

AÇILIŞ BİLDİRİSİ

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Teacher Training and Innovation in the United States

I first want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to visit your beautiful country. I am grateful to the Ministry of Education and Usak University for their support and, in particular, want to express my thanks to Dr. Aynur Bozkurt Bostanci for her efforts to bring me here. And, thank you all for attending this session today.

Teacher training in the United States has undergone a tremendous metamorphosis since the early days of public education. In its early years beginning in the 1600s, it was a system of rote memorization where children were expected simply memorize facts and has developed into a system that emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving. In my short time today, I would like to provide you with (1) some historical background about the education system in the United States, (2) a summary of trends in teacher training over the past 30 years or so, (3) a glimpse of what is happening today in teacher training, and finally, (4) some of the challenges that lie before us in meeting the needs of an increasing diverse population of learners both in terms of cultural and intellectual diversity. Never before has communication among scholars worldwide been so readily available and we have much to learn from each other's practices. It is my hope that through attendance at this conference I will be able to take back to the United States some important insights and helpful information from the Turkish educational system and from other countries who are participating here today and that some of our experiences in the United States will be helpful to you.

A Brief History of the United States System of Education

The earliest schools in the United States were founded by religious orders such as the Mennonites and Quakers during the 17th and 18th centuries. These religious groups came to America with the promise of religious freedom and they immediately began assembling schools with a dual purpose. First, schools were intended to foster religious teachings to ensure the development

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and continuation of a moral population. Second, schools were intended to teach children to become productive members of society both socially and economically, and to be well informed participants in the democratic governance of the country. An educated populace was in the best interest of the country.

With the passage of the Bill of Rights in 1781, the Tenth Amendment to our Constitution clarified that 'powers not delegated to the federal government "are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people.'" Because Education was not specifically mentioned as a federal power, the responsibility to adopt appropriate laws and regulations to govern education was left to each of the states. Every city and town was expected to provide for the education of its children and the tradition of local control of education began. The first public high school was opened in Boston, Massachusetts in 1821 and by 1852 the state passed the first compulsory attendance law requiring all children between 8 and 14 years of age to attend school at least three months of the year. By the early 20th century, all states had compulsory attendance laws and the age ranges were expanded.

Although the requirement that all children have access to a free public education and attend school took more than 200 years from the creation of the first schools in America, the call for better teacher training did not begin in earnest until 1837 when Horace Mann became Secretary of the Massachusetts' State Board of Education and advocated for public funds to support the training of teachers. It was under his leadership that the first Normal School was created and the movement spread to other states.

Normal schools were developed to train teachers in the techniques of teaching that moved away from the practices of rote memorization and more toward techniques to foster critical thinking among students. The curriculum was intended to standardize the principles of teaching and pass them on to prospective teachers through direct instruction and hands-on practice. Normal schools, typically a two-year program for high school graduates, emphasized learning about the world around them rather than solely the classical education provided by most four-year colleges. As the importance of well-trained teachers became increasingly evident throughout our history, normal schools gave way to state teachers colleges and universities that now provide four-year programs characterized by solid foundational subject area content knowledge along with

an emphasis on the most up-to-date teaching strategies to foster student learning.

Trends in Teacher Training

How we train teachers in the United States has changed dramatically in the past 30 years. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its report titled *A Nation at Risk*, a landmark report that caused the national discussion on education to focus on the “rising tide of mediocrity” in US schools. Fueled by international comparisons, it was evident that the United States was slowly sinking in the international comparisons with other countries and that something must be done to stem the tide. Although many of the recommendations in that report have never been implemented, it served an important function by raising the collective public consciousness regarding the pressing need for educational reform. Since that time, reforming public education has been a central issue for discussion at all levels and continues today.

We have seen many teacher training trends. Going back to the 1960s and early 1970s, the **Open Education** (or open classrooms) movement was characterized by learning that was initiated and directed by students rather than the teacher. Such a student-centered approach was intended to take advantage of student interests and curiosity to drive instruction, particularly at the elementary level. High schools saw a decline in required courses and an increase in electives intended to give students more choice in their learning. In time, although many teachers and students prospered under the approach, less effective teachers struggled with it. As a result, the research began to show a decline in student achievement overall and the approach was abandoned.

As early as 1937, researchers began to discover that small groups working together to achieve a common goal were more successful in attaining that goal. Thus, **Cooperative Learning** began. Cooperative learning had groups of about four children with diverse skills working together to reach learning outcomes. In about the 1940s, John Dewey discovered that such an approach had significant implications outside the classroom in helping to develop social skills, teamwork, and students became more active in building their own knowledge and the skills necessary to function in a democratic society. From the 1970s through the 1990s, researchers continued to find that children who worked together in small groups became more respectful of their group peers, developed better

communication skills, and were more critical thinkers in their problem solving. Research into the use of cooperative learning continues today.

As we move into the 1980s, **Mastery Learning** gained some prominence. Built on the idea that *all* children could learn given sufficient time regardless of their physical and/or intellectual disabilities, teacher preparation focused on training teachers to provide varying amounts of time and instruction based on the individual needs of students. Teachers were to (1) clearly specify what was to be learned and how it would be evaluated, (2) allow students to learn the material at their own pace, (3) assess student progress and provide appropriate feedback or remediation as needed, and (4) test that the learning criterion had been achieved. This method showed great promise for increased student achievement but collapsed under the difficulty of managing the instruction of so many students, each at a different point in their learning.

As the body of research on teaching began to grow and become more sophisticated, specific techniques emerged that would help organize instruction and put into practice what we knew about good teaching at the time. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, **Mastery Teaching** swept through teacher professional development and training. The strongest proponent of this approach was Madeline Hunter who posited eight steps that every lesson should be organized around: Review--start the lesson with a review of previous material; Anticipatory Set--focus student attention on the material to be presented and what they are about to learn; Objective--statement of the objective for today's lesson; Input and Modeling--presentation of new material and modeling the expected behavior as appropriate, Checking for Understanding--determine the extent to which students seem to understand the material presented; Guided Practice--providing time in-class for students to practice the material presented while the teacher is present to help them; Independent Practice--students practice the material after class or at home using what was just presented; and Closure--presentation or activities that are teacher-directed and bring the lesson to a close. Although all eight steps were not necessarily present each day's activities, the full lesson contained all the steps. This model's contribution was that it demonstrated teaching as a systematic process that focused on good teaching practices.

Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* shifted the teacher training emphasis from a behaviorist perspective to constructivism and emphasized self-reflection and constant assessment. This is an important

distinction because it caused teachers to self-assess the extent to which they taught the material effectively each day but also to consider whether or not students successfully learned it. Danielson's model focuses on four domains important to effective instruction: (1) planning and preparation, (2) the classroom environment, (3) delivery of instruction, and (4) professional responsibilities. Each of the four domains is comprised of a number of specific elements that help to clarify the domain. This important contribution has been used as the foundation for much of teacher training, mentoring, professional development and teacher evaluation. My home state, Pennsylvania, requires the use of the Danielson framework in the assessment of pre-service teachers.

Common Core Standards (English/Language Arts and Mathematics) are the latest effort to standardize the K-12 curriculum for all students across the United States and to provide a foundation for accountability assuring all students have the same opportunities to learn. Increasingly, at both the state and federal levels, schools and teachers are being held accountable through testing for the achievement levels of the students they teach. These high-stakes tests are administered annually and there are financial penalties to districts who do not measure up. In recent years, most states in the United States developed their own sets of state standards that students were expected to attain during their years in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Although there were many similarities across the states, a common set of core standards were developed in English/Language Arts and Mathematics to assure that teachers and parents have a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live. These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and

- Are evidence-based.

As you can see, trends in teacher education over the past 30+ years have moved us from very student-driven instructional models (e.g., Open Education, Mastery Learning) to increasingly more structured approaches to education (Coopertive Learning, Mastery Teaching, Danielson's Framework for Teaching, and Common Core State Standards). As each model became popularized, teacher training changed to fit the current trend. Training around the Common Core State Standards, with its emphasis on informational text, real problems and critical thinking will cause teachers to innovate and think of new ways to teach children. Let's examine more specifically what is happening in teacher education today.

Today in Teacher Education

Teacher education today is multifaceted. Today's teacher education programs are standards-based, require documentation and accountability, have higher academic standards for admission and retention, and require significant field work to adequately prepare prospective teachers to function in actual school settings. More than ever, teacher education curriculum is **standards-based**. We structure our courses to focus on best practices, comply with state certification regulations based on a set of state approved standards. In addition, standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, formerly NCATE/TEAC), a national accrediting agency, are considered in the redesign of professional education programs. Other professional organizations such as National Science Teachers Association, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council for the Social Studies, International Reading Association, Association for Childhood Education International, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children also play a key role in influencing the content of teacher education programs.

Accountability

Schools today are increasingly held accountable for what their students achieve and levels of acceptable annual progress have been established. The pressure is on for all schools to produce positive results. You can't help hearing

that many of our schools are troubled. All you need do is tune into the evening news, pick up a newspaper, or listen to talk radio. The outrage is everywhere and the blame is being placed squarely on teachers, administrators, and what is perceived to be a dysfunctional system. When commentators and newscasters talk about failing test scores in some of our most troubled schools, sadly, they are not wrong. Teachers and administrators bear the brunt of that criticism and the pressure is on them to turn troubled schools around. Interesting, in the national discourse on troubled schools, parents seem to have no role or responsibility in schooling and remain unscathed. Every critic of the schools continues to miss a very important part of the equation--the impact of parents on a child's life, education, and achievement. Parents set expectations, provide support at home, and have a responsibility to assure their child(ren) are at school, on time, and ready to learn. How can we continue the discourse on improving our nation's schools without talking about the role of parents in those efforts?

In any case, however, states and the federal government continue to test students and develop annual report cards of school performance. These report cards are released publicly and increase the pressure on schools to improve.

Consistent with the focus on testing of students, many states are developing teacher evaluation systems that incorporate a combination of test scores (up to 50% of the evaluation) and multiple evaluations by "highly trained" observers. This evaluation system carries with it the notion of tracking teacher effectiveness over time--something that has never been done before. In other words- teachers should be good with all kids every year. This is one of the primary issues fueling the current teachers strike in the City of Chicago in the US.

Although we have made steady progress in improving the quality of instruction and student achievement, we are faced with many challenges in the years to come.

Technology

The role of technology has changed dramatically and its effective use in the delivery of instruction is challenging. Today's delivery of courses via technology must provide for an integrated model that causes online students to think critically about big problems, develop solutions, build networks with other educators, and provide an avenue to delve deeply into the challenges of

the day. A significantly increasing number of colleges and universities are developing and delivering courses online through sophisticated technology. My own university, Alvernia University, is developing and delivering a series of special education courses that are pedagogically sound and make use of the very latest in technology for the delivery of instruction. We will be seeing more of this type of course delivery from a variety of universities that will open our courses to the world. We will be expanding that online model to other subject areas in the near future.

Special Education

We chose special education as one of the first programs that will be moving into the online world. The field of special education is a relatively new one in the United States, emerging only in the last half century as a legitimate profession with need for uniquely qualified teachers to teach the gifted and talented and students with physical and intellectual disabilities instead of merely a field providing custodial care of children with disabilities. At the federal level, teacher education for special educators had its genesis within the 1965 creation of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, and for the next two decades, special education and its teachers largely developed as a separate entity from general education, both in its curriculum and its physical location.

In the 1990s, special education in the United States shifted away from that separate model, to a model of services provided as often as possible within the mainstream of general education. Today, 85% of all children with disabilities are educated for most or all of their school day alongside their non-disabled peers. This philosophic and programmatic shift has naturally created a need for change in how special education teachers are prepared, and in the types of roles they play in our American schools. Three of the most dramatic differences in public policy and educational practices that are observable within both special education and general education teacher education programs within the last decade or so include **first**, the increase of Dual Certification Programs, **second**, the focus of methods courses on Data-driven Differentiated Instruction, and **finally**, preparation for collaboration across disciplines that are routinely now involved in inclusive classrooms.

In many American teacher education programs, teacher candidates are encouraged to complete courses in both special and general education topics, with coursework minimally including an introduction to how various

disabilities can impact a child's learning, what the various federal and state laws require in order to address the needs of these children, and what evidence-based methods work best for struggling learners. For those achieving certification to teach in both areas, programs require more college credits and take more time than a typical college student might need to graduate, but ultimately these programs prepare the student better for any type of teaching position they secure.

Data driven, differentiated instruction has become the focus of teaching methods classes, as it has also emerged as a nationwide policy expectation. In other words, gone are the days when one or two exams determined whether or not student achievement was occurring. Now, frequent and even daily checking for understanding, measurement of class and individual learning goals, and adapting one's teaching to meet the needs of learners are the pedagogical habits we hope to instill in our pre-service teachers. In schools, accountability for student achievement is at an all-time high with the clear responsibility resting with a teacher who can identify what's been effective and what needs to change, so that all students can meet the objectives of what is evolving as a national core curriculum.

Interdisciplinary collaboration among both regular classroom teachers and special education teachers is a reality in today's schools, and so our teacher education programs are beginning to include more awareness of that reality. Within inclusive classrooms, very rarely will there only be one teacher as the sole professional and a room full of children; more often, the teacher will have a variety of professionals present in the classroom, such as Reading or Speech teachers, support staff such as behavior assistants, and even outside agency personnel such as nurses or therapists coming and going throughout the day, all working together to address the wide range of needs of the classroom's diverse population. A popular model for inclusive classrooms is often to have a general education teacher co-teach, or team-teach, with a special education teacher. Teacher candidates are learning not only how to orchestrate the various players involved through careful scheduling and planning, but also how to interact professionally and collaboratively with many others for the benefit of each child.

A final emphasis in the preparation of special education teachers is the skillset associated with how parents of children with disabilities are involved in their education. The federal law specifically requires parent participation but future teachers need to develop the ability to go beyond the letter of the law and

to the spirit of the law. When differences occur between teachers and parents, a team outlook must be fostered, so that ultimately each child has the maximum opportunity to benefit from their years in public education.

Challenges

We have many challenges before us in teacher education in the United States. To name but a few...

- Educational reform at all levels driven by powerful amateurs
- Political factions are pushing the dismantling of traditional teacher education and advocating for quicker alternative routes to teaching.
- Many private companies are providing alternatives to traditional graduate education for professional development and in many cases are nothing more than profit centers
 - The dismantling of K-12 public education to create profit centers
 - We are in a state of transition in our state and national accrediting agencies and it is still somewhat unclear what will be required.
 - There is an increasing focus on student outcomes without consideration of the inputs as well as the use of data in continuous improvement processes in accreditation reviews.
- There are continued national efforts to disparage traditional preparation programs to pave the way for privatization
 - Uncertain job prospects for graduates because of major cuts to public education and the economy; however, special education, math, science, and bilingual education remain best employment prospects
 - Attempts to measure student growth in classrooms of teacher preparation program graduates as an indicator of program effectiveness

Conclusion

Teacher education and training has gone through some major changes over many years. I have provided you with some historical background about the education system in the United States and discussed some of the major trends in teacher training over the past 30 or so years. Today's teacher training in the United States provides us with an exciting time to make a difference for children. New methods, new ways of determining effectiveness have all contributed to an improving educational systems, yet many challenges remain. In the presence of growing special interest pressure, we must make sure out

teacher training curriculum is training young professionals to meet the needs of all students, including those with physical and intellectual disabilities. We must be constantly aware of the external forces that continually try to chip away at the evidence-based, research-focused teacher training methods we have developed over many years. And finally, through forums such as this conference, we need to work together as a community of worldwide scholars to encourage greater understanding of each other's practices to foster high-quality teacher training for the benefit of future generations of children. We have much to learn from each other's practices and I trust the conversation will continue.