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## ALTERNATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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As a group, those involved in preparing teachers for our schools are probably no more masochistic than anyone else, yet we continually engage in self-flagellation over the gap between present practice and what might be. Part of the reason stems from our awareness of the social impact of what we do. Part also results from the openness of our options. The knowledge base is so weak and the value elements so crucial that no one can with any validity claim to know the best way to prepare teachers . . . Still another reason for our self-flagellation is that in the face of all these uncertainties most of us are aware that the major bases for our present programs lie in the accumulated orthodoxies of our institutions more than in any coherent response to present condition. (Andrews, 1976:64)

Alternative programmes in teacher education would seem to have evolved from the kind of teacher education climate portrayed by Andrews. As they have developed, such programmes have tended to carry with them both the frustrations of the past and the hopes of better things to come in the future.

In trying to determine how and why alternative teacher education programmes evolved, a number of critical questions come to mind. For instance, what is meant by the concept of alternative? What are some reasons for the existence of alternative programmes?

For the purposes of this paper, an alternative teacher education programme will be viewed as the provision of a programme option to the regular programme, that is, another complete programme in a teacher education institution which is fundamentally different. In this sense, alternative programmes would be classified among Turney's (1977, p.3) organizational and administrative innovations.

A crucial notion associated with alternative programmes is the concept of choice, which refers to student choice of one programme among two or a number of options. A corollary of this student choice is the recognition by an institution that there is more than one way of educating teachers.

## Why Alternative Programmes Evolved

Existing teacher education programmes often seem to be the subject of public and professional criticism yet, despite the discontent, the traditional, regular programmes and approaches persist. Teaching programmes tend to be remarkably similar across institutions, and the impression gained is that they appear to be constructed to tie-in with the most common models of schooling and to socialize students to them. However, dissatisfaction with some crucial aspects of regular programmes is one significant reason why alternative teacher education programmes have evolved.

The reaction against regular programmes seems to have occurred across a variety of fundamental characteristics of teacher education. In terms of the underlying rationale for the professional education of teachers, McDonald (1977) suggests that, rather than being additive, the approach to developing professional competence should focus upon the skills of problem solving and decision making. How does the teacher conceptualize learning situations? What kinds of problems (educational goals and objectives for a given student) are to be anticipated? How does the teacher propose to cope with the problems? How is teaching adapted to carry out a particular instructional strategy? From this perspective, an effective teacher education programme, to McDonald, is one that develops a matrix of significant goals to be achieved by a particular teacher in a particular curriculum with a specific group of children.

A second reaction against the regular programme focusses on the effectiveness of the teaching practice. Flaws of the conventional teaching practice range from the unsatisfactory state of the classroom as an environment in which to learn to teach, to some possible false assumption that good teachers make effective supervisors of student teachers, to the little or no linkage of college or campus coursework with practice teaching.

A third reaction pertains to what Andrews (1976, p.67) calls "process of central determination." When all decisionmaking is made at the top of the hierarchy, those involved in the instructional roles develop a sense of restricted freedom and choice, which in turn builds up frustration. Alternative programmes tend to lodge the decisionmaking with administrative and teaching staff involved directly in the project. However, they must also accept the increased responsibility that accompanies increased decisionmaking rights.

Finally, many teacher education institutions function within a mood of reaction against the large sized units. By contrast, alternative teacher education programmes offer the many advantages of small, personalized units. The affiliative need in all persons may be better taken into account through such programmes.

For some time the notion of pluralism in teacher education programmes has been the subject of criticism, yet there exists a growing acceptance of there being no one best way to train all teachers. This emerging principle is exemplified by Joyce (1975, p.15) who has prescribed a "differential training model" as being fundamental to the operation of an effective teacher education programme. Teacher educators should accept that there are different ways in which to train different student-teachers and alternative programmes seem to offer a means by which pluralism can be achieved.

The provision of choice seems to reflect a growing societal demand. As a corollary to the "no one best way" premise, the often stated comment is that everyone should have the right to make a choice — and that should apply to both students and college staff or faculty.

The process employed in alternative programmes tends to recognize that decisionmaking is a cooperative endeavour involving the participation of all those who choose to be involved. According to Turney (1977, p.9) such a concern was emphasized in the introduction of alternative programmes at the University of British Columbia. A major stated objective of these programmes was to facilitate "participative rather than authoritative innovation—that is, 'grass roots' rather than 'laid-on' change." As Worthen et al. (1975, p.1) point out regarding the same programmes, "professors and students able to choose a program they prefer could reasonably be expected to view their efforts in the program as worthwhile and to do everything possible to make the program a success."

These considerations seem to suggest that the ultimate goal of alternative programmes is not to control people more effectively, but to enable them to exercise control and to recognize their basic human right to transform their own lives and institutions. Enabling students and college staff to have access to choice, therefore, constitutes an important change from the regular teacher education programmes.

The contemplation of change in conventional teacher education systems is often burdened by the inertia of the status quo. Alternative programmes seem to provide greater freedom for experimenting new approaches, whether in the translating into practice of a philosophy, the use of some new technique of supervision, or whatever. An alternative programme could be viewed, and has been employed, as a pilot research to work through problems of implementing an innovation. Subsequent adoption into the regular programme tends to represent one of the more profound and most satisfying indicators of the effectiveness of an alternative programme.

A feature of a number of alternative programmes has been the focus given to educating teachers for a particular societal group, such as minority cultures, handicapped persons, etc. Such programmes usually are designed to fill social needs and, at the same time, provide a greater range of vocational opportunities for prospective and existing teachers.

Alternative teacher education programmes have evolved through a diversity of reasons. This diversity would appear to range from concerns about conventional programmes as such to newly perceived teacher education needs. An analysis of the characteristics of existing or past alternative programmes should indicate the varied ways in which some institutions have responded to these concerns and needs.

### Characteristics of Alternative Programmes

After surveying descriptions, reports, and/or evaluations of a number of alternative programmes, a striking degree of similarity among the various programmes emerges. These commonalities not only pertain to the highlights and advantages claimed for such programmes but also to the anticipated problems and difficulties in implementation and administration. The programmes surveyed were:

1. The University of British Columbia Programmes (Worthen, Owens, and Anderson, 1975).
2. McGill University's Project MEET (Horowitz, 1974)
3. McGill University's COAST programme (MacRae, 1977)
4. University of Alberta's Plan B programme.
5. U.S. Office of Education TTT programme (Smith, Harste, Mahan and Clark, 1974)
6. University of Massachusetts' T.P.P.C. (Turner, 1977)
7. Western Illinois University's Corrections and Alternative Education programme (Gubser, 1977)
8. University of California (Berkeley), G.I.P. (Robinson, 1976)
9. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Work Experience programme (Humphreys, 1970)
10. Churchlands College of Advanced Education, W.S.I.T.P. (Hammond, 1978).

## Commonalities in Goals, Structure, and Methodology

A characteristic feature of *all* alternative teacher education programmes is a clear exposition of the goals to be attained by the student members concerned, and explanations about how the components of the programmes should enable the goals to be reached. The explicit nature of the goal statements seemed to emphasize the thoughtful rationale underlying all alternative programmes.

Further evidence of the thoughtful rationale is found in the explanations of the learning theory underlying each of the alternative programmes. Of the various learning principles that were common to nearly all of the programmes, one seemed to be of primary importance. Linked to the common goal that alternative programmes promote and enhance professional and personal growth, this principle emphasized catering for individual differences among students.

Fundamentally, the principle recognizes that all students are at differential stages of development on all of the different roles, skills and competences, and philosophies of teaching; that all students differ in terms of abilities and developmental potential; and all students vary in terms of attitude, self-expectations, and other facets of "self". By their structure, alternative programmes claim, and have been evaluated to take better account of student individual differences (Hammond, 1978; Horowitz, 1974, p.85; MacRae, 1977, p.25; Robinson, 1976, p.62).

Primary among these individual differences is the notion of readiness. When the student feels ready to advance from one level of professional development to a higher level, then he should proceed—but not usually before. Robinson (1976, p.63) sums up the notion of readiness when he says:

Professional growth, by definition, is change—from dependence to independence in teaching; from frequent to infrequent supervision; from experience to principle-oriented seminars; from ability to work with individual and small groups for short periods of time to ability to handle large groups for extended periods; from attempts to copy teaching techniques of others to development of one's own style of teaching; from a need for problem-oriented subject matter in small amounts from a number of disciplines to a study of separate organized disciplines in depth; from whole-group instruction to grouping to provide for individual differences; from dependence on teaching devices to dependence on an integrated, personal philosophy of education.

Alternative programmes seem better able to allow students more time to proceed at their own rate, with their own choice. This seems to underscore the developmental perspective of these programmes.

The reality of the claim about catering better for the individual differences in students may well depend on a number of factors. First, the group of students in most programmes tend to be both small in size, ranging from 10 to about 25 members, and at least partially independent of the regular programme students. Second, unlike the situation for students on regular programmes, the alternative programme students' associations with college staff and cooperating teachers tend to be more stable, their relationships with these personnel seem to be more close and, as a result, students are in a more growth-oriented environment.

All programmes surveyed refer to the improved, more personalized relationships that are fostered. Andrews (1976, p.71) discusses the strong supportive relationships that develop among students, and between them and their college staff and cooperating teachers. Andrews attributes these relationships to the small-sized groups and to the innovative nature of the programmes. Horowitz (1974, p.84) makes the same points. He reports the high value that students place on being treated as equals by university and school personnel. Students of the WSITP programme (Hammond, 1978) also appreciated the close contact between the supervisors and themselves. These reports emphasize that when treated as persons, as adults, and as teachers, student-teachers are more likely to grow professionally. In other words, the better climate for growth seems to be when students are regarded as teachers who are learning rather than as learners who are practising teaching.

Another important aspect of these improved interpersonal relationships is an outcome arising from the close bond of togetherness which tends to prevail among the group of students. Whether over the inevitable cup of coffee, while in classes, during Horowitz's (1974, p.85) "group therapy" sessions, or in the casual chance meeting of students, much learning from each other tends to occur. As the students in the group often experience the same dilemmas, stresses, and problems, so they are able to share these concerns. Similarly, as their positive experiences are much of the same kind and in familiar settings, students readily share their delights. The supportive and helpful role provided by peers is viewed by most programme reports as a major success factor.

In his description of the University of Massachusetts programmes Turney (1977, p.7) points out that a vital component of any programme should be one in which

students develop both the capacity and inclination for reflective analysis . . . an ability to reflect not only upon one's own behavior but about the assumptions upon which one's behavior is based.

Many programmes seem to accommodate this essential component of reflective analysis. Some aspects of reflective analysis may take place within "group therapy" sessions, while reflective analyses of a more personal nature are facilitated by other learning techniques, such as flexible timetabling, modular computer-assisted instruction, and use of contract systems.

Another essential component of any alternative programme is the strong emphasis on a more appropriate and more valuable clinical experience. All programmes seem to emphasize a better coordination of campus-school requirements in order to achieve better integration of theory and practice, and the adoption of more functional and effective clinical supervision processes.

Likewise, alternative programmes seem to be characterized by more effective systems of clinical supervision. Most programmes refer to the use of formative assessment and supportive evaluation.

The principal, the cooperating teacher, the college staff and even other students cooperate with the student in a supervision process that is freed from the anxieties of the summative assessment which tends to accompany supervision of regular programme teaching practices. A striking feature of a number of the alternative programmes is the deliberate attempt to familiarize all members of the supervision process with the clinical model, for example, Hammond (1978), MacRae (1977, p.2), Robinson (1976, p.66). As a consequence, supervision experiences in alternative programmes tend to be, as Worthen et al. (1975, p.230) state, "more intensified, more diversified, and/or more extended than is true in the regular programs."

A major claim and aspiration of *all* alternative programmes is the bridging of the campus-school situations, usually with a view towards reducing the perceived theory-practice dichotomy. Because most alternative teacher education programmes relate to the professional year of a student teacher's programme, many include among their programme objectives statements such as:

1. "Students learn to become teachers when their theoretical and practical experiences are concurrent" (Horowitz, 1974, p.83).

2. "To prepare teachers who have integrated their academic and educational theory with experience" (Humphreys, 1970, p.5).

At the University of British Columbia one programme, The School-Campus Interaction Programme, was structured to achieve this very purpose.

The integration of theory with practice seems a logical outcome of programmes which coordinate campus requirements with school/clinical experiences. According to Hammond (1978), school-based assignments and workshops conducted within the context of the long term teaching practice seemed to have yielded benefits to school students and the teachers, as well as the student teachers themselves. Enthusiasm for the linkage between theory and practice was also expressed by Robinson (1976, p.62) but not without the "blood, sweat and tears" by the university personnel involved. However, MacRae (1977, p.29, 30) reports in an evaluation study that the perceptions of students, university personnel and cooperating teachers reflected serious doubts as to the effectiveness of the COAST project in overcoming the theory-practice problem. Maybe, as yet, some caution may be in order before accepting categorically that alternative teacher education programmes successfully integrate theory and practice.

### Implementation and Administration

Alternative programmes involve a number of college staff participating in the decisionmaking of, and taking greater responsibility for, the progress and development of a group of student teachers. This entails team planning, which as a managerial process needs to be facilitated by the establishing of clear organizational patterns of meeting times, division of labour, and so forth.

The University of British Columbia outlined a number of concerns relating to administrative and support structure and availability of resources which need to be considered. Such concerns included the choice of adequate and appropriate instructional staff; selection of a programme coordinator; the provision of necessary secretarial and other support staff; the availability of university staff consultation services in curriculum development, measurement and evaluation; the granting of adequate financial support, the provision of sufficient and appropriate physical space; and the determining of necessary timetable arrangements. As Turney (1977, p.8) points out, once the organizational mechanisms are sorted out, alternative programmes tend to function smoothly.

Two basic features of the planning of alternative programmes seem critical for success. First, the future employing authorities must be willing to accept graduates of the alternative programmes. Writers such as Gubser (1977), Hammond (1978), Worthern et al. (1975), and Horowitz (1974) all emphasize the importance of this concern. Second, the University or college should accede to at least a partial modification of the regular programme requirements. The alternative programmes of the University of British Columbia and of the University of Massachusetts were able to achieve this fully. However, other programmes such as Project MEET at McGill and WSITP at Churchlands were faced with operating within the regular programme course work requirements. Only the smallest amount of modification apparently was possible and in both examples students commented negatively about the excessive work requirements. Both the major planning concerns stated above need to be carefully assessed before implementing an alternative programme.

A feature of alternative programmes is the nature and extent of improved relationships that seem to emanate between campus and school. Better, more systematic relationships between school and campus seems to have the effect of breaking down the respective myths held toward the other. School personnel less often view college personnel as occupying some "ivory tower" positions, and college personnel are less likely to see the school personnel as impervious to change, and burdened by the notion that is often conveyed to students: "Forget all that theory you learnt at College; here is where it really is at!" Probably the most distinguishing feature of alternative programmes in respect of campus-school relationships is the shared responsibility and planning of students' progress which seems to prevail.

An important concern in the administration of an alternative programme is whether or not the programme is achieving what it claims. Several programmes have incorporated evaluation strategies into the operation of their programme. Some of these, such as Project MEET and the Western Ontario Corrections and Alternative Programme, were of a long-term evaluation. Others, such as WSITP and especially at the University of British Columbia (Worthern et al, 1975), involved the use of an external evaluation. Turney (1977, p.9) considers whether or not evaluation by an "in-member" merely reflects the time, involvement and commitment of those who participate in these programmes. For this reason, the use of external evaluations is more objective and perhaps more valid.

A general trend to emerge with alternative programmes has been the selection of the best available students (Robinson, 1976, p.56); Hammond,

1978). The process of screening and selection tends to entail a number of features. Information is derived from a course-grade point average, amount of work experience, breadth and depth of subject matter, results on test scores, along with a number of subjective assessments on various criteria, such as interviews. Students are usually made aware at an early stage as to the probable workload involved in the programmes, yet good candidates tend to come forward. Alternative programmes are usually characterized by high retentive power.

### **Anticipated Difficulties and Problems**

Among the various problems and difficulties of alternative programmes are some which are substantive in character, while others relate to more operational concerns.

Turney (1977, p.8) raises a number of potential problems and questions when discussing the features of the University of Massachusetts programmes. First, has a commitment to so many alternative programmes operating simultaneously nurtured an intellectual "cop-out", that is, "an anything goes" syndrome? Second, can the central authority, such as the faculty of education, play the dual roles of programme nurturer and critical evaluator? A fascinating yet highly credible question is: As approaches are compared, evaluations are shared, and revisions undertaken, do the alternative notions remain or is a "creeping" sameness likely to arise? In other words, how might an alternative programme retain its unique character. Another question considers at what point does personalization become dangerous by limiting a student's range of exposure to ideas, and by isolating faculty from competing points of view. Maybe alternative programmes have the potential to become the haven of the radicals, the discontented, and the dissatisfied. This might apply particularly to those staff who are restless and anxious for change.

At a more specific level, a number of potential problems and anticipated difficulties are discernible. The first relates to clear communication and understanding of the organizational and expectation aspects of the programmes. For any group of participants in planning and/or refining the programmes, the establishing of involvement criteria for all concerned is vital. As well, the goals and intentions of the programmes need to be clearly presented to all the participants. Within the context of the teaching practice periods, the three-way decisionmaking process regarding practice requirements is quite necessary in order for the field experience of the alternative programme to be viewed as being something beyond the extended normal teaching practice period.

A second specific problem deals with the need for careful selection of cooperating teachers and schools. Identifying and applying the appropriate criteria could be problematical but the value derived through careful attention to this concern could have far-reaching implications.

Third, the lack of flexibility at a campus constitutes a serious difficulty. As Horowitz (1974, p.85) states, "you cannot change one part of the program without reshaping the remainder of the program as well."

A fourth specific problem refers to the powerlessness of the college staff managing an alternative programme, especially in those programmes which are small-scaled. A great deal of time invariably is consumed with negotiating and retaining goodwill with other college staff and with non-cooperating teachers. There seems to be definite value in release time being given to programme supervisors for this particular reason alone. Andrews (1976, p.70) refers to alternative programmes as being mechanically and administratively a nuisance. Maybe release time for key personnel might help to accommodate these programmes within the institutional structure.

The problems and difficulties associated with alternative teacher education programmes are many and varied. While many are common to several or most programmes, others are idiosyncratic in nature. In the final analysis the people involved at all levels determine when a problem becomes just another concern to be considered, or when it requires major rethinking and new decisions to be made.

### Summary

The nature and function of alternative teacher education programmes is aptly summarised by Turney (1977, p.10) when he states:

... the "alternative program" movement will continue to grow. If it does nothing else it will tend to increase the quantity and quality of dialogue about teacher education, harness the interest and enthusiasm of staff, and provide students with an opportunity to choose a program which seems most relevant to their needs.

A major impression gained from alternative teacher education programmes is one of comprehensiveness. They seem to be associated with, related to, and/or embracing all aspects of teacher education generally. In a sense they almost become microcosms of the teacher education process. Another major impression is the widespread adoption of altern-

ative programmes. A remarkable feature of these programmes is the striking degree of similarity to be found among them.

Finally, many persons are critical of present day, regular teacher education programmes. The majority of revisions and suggestions for improvement that are advocated seem in accord with many of the goals/objectives of alternative programmes. Hopefully alternative programmes will be viewed as much more than some kind of panacea to all teacher education evils. As Cross and Minnis (1976, p.38) caution, "every new program should be organized around some sound theory instead of around the composite of negative reactions to the regular program." Presumably, alternative programmes have in their own right a highly respected place in teacher education in Australia and New Zealand.

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## BEGINNING TEACHERS : A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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### Introduction

*The Sociology of Teaching* (Waller, 1932) was one of the earliest publications to focus attention on the beginning teacher. In the latter part of this work, Waller briefly described the personality changes, such as expansion of the ego and ego frustration, which he found to occur in first year teachers. He also detailed his observations of the marked contrasts between experienced and inexperienced teachers, mentioning, for instance, that "discipline is more a problem . . . to the beginning teacher" and that "a new teacher is more likely to have an idealistic conception of the student-teacher relationship than is the older teacher" (Waller, 1932, p. 435). Although these perceptive comments still seem to have much relevance today, Waller never developed them further and, in the overall context of his treatise, they hold little prominence.

During the 1940's and early 1950's a small number of studies of beginning teachers, comprising mainly doctoral dissertations (e.g., Wallace, 1948; Homoeier, 1953; Elliot, 1954), was completed. However, in the late 1950's, particularly in Britain and the United States, the joint problem of teacher shortages and the high drop-out rate of young teachers gave rise to a new wave of studies on beginning teachers. Probably the best known of these researches was that undertaken by Mason (1961) on the status and career orientations of a sample of beginning teachers in the United States. Using postal questionnaire data, Mason was able to highlight some of the apparent reasons for the high drop-out rate of newly qualified teachers at that time (e.g., inadequate salary, desire to move into a higher ranked occupation). While the methodology of Mason's research and his conclusions relating to teacher commitment appear suspect (Ramsay, 1978), the publication of his report in 1961 clearly identified the beginning teacher as the subject of much needed research.

In the last two decades, the recognition of this need has resulted in reports of over 250 studies and a plethora of literature about the beginning teacher. In categorising this material, a broad distinction has emerged between the theory-based research and literature and that which is orientated toward the professional development and practices of beginning teachers.

### Research and Literature on Professional Development

Much of the research and literature in this category has been reviewed extensively elsewhere (Ennis, 1972; Taylor & Dale, 1973; Ussher, 1977;