

CHAPTER 3

Work in Teacher Education: A Current
Assessment of U.S. Teacher Education

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Introduction

For quite some time I have been struck, bemused, and somewhat depressed by the parallels between my work at home and my work in teacher education.¹ At home my wife, Michele Seipp,

maintain a domestic life that nurtures and cares for our children,
keeps the house in working order, prepares food for the table

work and worker again, the concept of 'work' is not a neutral, objective, or universal category. It is a social and cultural construct that varies across different contexts and communities. In the context of teacher education, work is not just a set of tasks to be performed, but a process of learning and development that is shaped by the social and cultural norms of the profession. The concept of 'work' is also closely tied to the concept of 'labor', which is often used to describe the physical and mental effort involved in a particular activity. In the context of teacher education, labor is not just a means to an end, but a way of life that is shaped by the social and cultural norms of the profession. The concept of 'work' is also closely tied to the concept of 'vocation', which is often used to describe a calling or a sense of purpose that motivates individuals to engage in a particular activity. In the context of teacher education, vocation is not just a means to an end, but a way of life that is shaped by the social and cultural norms of the profession.

I first survey and summarize briefly the recent research documenting the obstacles in U.S. teacher education, focusing on qualitative distinctions between work in teacher education and

"classed" system of labor in schools of education that harms, not engenders, the education of teachers.

In an historical examination of the University of Chicago's

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These brief descriptive reports

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long for some very particular and, at times, immediate, responses. Some balance is needed and called for. In teacher education, training and reflection are required; and they are required in a manner that recognizes the place and importance of each component. In the preparation of teachers, there are issues to examine, skills and behaviors to develop, and norms and values to inspect. Research can contribute, but it is certainly not

experience tends to reject rather than utilize large portions of what went on before it.

For faculty members in teacher education, the levels of uncertainty and ambiguity are generally high and the rewards fairly low. Talking about teaching practice when one's experience tends to be dated (or nonexistent) is not the most comfortable or secure setting for instruction. Teacher education

carried on under fairly amicable and congenial conditions. Faculty members can usually indicate the number of graduate

institutional effort, but the truth of the matter is that it rarely "counts." Assistant professors are informed early on that

custom analysis. *Human Ecology* (1999) 17(1): 1-11

the university faculty "with its time-honored



men. It is recursive, time intensive, and frequently emotional labor. It seems "never-ending" and is emotionally taxing. Domestic labor includes the daily chores of cooking, cleaning (clothes, utensils, and living quarters), and, when children are present, caring for children. Caring for children entails clothing, feeding, educating, and loving them. The "feel" of domestic labor, in this age of the second shift, is work that has to be

need to view it relationally—not simply as tasks that are performed within the home. We need to see it as a production effort that occurs within a social relation. Trying to explain why standard economic accounts do not view housework as productive, Delphy maintains that the

... reason why housework is not considered to be productive and why it is not considered to be work is

is "women's work": It entails care for children and a type of emotional labor for which women are best suited. The argument

is that women know these situations best; they bring a natural talent to situations that require care and patience and an eternal belief in the goodness of the real world. Others simply argue

especially research-based schools, faculty are expected to teach and do "some" service. However, neither teaching nor service

are critically assessed. They rarely constitute the basis upon which people are hired, fired (except for egregious error of judgment) promoted, or financially rewarded. Research in the

many individuals, work around the home is considered a necessary evil, part of our "private lives." It certainly benefits those within the home who eat the meals, wear the clothes, and grow from the nourishment and care that are provided. Those who work in teacher education programs most probably

cannot be excised. Teaching elementary and secondary students is certainly emotional labor, and preparing those individuals to teach at the elementary and secondary level is the closest one gets at the university to the life of the "real" teacher.

There are also parallels between the conundrums and

dominant images of dance. He urged his companions to alter _____ home. When Michele and I have hung on to our empty minds

earner outside the home and a worker and parent inside the home. The variety of the demands seems far reaching and the number unending.¹⁶ When I look around and see colleagues and friends who have eliminated or simplified either their professional or their domestic lives, I can get envious and resentful. My resentment and envy kicks in when my colleagues

lately I have been struggling to find a vantage point that will balance my own desires and deal with some rather strong emotional and intellectual currents; unfortunately, I do not have a clear, resolute vision of what constitutes that perspective. I have had to realize that I need to make some choices about the kind of labor I will perform when I will perform certain types of

changes" in women that tend to keep them in subservient situations. She explains that in the acts of caregiving women are affirmed in some ways and diminished in others. But what goes

experience, or elementary and secondary teachers who are on leave from their schools or on loan to the university for teacher education. The disempowerment that Bartky speaks of—

erecting another's perspective and thereby disclosing and

teacher education tends over time to reduce

agreements to include provisions for any later reversals of

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I doubt the knocks will not be answered. I could be, and I hope I am, wrong. But it seems that while changes in the landscape of teacher education and schools of education are likely, it is difficult to discern the direction and directors of that change.

NOTES

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"Traditions of Reform in U.S. Teacher Education" in Liston and Zeichner (1990).

10. See Goodlad's discussion that follows on page 152 of his book.

11. For an extended analysis of teaching as work, see Connell (1985).

12. For many people in the U.S., the phrase "domestic labor" has an odd ring to it. Frequently, when I use the term people unfamiliar with labor analysis cock their heads trying to figure out what is being said and what type of picture is being drawn. In addition to this lack of familiarity, the problem is compounded by the fact that the literature on domestic labor is not wildly extensive. It certainly exists and MacKinnon (1989) highlights some of it; however, it is not that extensive.

13. See Hochschild (1989) for further discussion and analysis of

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