one SCDE collaboration around an action-research paradigm. Such a focus requires significant changes within the SCDE, including redesign of curriculum to create a comprehensive master schedule of topics across all courses, collaboration between teachers and faculty, restructuring to facilitate longer term student intern placements, development of mentor relationships, instruction in group collaboration, and increased faculty involvement in school work.

Emihovich provides a one-paragraph overview of some general curriculum components recommended by other researchers. These include incorporating the knowledge about teaching from understanding, scaffolding learning for diverse learners, developing frameworks that draw on teachers' expert content knowledge, and assessing students through complex multidimensional outcome methods.

She hypothesizes that teachers need to see themselves in new roles engaged in these activities. Action-research is offered as a vehicle through which they can explore aspects of these new roles along with the associated student learning.

Fourth, Jacobson, like Gross, sees a need for new approaches to the preparation of educational administrators. However, whereas Gross advocates top-down leadership, Jacobson has designed a leadership program that promotes three strategic elements: schools as learning communities, collective leadership, and shared vision. The goal is the reconfiguration of traditional power relationships. The principal design features are district participation in student/candidate selection, cohort and mentor relationships, integrated curriculum organized around problems in practice, and paid full-time internships in multiple sites.

Finally, Stevenson reviews ways in which SCDEs can help educational practitioners use educational research. He suggests that schools of education can expand students' conceptions of knowledge; conceptions of themselves as active agents who can use critical inquiry into their own practice as data for making complex instructional decisions; and knowledge, skills, and dispositions for conducting research. His requirement that teachers confront their assumptions, biases, and preconceptions about teaching are aligned with prior research (e.g., Goodlad, 1991).

Collectively, Jacobson and colleagues enjoin each SCDE to reexamine its "social contract with public education" (p. xiii). The ensuing collaboratively developed mission statement will lead to SCDE reform in the following areas: recruitment of teacher candidates; establishment of academic standards and certification requirements; redesign of programs, university collaborative work in schools, and teacher involvement in teacher preparation programs; and application of theory to practice, along with the modification of theory as a result of data emerging from practice.

One particularly useful feature of this book is the discussion by each author of the barriers to success that they encountered. For example,

Helfrich's disclosure about forgetting to include support staff on work teams is more informative to the reader than if he had only listed the necessity for such inclusion. This book also provides an inside look at the type of multiprong reform approach recommended by groups such as the Carnegie Forum (1986) and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996).

All of these books recommend that schools of education make significant changes in their structure, mission, and reward system for faculty. Gross suggests that we move back in time to a period where public education was for a select group, and where education functioned as a weeding-out process as it still does in many European, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African nations. This is not a feasible strategy for a national system that is trying to implement integrated inclusive education to maximize the potential of all of its students.

In addition to, and possibly because of the omission of a mission statement for 21st-century schools of education in any of the three books, there is no mention of several educational factors crucial to the restructuring of SCDEs. Three factors from this list are (a) increased salaries for teachers, (b) curriculum content as part of the knowledge base, and (c) use of technology. First, higher salaries are needed to attract top undergraduate students. Along with Gross, many reform tomes call for the recruitment of top undergraduates into education. To attract top candidates, beginning teachers' salaries need to become comparable to other professions (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

Second, new curriculum theorists/developers are needed. The Holmes Group (1995) points out the importance of analyzing the learning needs of the next generation, and thereby the learning needs of future teachers. The report suggests that this "... area now calls for new kinds of curriculum theorists, who have as their main accomplishment the ability to analyze societal trends and to better project likely knowledge demands" (Holmes Group, 1995, p. 33). Schools of education not only need this information, they need to design programs of study to prepare such individuals.

Last, technological advances such as computer access to the Internet, video conferencing, education and information Web sites, either can or will change the nature of teacher education programs. Furthermore, teachers are working with an increasingly computer-literate student population. Yet, any discussion of how technology will change teacher education or K-12 education is missing from all three books.

Despite the missing elements, each of the three books provides a long list of teacher education reform components as well as strategies for beginning the reform process. They acknowledge the difficulty of recruiting good teachers within a society characterized by anti-intellectualism and the undervaluing of teaching. The authors' very readable, provocative, and insightful books compel immediate reevaluation of every institution, organization, and agency engaged in or responsible for teacher preparation. Although they do not answer them all, the collective work develops the following list of questions that should guide reform agendas: (a) What are the educational needs of 21st-century students? (b) What kind of teachers do 21st-century students need? (c) How do we educate and support those teachers? (d) What kind of educational environment do we need for pre-K through 12, higher education, and specifically, for SCDEs? (e) By what criteria should we judge the effectiveness of our educational systems? and finally, (f) What is the role of the SCDE, especially at research universities, and how should SCDE faculty be assessed?

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