

# Challenges and Dilemmas of Educating Teachers of Young Children

Lilian G. Katz, PhD

Clearinghouse on Early Education & Parenting

NAECTE - NAEYC

Dallas, Texas

November 5, 2008

## Challenges and Dilemmas of Educating Teachers of Young Children

It is an honor to be invited to speak to you this morning.

I have been corresponding with Sara Davis over a period of several months about this event.

She has given me complete freedom to take up any topics I choose - and that is always a bit frightening. So -- I have agonized quite a lot about how best to use our time together. And the more I thought about it, the larger the number of issues came to mind.

In the time we have I will do my best to take up some of the issues that seem to me to be most pressing. I just wish that I could also offer some positive ways to approach the issues, or some reasonable solutions to the wide range of problems we all face.

As you well know, teacher education in general has become a frequent topic for public comment and criticism, not just in the last couple of years - apparently forever!

In an interesting review of issues concerning research in teacher education, Pam Grossman of Stanford University in article entitled "Responding to Our Critics: From Crisis to Opportunity in Research on Teacher Education" (In Journal of Teacher Education, 2008, 59, 10.)

I would hate to share all the quotes she includes from educators - not politicians - that are scathing criticism of teacher education.

- Oldest quote: Bestor, 1953:

"A reorganization of teacher training and certification requirements along the lines here outlined would...end the preposterous overemphasis upon pedagogy that produces teachers who can talk glibly about how to teach, but who know too little about any given subject to teach it satisfactorily."

- Ten years later: Conant: 1963

"And now I come to a red-hot question: How about those terrible methods courses, which waste a student's time?"

- Most recent of the six quotes is from Levine: 2006

"Teacher education right now is the Dodge City of education: unruly and chaotic"

I am sure you are aware of the piece by George Will also in 2006 in which he asserted that the best way to improve education would be to shut down schools of education and teacher education departments. And I quote:

The surest quickest way to add quality to primary and secondary education would be addition by subtraction: Close all the schools of education. (Newsweek Jan 16, 2006.)

His attack was made easy by the new AACTE standards for teacher education programs with their emphasis on dispositions. Unfortunately AACETE adopted the concept of dispositions, but in order to emphasize political views - not dispositions specifically related to teaching. That is another whole topic for another time!

I hate to think of what George Will might have said if he had seen any standards for the preschool and infant-toddler teacher training.

And there is still also the fairly widespread belief that whatever is wrong with our country or our society is the fault of the schools.

Over and over again the press reports assertions made by political leaders to the effect that we cannot compete in the global economy unless we improve our education system,

Have you noticed how long the business folks have been trying to straighten out educators and insisting that we should be held accountable for the "outcomes" of our work? So now look who's talking! Is the business sector being held accountable for their terrible outcomes and for the mess that their (and our) bank accounts are in?

Note that the collapse of the global economy - as began on Wall Street - was not due to the lack of scientists, but to the very financial experts who have consistently criticized the field of education and not examined their own behavior and its potentially devastating consequences.

Sometimes it seems to me that when it comes to teachers of young children - during the preprimary years - many believe that any woman can do that kind of work. Taking care of young children is after all, "instinctive" to women!

The importance of having more male teachers is another topic we cannot take up today, but should perhaps put on our agenda in future.

Back to the issues in our field ---

- Most of the severe criticism of teacher education is focused on methods courses, or pedagogy, and makes the point over and over again that the main thing for teacher education is to make sure that students *know the subject* they are to teach.
- How does that apply to us? I will return to this question.
- A few studies have shown that the quality of preschool programs is related to the amount of training and the qualifications of the staff. (e.g. Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 2003).

But there are relatively few of such studies.

- A careful review of the effects of teacher's education and qualifications reported in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* and based on the data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning's Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten, involving 237 pre-kindergarten classrooms and over 800 children, randomly selected from six states with well-established state-funded pre-kindergarten programs *yielded no clear benefits from teacher training and teacher education.*

The investigators concluded that "education, training, and credentialing are not consistently related to classroom quality or other academic gains for children". (Early et al, 2006).

How should we interpret this finding? Note the term "academic gains." Perhaps another report will look at social, emotional and intellectual gains. But, I must admit that when I chat with many of you and your colleagues around the country, they admit that they have a very hard time placing their students in really good setting for their practicum experiences.

- So where should we go from here?
  - I have decided to take up just a few of the issues we have to deal with, and I hope we can discuss and share thoughts about them as the day proceeds.
- 

I am sure most of you are familiar with my habit of addressing the main issues in early childhood education in terms of 3 basic questions: (But these same three questions are appropriate for all education, at any age, in any profession...)

1. First, **what** should be learned?

- a. Here, I want to raise the complex question of what should be learned by our students planning to become caregivers and teachers of young children.
- b. If only it were a simple question!

2. **When** should it be learned?

- a. As you know, this is the big developmental question.
- b. Sequence and timing are always relevant issues in the planning any curriculum, any subject, for any profession. The concept of ZPD applies to all learning.
- c. This also refers to the importance of DAP for teacher training and education, i.e. our practices should be DAP

3. **How** is it best learned?

- a. Once we've decided what should be learned and when it should be learned, the next big question is of course, the How question.

- a. Again, we face very complex issues in trying to answer this question.
4. There is of course a **fourth** question that we cannot really address fully here, namely,
    - i. How can we tell how well we have answered the first three questions, i. e. the problems of evaluation or assessment of our effectiveness. And, by the way, when should our effectiveness be assessed?
    - ii. This is a tough one, and should be discussed in the context of the NAEYC professional development accreditation processes.

So I will share with you my thoughts on these first 3 questions, and hope there will be time for questions and interactions, and perhaps some thoughts about follow-up on these issues.

### 1. What should be learned?

- To some extent, answers to this question are related to the characteristics of the students.
- When we consider the whole field, nation-wide, we have an enormous variety of students:
- Our usual or standard undergraduates - meeting grade level requirement
- Undergrads in four-year colleges - perhaps better motivated and better prepared to adapt to college requirements and procedures than many of our CDA and community college students.
  - Community college students - varying levels of literacy skills

- Some already experienced parents and teachers
- Some cannot read; some can, but never do
- Some do not know English very well;
- Some do not know the Spanish or other languages that they might need
- A few should never be allowed near children

But I really want to come back to the central issue of:

### **1. What should be learned?**

- When planning a curriculum for future math teachers, or French teachers, or music teachers, etc. - it is clear that mastery of the fundamental content and skills to be taught -- the ideas and the techniques they will be teaching must come first - sine qua non, so to speak
- But what are the fundamental content, ideas, and techniques that must be mastered by infant and toddler and preschool and kindergarten teachers?
- When taking up this question for the early childhood teacher education curriculum, I propose that there are at least three different kinds of learning goals that must be addressed: (1) knowledge/understanding, (2) skills, (3) and dispositions. (I will omit the fourth category that I usually include in the ece curriculum - namely *feelings* because there just isn't time to explore this complex goal today - next time!
- (It is customary to talk about what the learners should know and be able to do. This formulation leaves

out the importance of 'understanding' and of the dispositions to do when they have learned to do.

- The more I thought about this, the more I wondered how all of us would answer these questions, retrospectively:

(1) **What** knowledge, understandings and skills did I learn that contributed to my becoming an effective teacher of young children?

(2) **When** did I learn the main knowledge, understanding, skills, and dispositions that made me an effective teacher of young children?

(3) **How** did I learn the main knowledge, understandings, skills and dispositions that contributed to my being an effective teacher of young children?

(4) **Where** did I learn all of these?

- But let's look at the first sub-category here:
  - What knowledge/understanding should our students master?
  - What first comes into your mind with this question?
- Child growth and development?
- E.g. Two dimensions of development: the normative and the dynamic dimensions?
  - Importance of insight?
  - A recent article in *Child Development Perspectives* (Vol. 2, No. 2, August 2008. (SRCD) by McDevitt and Ormrod: Abstract: "It appears that courses in child

development do not always have optimal effects on college students' understandings of children"

- They identified several possible factors and hypothesized that "instructors can promote more robust and usable understandings about child development when they use tactics that foster students' *conceptual change*, the process of revising or replacing understandings to accommodate existing new, more adaptive ones.
- Also complained that students over-generalized from their own childhoods and tended to reject views that did not support their own views of their own childhoods.
- Strong anti-research bias and preference for "intuition" or perhaps "what comes naturally" versus thoughtfully.
- This is not a simple question. Over and over again we have all seen hundreds of "missed opportunities" when a teacher might have been able to engage children's minds in really interesting work, but due to his/her own lack of knowledge of alternative responses, missed the opportunity.
- In some sense I think that there is an "early education culture" marked by ways of talking to children that seem inappropriate to me: Too much phony talk "What words could we have used?" "Mrs. Jones is waiting," "We don't do that in this school" when we just did!
- Surely our students are not trained to talk that way to children, but it is nevertheless widespread in our

country. Perhaps because I students were spoken to that way in their own early years in school.

- Let's teach our students to be straight with young children - honest, matter-of-fact, clear, respectful, and yes, sometimes humorous too. But not phony.
- How will our students learn the complex but basic interactive skills required for good early childhood experiences?

Moreno and Valdez (U of New Mexico) published an interesting study in the *Journal of Ed Psych* (2007, 90(2), 194 -206.) in which they compared the immediate and delayed effectiveness of using a classroom case exemplar in teacher education, comparing different presentation formats.

They reported that those students who saw the teaching principles enacted in a video were more likely to employ the methods than those who obtained the same ideas via a case study presented only verbally.

They offered as a summary that "students who learn by observing or reading exemplar teaching strategies are more likely to transfer the modeled strategies to their own teaching experiences than those who learn without a teaching exemplar. In addition, video presentations appear to encourage more modeled answers than text narratives. Although both the video and text conditions showed a decline in transferring modeled answers over time, the

text condition showed a much more rapid decline than the video condition. (p. 202)

"Results encourage using classroom video exemplars to promote students' affect and retention, but suggest that additional pedagogies are needed to promote longer term transfer of theory into practice."

How many exemplars - of what behaviors - are needed? What episodes should be presented on video to our students? How should we decide? And who should decide?

So! What information, facts, ideas, concepts, theories, and so forth should we promise that our students will master?

The concept of ZPD is a useful one. Can we be sure that mastery of that concept will yield positive effects on our students' teaching?

How much of all this information, knowledge, understanding, to say nothing of skills can be offered in a two year AA program or CDA program?

I now want to take up some of these issues in terms of dilemmas that we all have to deal with.

Remember, of course, that a dilemma is a choice between two "horns" each of which has positive as well as negative implications.

### **Dilemma #1: Coverage versus mastery**

- I want to revisit this particular one in more detail.

- All teachers at every level of education face conflicting pressures concerning the extent to which they should emphasize coverage versus mastery of the content and skills to be learned.
- In this sense all teachers are pulled in opposite directions: the more content and skills covered, the less of them students can master, and vice versa.
- Can't do equal justice to both coverage and mastery at the same time.
- We are under constant pressure to expand the teacher education curriculum to cover more content and skills. No one ever offers to drop a component of a program!
- Some of the pressure to expand content and skills coverage comes from teacher educators who urge expanding it to include such important aspects of teaching as sensitizing students to minority cultures, cultural diversity, gender stereotyping, mainstreaming, special education, parent-school relations, computer literacy and so on and so forth.

#### **Advantages of emphasizing coverage.**

- Pressure to maintain or expand coverage of topics (content, skills etc.) in teacher education stems from the sheer expansion of knowledge and information in all related

disciplines. (linguistics, brain research, second language learning, special needs, multicultural concerns, ad infinitum)

- Expansion of knowledge applies to what I call "supply disciplines" such as child development, psychology of learning, methods of teaching phonics, language development, math and science, special education, and so forth.
- In our field our students are required to become generalists in possession of a wide range of knowledge, understanding, and skills needed to teach the whole early childhood curriculum.
- In addition, because our graduates are likely to be employed in settings in which the diversity of children and communities may be very wide, it is difficult to predict what knowledge and which skills are essential and which are merely traditional or simply desirable. So -- there's a lot to cover!
- The main problem in opting for coverage versus mastery is that the teacher education program may easily become a "smattering" approach to education. A "smattering" of this and that, but little real depth and mastery.
- What is covered in the program may indeed be learned by students, but is unlikely to be sufficiently mastered to permit retrieval and application when the candidate is subsequently under fire in the trenches.

- A smattering of many subjects and teaching methods courses is likely to have a weak impact on our college students' ultimate professional competence in the workplace.
- The greater the coverage the more likely our students will feel under pressure to "cram" the course content just to cope with the assignments and examinations. Just get through!
- Their main concerns would have to be stuffing their heads with collections of vaguely related facts and satisfying performance criteria on a laundry list of techniques and competencies. In this way, the knowledge covered is likely to be inert rather than in applicable form.
- When I first taught an undergraduate course, after mainly teaching graduate course, I began by going over the recommended readings list, suggesting which of the various books would be best for various topics, just as I had done with graduate students. I said things like "This book has a very useful chapter on early math development." "If you want some helpful ideas on second language learning, try this book, etc. etc." After I finished this overview of the recommended readings, one of the 19 year-old students asked me "Are you going to tell us which pages will be covered on exam?" I was surprised by the question, and responded by saying "Well, I

don't know yet." The student then said "How will we know what to read if you don't tell us what will be covered on the exam?" To which I responded "Do you mean you won't read it if it is not covered on the exam?" to which she said, "Yes" and I then said (and I don't recommend this!!) "Have you thought about becoming a flight attendant?"

- In the process of coping with these pressures to cover many topics, students may develop a distaste for learning, as well as for the teacher education program.
- Certainly the disposition to be reflective is unlikely to thrive when the teacher education program opts for coverage.
- The cumulative effect of such experiences may be to undermine or inhibit the disposition to delve into problems and to take the responsibility for one's own continuous learning seriously
- The fact that topics and skills are covered in a course sufficiently for students to pass exams does not mean that the mastery is deep enough to withstand the pressure of later "real world" demands. It seems reasonable to assume that opting for wide coverage would have not only low impact, but high candidate dissatisfaction as well.

### **Advantages of a mastery emphasis.**

- A major advantage of emphasizing mastery and reducing the breadth of content and skills covered is that it could allow time for faculty to focus on strengthening dispositions relevant to the students' professional development in the long term (Katz & Raths, 1985).
- If faculty members are to assume a role in helping to strengthen desirable dispositions and weaken undesirable ones, their relationships with students may need to be close, direct and fairly personal.
- The latter seems to depend upon allocating substantial amounts of time to staff-student contact.
- For example, such dispositions as: to be respectful,
- Accepting/patient/thoughtful/resourceful/experimental,
- to consider alternative approaches to teaching,
  - to be open to fresh ideas,
  - to look things up,
  - to cooperate with colleagues, and so forth,
- these dispositions can be addressed more easily when the teacher education course is less preoccupied with coverage and the inevitable pressure it creates, and when it allows time for serious **in-depth** examination of a smaller range of topics and techniques.

- With low pressure on coverage, time can be given to consideration of a wide range of contextual, situational and ethical constraints facing teachers, to the pro's and con's of various practices and other complexities of professional practice. (Several examples were offered)
- Furthermore, close relationships between students and faculty will increase the chances that students will be able to observe manifestations of desirable dispositions in the faculty members who serve as models of appropriate dispositions.
- (Here I would like to introduce the *principle of congruence*, namely that the way we teach our students, should be congruent with the way we want them to teach children - e.g. be serious, respectful, matter-or-fact, straight and not phony, etc. etc.)
- Clearly the range of content and skills to be covered in a teacher education course can always be expanded. It is difficult to argue with the assertion that students should master all the knowledge they will be expected to teach.
- However, if mastery is to be emphasized, some things will have to be dropped from the lengthening list of topics and competencies to be covered.

**Summary.** Given the short life of information, knowledge and skills learned under pressure, the **preferred choice would seem to be to strive toward deep mastery of a small range of really significant content and skills - those deemed essential to practitioners in our field.**

- Furthermore, it may be that the specific content of a course contributes less to its impact than other parameters of the teacher education program, e.g. the **ethos** of the program or institution, the philosophy or ideology it espouses, etc.
- It seems reasonable also to assume that compared to the coverage emphasis, the mastery option would give teacher education students greater feelings of competence and confidence in the knowledge and skills they have learned, and therefore a greater sense of satisfaction with their professional preparation.
- It is likely also that with a mastery emphasis, courses would have a longer lasting impact on graduates.
- However, if the mastery horn of the dilemma is chosen, educators would have to establish some priorities concerning which content and skills deserve the greatest priority in a teacher education program.

**Dilemma #2: Current versus Future Needs of Students**

- During their pre-service training, students are typically at a stage in their development characterized by high dependence on their instructors for direction, prescription, and evaluation.
- Instructors can indulge and gratify students' current dependence by providing what they claim to need in the way of specific guidelines and tips for teaching,
- Or they can resist students' dependency needs and encourage them to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and professional development by withholding specific academic requirements, directions and prescriptions.

#### **Advantages of addressing students' current needs.**

- Pre-service students in our field are so diverse that it is impossible to characterize the typical student here. But chances are that many of them come to the teacher education program after about twelve years of moderate success as students -- in the narrow academic sense of that term.
- Their previous socialization has adapted them to meeting clear expectations, specific course requirements (e.g. specified lengths of term papers), and following explicit criteria by which to maintain good standing in the program.
- The student who asked: "What will be covered on the exam?" was exhibiting adaptive behavior. She had learned to "bone up"

for exams in her Chicago suburban high school, and was therefore a sufficiently successful student to be admitted to the University of Illinois!

- If instructors yield to pressures to continue to reinforce the well established habits of attending to immediate academic needs and procedures rather than to the intellectual content of potentially lasting import, students will feel comfortable in the system, and be reasonably satisfied with their experience of teacher training and education.
- However, the impact of the program, though adequate in the short term, is unlikely to be very great in the long term
- Being good at being a student is not necessarily equal to being good at teaching.

#### **Advantages of addressing students' future needs**

- If, on the other hand, instructors resist such student pressures for an academic rather than intellectual ethos, and offer instead flexibility, open-ended tasks, loosely structured assignments, and encouragement of initiative, independent study, and elective projects, etc., students are likely to suffer anxiety and become dissatisfied with the program.

- They may feel vulnerable to the particular whims of the instructor, which in turn, might engender feelings of insecurity that will weaken the impact of the course.
- \* This dilemma can be examined in terms of the feed-forward effect that is probably generic to all anticipatory socialization.
- The feed-forward effect in pre-service teacher education is caused by the fact that it consists very largely of providing undergraduate students with answers to questions they have not yet asked, and of preparing them for eventualities rather than actualities.
- Content and skills of pre-service courses largely remote and inert to students.
- The underlying principle of the feed-forward effect is that while experience, once obtained, does not change, the evaluation and meaning of it may change as time passes and subsequent experiences and understandings accrue - - **retrospectively**
- The evaluations of the applicability, practicality, and interest of a given course can and most likely will change during the early years of the graduate's career such that what may have been evaluated positively as applicable and/or interesting during the pre-service experience may, retrospectively

following professional experience may be judged low on either or both of these criteria.

- Similarly, experiences students evaluate negatively during the pre-service period may, retrospectively be reassessed positively at some point during the graduate's career -- later on.
- It appears that student teaching receives more positive evaluations during both the pre-service experience and early during professional practice than other components of the pre-service program.
- Teachers often claim that the practicum was the only part of their preparation of lasting value.
- If the hypothesized feed-forward effect is real, it may be that some instructors and supervisors who make students feel uncomfortable during the pre-service period are evaluated positively later in retrospect, and vice versa, that those who help students feel comfortable and satisfied at the time of preparation are negatively evaluated, but only in retrospect.

**Summary.** The major implication of the hypothesized feed-forward effect is that decisions concerning what is in students' best interests cannot be based entirely upon their evaluations of their experiences while they are undergoing them.

- That is to say, the level of satisfaction reported during the experience may be quite different from the level when graduates reflect later upon the very same experience.
- The difficult question is: On what basis should those decisions be made? We seem to be in need of some theoretical and empirical bases to assess the long versus short-term impact of the alternative courses of action available to us.
- So. What do we want our students to be learning during their pre-service training? Who says?

**Here is a major Dilemma #3. Whether to take an Thematic versus an Eclectic Approach to the teacher training curriculum.**

Some teacher education programs are designed around a coherent theme that includes a particular philosophy, curriculum and pedagogical model. There are many in the history of early childhood education teacher training: Montessori, Bank Street, Creative Curriculum, Constructivism, High/Scope, Project Approach, etc. etc.

Every course in the program is committed, in part, to advance the common theme, and to use that theme as a basis for selecting readings, giving feedback and evaluating the students' progress...

- On the other hand, programs without themes generally encourage instructors to "do his/her own thing".
- Individual instructors order their texts, prepare assignments, and evaluate students without any systematic consultation with colleagues or with program policy.
- Very little "commonness" or philosophical coherence exists across courses, except by sheer accident or circumstance.
- The horns of the dilemma then are whether to organize the teacher education program around a main theme, philosophy or a model, or whether to give the faculty license to take an eclectic approach in which each instructor advocates his/her preferred philosophy or pedagogical model.
- This has been the case at the University of Illinois. On one occasion an undergraduate student who was taking two different courses related to teaching reading, said to me "Why doesn't this department get its act together?"

### **The advantages of a thematic approach.**

It seems reasonable to assume that when students receive similar, or at least concordant messages from their instructors, the program will have a greater and a longer impact on their professional practices than if these conditions were not in place.

- By not agreeing upon general approaches to teaching and teacher education or training, a faculty provides fertile ground for controversy.
- Advocacy of a preferred approach to teaching on the part of one faculty member, without casting aspersions upon the judgments of colleagues who espouse other views, presents difficult and almost insurmountable ethical as well as pedagogical conflicts.
- How is it possible to assert that preferred approach A is a DAP way to teach without suggesting that approach B, (or rather approach not-A,) advocated by colleagues, is not?
- Should our students learn a wide range of curriculum approaches?
- To suggest to students that they study the array of alternatives advocated by their instructors and select for themselves the one most compatible with their own predilections may be an abdication of the teacher educator's professional responsibility and role
  - Given that some of our students are likely to be at a stage of development in which clear and unambiguous guidelines or rules for handling the routine tasks of teaching are sought, the presence of a single approach without competing

alternatives may build confidence in students and be more satisfying to them.

### The advantages of the eclectic approach

There is reason to believe that a program organized around a coherent theme and unified approach to teaching will have deeper impact on students' subsequent practice.

- However, a program organized around a coherent theme may well be indoctrinating students into particular views about teaching & learning & leading to resistance to counter-evidence or change.
- A doctrinaire approach is antithetical to the ethos of a university prizing openness to alternative points of view.
- Indeed, an advantage of locating teacher education in a university vs teacher training institution was that exposure to a wide range of ideas & intellectual endeavors was seen as a valuable part of the socialization of prospective teachers.
- Given that students are likely to be at a stage in their development when they crave unambiguous guidelines & "tips for teaching," exposure to competing philosophies & alternative pedagogical models could contribute to confusion & anxiety, & hence dissatisfaction.

- Many undergraduates coerce instructors into providing prescriptions or recipes for action, and thus are unlikely to welcome the examination of an array of alternative teaching methods and philosophies.
- Some students may perceive the eclectic approach as the faculty's abdication of its own professional judgment; in such cases they probably simply dismiss the faculty as a bunch of competing ideologues and develop a united front with their cooperating teachers against the college instructors.
- In such cases it is expected that students would express high dissatisfaction with their teacher preparation. An eclectic approach is also unlikely to have an enduring impact of graduates' subsequent professional performance.

**Summary.** If a faculty adopts a theme or particular educational philosophy, their certitude can become shrill, leading to the indoctrination of students.

- When there is no theme, students free to elect courses and instructors on & instructors are given the option of teaching whatever philosophy they want.
- But students likely will be dissatisfied with the program and the impact of the program on students will be weak.

In conclusion, I want to return to the **principle of congruity**, namely that *the way we teach our students should be congruent with the way we want them to teach children.*

This means that we are clear models of the basics of good teaching. For example, it is not necessary for our students, or young children, to enjoy everything they have to do. In fact, all of us have to do things we don't especially like to do.

- But we can be understanding and respectful of how children feel (and how our students feel), and also indicate that while we understand their feelings, they still have to comply with the require procedures, etc.
- In this case, the teacher/instructor expresses (honestly and straight-forwardly) her awareness and appreciation for the students' feelings about the task or assignment, and then expresses clearly the position she takes, namely "you do have to it anyway" plus perhaps "And I will do my best to make it as interesting and useful as I can."
- Another essential component of good teaching at every level is respect for the learner:
- I suggest that to respect the learner means, among other things, attributing to the learner positive qualities, intentions,

and expectations, even when the available evidence may cast doubts on the learner's possession of these attributes.

- A respectful relationship between the teacher and the learner is marked also by treating learners with dignity, listening closely and attentively to what the learners say, as well as looking for what they seem reluctant to say.
- Respect also includes treating the learners as sensible persons, even though that assumption sometimes requires a stretch of the teacher's imagination.
  - Another major element of respectfulness in professional behavior is the disposition to treat all of those we serve with dignity, even when we disagree with them, or even perhaps dislike them.
  - To respect, accept, and treat with dignity a child or colleague or parent we like, enjoy, and agree with, is easy. We all can do that without much trouble.
  - But it takes a true professional to be respectful and accepting of a child or a student you might wish was absent from the classes or meetings more often! To be a professional also means treating with dignity and acceptance students or parents we might dislike or with whom we disagree. After all, parents - and students -- are just like

people! Some are easier to develop relationships with than others.

- Respect cannot be enacted or conveyed by gestures, trick phrases, or any other phony techniques. It can only be communicated when the teacher's feelings toward learners are based on the deeply and profoundly held assumption that all humans are created equal—not equally tall, or equally mathematical, or equally athletic, musical, poetic, or analytical; or on numerous other attributes.
- But we are all equally human in that we all have dreams, hopes, wishes, fears, and fantasies, and we all want and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- So, let us all do what is in our hands to do as wholeheartedly and as well as we know how - and the rest will follow
- And even if it doesn't we will be doing what is right!
- Carry on doing what is right!

#### References

Early, D. M., Bryant, D. M., Pianta, R. C., Clifford, R. M., Burchinal, M. R., Ritchie, S., Howes, C., Barbarin, O. (2006). Are Teachers' Education, Major, and Credentials Related to Classroom Quality and Children's Academic Gains in Pre-

Kindergarten? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 21, (2). Pp. 174 - 195.

Grossman, Pam. (2008) "Responding to Our Critics: From Crisis to Opportunity in Research on Teacher Education" *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 59, 10.)

Katz, L. G. & Raths, J. D. (1985) "A Framework for Research on Teacher Education Programs.". *Journal of Teacher Education* 36 (6), 9-15.

Katz, L. G., & Raths, J. D. (1985). Dispositions as Goals for Teacher Education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Vol. 1, No. 4. 301 - 307.

Kontos, Susan & Wilcox-Herzog, Amanda (2002). *Teacher Preparation and Teacher-Child Interaction in Preschools*. ERIC Digest EDO-PS-02-11. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Moreno, Rozana, & Valdex, Alfred (2007). Immediate and Delayed Effects of Using a Classroom Case Exemplar in Teacher Education: The Role of Presentation Format. *Journal of Ed Psych*. Vol. 90 (1) 194 - 206.