Focusing our Efforts: A Response to Power

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Donald Power's comment on my article has provided further clarification (and maybe a justification) of the possible role of psychological and philosophical thought in developing a defensible ideology for teacher education. Moreover, Power's attempt to relate the three perspectives I advanced as a basis for criticism to those aims of education suggested by Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) is persuasively writen. Yet, in reading the Kohlberg and Mayer article and in examining the additional typological categories suggested by Power, I get a little uneasy with the perceived sense of congruency between the two frameworks and the labels that are add-ons based upon defensible aims of education rather than orientations rooted in what educators do in the field of curriculum (Pinar, 1975).

The attempt to clarify aims of education undoubtedly can be a healthy process and for that reason I applaud Power's comments. Yet, two difficulties may surface. First, attempts to clarify ideals through logical extension and comparison often lead to a state of polemics that diminishes the importance of a "criticism" of teacher education. Such an exchange seldom achieves any high degree of mutual understanding of what ought to be achieved. Second, and what I see to be the fundamental issue, clarifying aims of education is not the kind of dialogue necessary for "a probing examination of the underlying premises of programs we offer students and the nature of the improvement we advocate" (Wilson, 1981, pp. 55-56). In other words what is needed is a process of inquiry that focuses on what we are doing in teacher education rather than efforts that seek to first build defensible ideologies for guiding teacher education practices.

Take as a case the teacher education program outlined in the 1980-81 handbook for professional development at Simon Fraser University (1980). The introduction states:

> The heart of the program for students is the practical experience which extends for six months. More importantly, this experiential part of the program is meant to provide a practice setting where theory, acquired during courses in education, is tried out. Further the practica are, themselves, the core training experiences. The P.D.P. student learns in the practical setting through a graduated set of activities spanning the range from observation to teaching. His tutors and supervisors are the School Associate and the

Faculty Associate. Both School Associate and Faculty Associate have a supervisory responsibility.

Naturally this approach to teacher education creates an intense relationship among the student, the teacher and the university associate. Unless the special features of this interaction are fully appreciated, the power of the P.D.P. approach cannot be fully realized. We believe in a phenomenological approach to teacher education. The educative experience begins in the real setting. (p. ii)

This statement includes beliefs and assumptions of pedagogy and human relationships in the education of teachers. It is concerned with fundamental questions about being a teacher. It values human experience and the integration of theory and practice. In short the statement suggests a set of practices for teacher education. A process of criticism then allows those involved in teacher education to make problematic through thought and action the ideals inherent in the practices of the program.

While Power suggests the priority of building a clear and defensible educational ideology, I consider the persistent problem to be a lack of reflection concerning the social, ethical, and political aspects of practices in teacher education. The temptation to dwell only with "the ought" is a luxury we can ill afford in times when constraints are impeding the aim of excellence in teacher education. Efforts to improve, therefore, rest with a reflective examination of those programs we create and maintain in particular situations and not with the clarification of desired aims of education.

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