The Content of Teacher Education in Relation to the Postulated Functions of Teachers (Analysis of Some Teacher Training Programs)

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Introduction

Despite the considerable literature concerning the reform of teacher training it is extremely difficult to find much reference in it to a connection between the functions of a teacher and the postulated reorganization of the training process. This is partly because most plans do not refer explicitly to such a connection by, for example, trying to deduce new contents directly from specifically stated functions. To do so would suppose that at least both dimensions were mentioned. Mostly, however, the functions of teachers are not even taken into consideration by way of suggestion. What, then, are the criteria underlying postulated reforms of teacher training? In the discussion about the reform of teacher training there is a good deal of implicit consensus on seemingly self-evident conclusions which are by no means self-evident. Consequently no agreement about these matters has been reached. Sentences like

"Donner aux futurs enseignants des connaissances solides dans la où les disciplines qu'ils auront à enseigner est un impératif qui paraît aller de soi."

or

"Il nous apparaît également indispensable que les futurs enseignants acquièrent pendant leur formation universitaire quelques concepts de sciences humaines."

will hardly do for the determination of contents of teacher training. But even statements like

"The task (of the study of educational scientific disciplines) consists in providing the future teacher with that knowledge he needs for a sensibly planned practice of his profession."

or

"The topics of the study of educational science subjects have to be defined in such a manner that they will be relevant to education and teaching practice."

are, at the most, helpful for particular decisions. They are not helpful for at least rudimentally objectified decisions on the structure of the training process for the future teacher.

The present paper tries to analyse, in relation to their educational consequences, the functions mentioned in several proposals concerning the reorganization of teacher training. The selection of proposals is, of course, just incidental, and mainly German papers have been used because of the author's nationality. In the conceptions analysed, the connections between functions and the tasks of the teacher, on the one hand, and the definition of training contents, on the other, can only be identified in a fragmentary manner. It is, however, possible to analyse at least some of these connections.

Four main groups of functions could be determined from the proposals studied concerning the formulation of new training programs:

1) functions relating to the professional situation of the teacher and his social func-
tion in a broader sense,
2) functions which define the teacher as an expert in certain subjects which he is expected to transmit,
3) functions which describe the teacher as an expert in transmission of contents,
4) functions which define the teacher as an active planner in the process of curriculum-revision.

In the light of various pressures—“Sputnik-shock” in the USA, the new school-curricula in the GDR; the non-systematic philosophical and pedagogical training of future teachers in the Federal Republic—there is a general agreement about the inadequacy of present teacher education. The German Education Council (Bildungsrat) thought, that the changing role of the teacher required training leading to more independence and self-responsibility during his studies. Conant holds four developments noteworthy for the revision of teacher education. “First, the rapid introduction of new methods and materials, particularly in physics, in chemistry, in biology, and in mathematics; second, the increasing tendency to push down into the lower grades the teaching of material one thought proper only for the higher grades; third, the introduction in some high schools of college work in the 12th grade by means of the advanced placement program; fourth, the increasing use of television, team teaching, and some form of programmed instruction. All these developments have had and will continue to have their impact on the education of secondary school teachers.” (Conant, 1963.) Nearly the same arguments were the basis of revision concepts of the German Education Council, the Colloquium of Amiens and the Planning Staff for North-Rhine-Westphalia.

1. The Role of the Teacher in Society and in the Educational System

The concepts of teacher training we have analysed emphasize in varying completeness of detail that the teacher has to know the assumptions and conditions under which he can work and become efficient. At the same time they refer to the teacher’s task to support and to initiate the reform of the school system. He is supposed to reconsider the standards of the school system and to conceive, structure and carry out his educational task against the background of his critical revision.

Hence there may be inferred two different factors concerning teacher training:

a) The future teacher has to have knowledge of the school (and of the teacher as a part of it) in its present societal context. Differently defined, the concepts require a confrontation of students with topics like organization of the school and teaching, and a simultaneous combination of pedagogical, sociological and psychological aspects. At the same time, future teachers have to learn something about the problems of research into teaching. By this it is meant that they should, for example, come to know the conditions of socialization in relation to educational achievement. Moreover they have to be pointed towards the connections of language and achievement, and to be informed about the effects of selection within the school system. They have to be introduced to problems of the connections between school and science as well as to conceptions of the teacher’s self-image and of social perceptions of his role. In the communist countries future teachers have to learn the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist theory of political economy. As Rokisch has shown us (1971), the aim of this part of the studies in the GDR is “to confront the students with the complex practice of socialist structure” and to enable them to participate in the solution of social problems.

b) The future teacher must acquire analytical understanding of educational situations and aims. The sub-committee on “teacher training” of the German Education Council has given its opinion, most precisely concerning this complex. The following elements of pedagogical and sociological studies are considered indispensable in this context:
Pedagogical studies
— curriculum-theory; general didactics; specific didactics according to the stages of education
— strategy and technology of teaching and education
— theory of education, and educational systems; philosophical, ethical and religious problems of education; comparative education

Psychological studies
— psychology of development
— psychology of teaching and learning
— psychometry
— social psychology

Sociological studies
— sociology of education
— methods of empirical research
— political and juridical aspects of school and educational system
— economic aspects of education

Practical and “clinical” courses
— methods of observation and analysis of situations in teaching and education; case-studies
— successful planning, implementation and control of educational and curricular aims of teaching; curricular methodology
— school and school organization as a system and as an object of research and development.

2. The Teacher as an Expert for the Transformation and Transmission of Subject Knowledge

This function of the teacher can be divided into two components: first, his function as an expert in the academic and didactic questions concerning specific subjects and, second, his function as an expert in broader curriculum and method questions.

Turning to the first aspect, agreement is virtually unanimous that the field of teaching activity on curriculum theory is the fundamental topic of teacher training, no matter how differently defined this may be. At the Colloquium of Amiens (1968), the aim was postulated, for subject-oriented training, of qualifying teachers for permanent communication with experts. In contrast to this, the concept for North-Rhine-Westphalia does not make any precise statement on subject-oriented teacher training (although, as the most conservative type of all models studied, it generally points out that, above all, teachers—except those of the elementary level—have to transmit subject knowledge).

The most rigorous of all reform concepts is that of the University of Bremen (which will begin in the coming winter, at the earliest). This concept demands of the teacher the capacity of follow up continually the development of the sciences relevant to his teaching—including the fundamental academic disciplines on which his subjects are based. This is near to Conant, who states that what is important for the teacher is not the number of hours per semester but the level of competence reached. His concept of teacher education is centred on the professional functions of the teachers. Consequently he labels traditional introductory courses as eclectic.

In a similar way—but with much more practical consequences—the concept for Bremen University centres teacher training on the educational process with its different aspects. Subject competence is to be obtained by the planning and realization of a teaching unit during the whole course of study. Therefore single, short, systematic subject-oriented study sections have to be effected. The objection has been made that the planning of concrete projects would involve a great limitation on the curricular qualification of the student teacher. Opposing this argument, the supporters of the Bremen model are pinning their hopes on the study-motivating effect of the study project. Definitive evaluation of the model must await the results of practical experience and its analysis.

Training in the methodology of the academic subject seems to be even more important than training in the academic subject for the Bremen model. As in all other concepts, training in the methodology of
the academic subject is considered as a training for techniques and conditions of transmission as well as a training for the selection and definition of curriculum contents and their underlying social norms. The teacher student should be informed about psychology of learning and should get assistance when formulating the aims of their lessons or when defining the learning content of their teaching projects. At the same time the social and individual requirements of learning should be worked out.

The difficulty of formulating precise training aims for this field of study is due to the fact that while the necessity of a specialized didactic training for teachers is generally conceded there is no standard for its orientation. Generally, what is postulated is the pursuance of a combined training in the academic subject and in its methodology, for which curricula which must be held open for continuous revision should be developed as soon as possible.

3. The Teacher as an Expert for the Transmission of Contents

In the proposals analysed here, there is a close relationship between training in the methodology of the academic subject and the methodological qualifications. There is also agreement that these qualifications have to be obtained by pedagogical studies, and partly even by social science studies, as well as in the context of a clinical phase (the definition of which differs widely). It must be underlined here that this is not at all the only aim of the clinical phase, as we can learn from the report of an expert meeting on “Current Problems of Teacher Education”, run by the UNESCO-Institute for Education in 1970. Moreover there is agreement in so far as this part of the training is aimed at supplying a basic understanding of the socio-psychological and learning conditions of the transmission of subject contents and standards for different ages and achievement levels. When defining the concrete contents of training, emphasis is laid on different aspects.

This results to some extent in diverging concepts. Thus the Bremen concept requires course material in the theory of cognition, theory of learning, psychology of development and socialization-research in order to fulfill this function. At the same time future teachers should have knowledge of the fundamental interests of pupils, should learn to analyse educational processes and should become qualified in the use of control instruments. The concept for North-Rhine-Westphalia additionally attaches great importance to information on group-dynamic processes in the class and in school and on teaching techniques. As a supplementary part of teacher education the German Education Council and the Colloquium of Amiens ask for training in modern teaching technology.

The necessity of basic knowledge of the different conditions of transmission is underlined by the views of North-Rhine-Westphalia. It therefore postulates some training in psychology of adolescence and in sociology in order to enable the teacher to cope with the difficulties of his pupils. In order to be able to organize individualized instruction, the future teacher is also expected to have information about problems of grouping (streaming, setting, non-streaming etc.).

The Colloquium of Amiens also saw the teacher as a promoter and controller of communication-processes within the school. So an introduction into the problems of communication was asked for, for all teacher students. Furthermore, the practical phases during and at the end of teacher training were seen as helping to bring about experience in transmission processes. Related proposals range from obligatory work as monitor in a holiday camp to a phase of practical instruction in classes for a longer period.

4. The Teacher as an Active Partner in the Process of Curriculum Revision

The different proposals are almost unanimous in expecting the teacher to work
actively in the rolling reform of curricula for his special subjects. Whereas the concept for North-Rhine-Westphalia only asks for the process of curriculum-construction to be made evident to all teachers, the German Education Council and the Bremen concept expect the teacher to participate actively in the process of curriculum research.

A well founded didactic and subject training, integrated through appropriate studies, is expected to develop the ability for this task. In Bremen, this integration is expected to take place in the project studies. A critical revision of teaching methods and of educational activities should be fostered by means of education in teaching and learning processes as well as in the field of socialization and its psychological and social assumptions. Thus, the future teacher should get a basic qualification for his function as curriculum reformer.

The concept for North-Rhine-Westphalia defines the contents of education in the fields of curriculum construction most precisely. The teacher is expected to become fit for defining the aims and objectives of education by a training in the following topics:

1. socio-cultural norms (their development, their stability and their change) in their philosophical, social and psychological aspects,
2. ability and learning,
3. the importance of socio-cultural norms for education,
4. the definition of general aims and objectives in education and the derivation of special aims,
5. the definition of learning sequences and the methods to control their acquisition.

Whilst, in the proposals referred to, the teacher’s role in the field of curriculum revision is seen as a more active one, the teacher in the GDR is only expected to implement curricula already revised by the central administration. The system of teacher education was changed in 1969 to enable future teachers to be better qualified as co-operators in the process of implementing curricula.

Of course, these programs have consequences for the organization and the staffing of teacher training. To me it seems necessary to discuss these consequences, as a kind of practical problem of training, in relation to the research designs offered by Helga Thomas and Hartmut Frech.

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Le Contenu de la Formation des Enseignants par rapport aux Fonctions qui leur sont demandées

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Les propositions pour la réforme de la formation des enseignants comportent rarement une référence spécifique au rapport entre les fonctions des enseignants et la réorganisation demandée. La formulation des faits qui sont à la base des propositions de réformes est habituellement trop générale pour être d'une aide quelconque.

L'analyse de plusieurs propositions de réforme pour la formation des enseignants montre qu'une attention plus particulière est portée à quatre grands groupes de fonctions liées :

1) au rôle de l'enseignant dans la vie professionnelle et la société
2) à son rôle en tant que spécialiste d'un sujet
3) à son habileté à transmettre un contenu
4) à sa fonction de planificateur actif de programmes.

Quelqu'en soit la cause — « le choc spoutnik » aux États-Unis, les nouveaux programmes des écoles dans la République Démocratique Allemande, la re-définition du rôle de l'enseignant en Allemagne de l'Ouest — la formation actuelle des enseignants est considérée comme inadaptée aux nouveaux besoins créés par l'introduction de nouvelles méthodes et de nouveaux moyens, aux nouvelles tendances vers l'introduction de matériaux spécialisés plus tôt et vers une augmentation de l'utilisation de la technologie éducative.

Pour ce qui est de leur rôle social et professionnel, l'analyse montre qu'on attend des enseignants qu'ils reconsidèrent les normes en vigueur dans le système scolaire mais aussi qu'ils enseignent dans le cadre des structures actuelles. Ainsi on peut définir deux aspects fondamentaux de la formation :

a) à savoir que, pour comprendre l'école et son contexte actuel, les cours devraient inclure l'étude des aspects pédagogiques, psychologiques et sociologiques des écoles et de l'enseignement, la connaissance de la recherche sur l'enseignement et ses résultats, une introduction aux rapports entre l'école et la science, entre l'image qu'a l'enseignant de lui-même et son rôle tel qu'il est considéré socialement et, dans les pays communistes, entre l'éducation et la théorie Marxiste-Léniniste ;

b) que, pour comprendre les situations d'enseignement et les buts de l'enseignement, sont nécessaires, en plus de l'apprentissage « clinique », des cours comportant des études théoriques liées au programme, à la technique et la technologie de l'enseignement, à la théorie de l'éducation, au développement de l'enfant, à l'enseignement et l'apprentissage, à des études psychométriques et de psychologie sociale, et aux aspects sociologiques, politiques, juridiques et économiques de l'enseignement.

En tant que spécialiste d'un sujet, on attend de l'enseignant non seulement qu'il connaisse son sujet mais aussi qu'il sache l'utiliser dans l'enseignement. Cependant, bien que la conception de ces tâches varie — des propositions conservatrices de la
Rhénanie—Nord-Westphalie aux conceptions de réforme complète de l’Université de Brême, tous considèrent l’apprentissage pour cette fonction comme un des sujets fondamentaux de la formation des enseignants.

L'aptitude à transmettre un contenu est considérée, dans les propositions analysées ici, comme liée de très près avec la formation dans la méthodologie de la matière enseignée. On est généralement d'accord sur le fait que l'apprentissage de cette aptitude doit être acquis par des études pédagogiques et sociales ainsi que dans la phase « clinique » et qu'un tel apprentissage devrait viser à une compréhension des conditions de transmission du savoir, du contenu et des normes appropriés, selon l'âge et les différents niveaux d'aptitude des élèves.


Toutes ces propositions ont des répercussions sur l'organisation de la formation des enseignants et le recrutement du personnel concerné et doivent être considérées à la lumière des projets de recherches présentés par Helga Thomas et Hartmut Frech.