A Good Teacher in Every Classroom

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Student Teacher Internships

The article “A good teacher in every classroom: Preparing the highly qualified teachers our children deserve” by Linda Darling-Hammond and Joan Baratz-Snowden addresses the significance of teacher preparation programs and summarizes the essential qualities teachers should acquire throughout their studying in those programs. The authors describe the key points that can make any teacher preparing program quality and effective. Although the ideas discussed in the article are highly important and exciting, many seem rather depressing to me personally.

While reading the article, I recollected my experience in the college of education ten years ago. I agree with the writers in the fact that teacher education should not be only based on theoretical knowledge but rather has to be tightly connected to practice and application. The explanation of the term ‘teaching practice’ may prove the importance of the program’s practical side. Marais & Meier (2004) define it as "the range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms and schools". Unfortunately, the curriculum in our program was stuffed with theories and information which we memorized only to pass exams. Honestly, I cannot remember most of this information today. The problem is that there was no application, which had a very serious impact on me when I started my career as a teacher in real life. For instance, in spite of the fact that I have studied assessment as a subject for a whole semester, it took about two years until I learned to assess my students effectively. The first couple of years could have gone more smoothly if I had been better prepared.

I do not say that I have not received any preparation at college; however, that preparation program was not as effective as it should have been. That is why when reading what the authors say about student teaching or internships, memories start rushing into my mind. The time for application was limited; in addition, we were not allowed to practice
different situations with students in classrooms in order to learn to prepare for diverse lessons, or to have opportunities to solve educational problems. Another essential thing about practicing is to have effective supervision. I can remember our supervisors visiting the class for 15 or 20 minutes and rushing out without having a clear picture of our teaching skills in order to share their feedback later. Sometimes those supervisors were not able to give effective comments at all. I remember that one of them told me that she did not like the class because I kept speaking in English. Modeling is a key concept in teacher preparation. We used to visit classes for teachers but, sadly, they were not chosen carefully. A model should be an expert teacher whom perspective teachers can really learn from.

**Teaching Portfolios and Performance Tasks**

The authors claim that teaching portfolios and performance tasks are other effective ways that provide opportunities for practice in a more structured manner. Personally, the last semester was my first time to practice creating my own teaching portfolio. I really liked that experience and I hope it would be applied in every teacher preparation program and even with teachers at schools. Portfolios provide chances for recording and analyzing one’s job. This provides potential teachers with a great opportunity for self-assessment. From my experience with my first portfolio I discovered many strong points in my work and other things that I have to learn more about. For example, one thing I learned about myself is that I get angry very fast during class; thus, I need to improve my self-control and patience.

As Abraham Lincoln said, "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six sharpening my axe". Teacher preparation programs should provide opportunities for practice and application in different contexts and situations as well as allow enough time to use diverse strategies and tools. Moreover, they should be a source of strong models and allow student teachers to apply tools like portfolios to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses.
References
