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Teacher Education or Teacher Training: Which is it?

Abstract

This article makes a critical distinction between the two concepts, teacher education, on the one hand, and teacher training on the other. It is maintained that the title of a program should correspond with the title of an institution. Hence, the expression "teacher training" may have been appropriate when the titles "normal school" and "training college" were in vogue. However, with the advent of the university college, it is argued that the phrase "teacher education" should have replaced "teacher training". Unfortunately, though, the transition has been hampered by confusion in the literature. Reasons for this confusion are explored along with a challenge to rectify the situation.

Introduction

The Toronto Normal School, the first provincial institution for the systematic *training* of elementary school-teachers, was established in 1847 through the initiative of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Schools for Canada West. In 1852 the School was located in Classical Revival style buildings designed for this site by F.W. Cumberland and Thomas Ridout. At first the Normal School had to provide academic instruction for some poorly educated student-teachers, but, increasingly, emphasis was placed on professional *training*. As a result, the Toronto Normal School contributed significantly to the gradual improvement of teaching standards throughout Ontario and it became a leading centre for teacher-*training*. In 1941, the Normal School was moved to a different site and renamed Toronto Teachers' College in 1953. (Italics author's.)

(Erected by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ministry of Culture and Recreation).

This heritage plaque, as several readers may have surmised, is situated in front of the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute on Gould Street in downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The plaque is of interest because, throughout, it assumes that the professional preparation of teachers was that of training and not that of education. Of course, the references are historical and, as such, could be appropriate for the period in which the overview is presented.

However, since the mid-1960s, normal schools or training colleges have been increasingly incorporated into faculties or colleges of education (Gordon and Lawton, 1984). Concurrently, it could, or should, be assumed that most instructional programs have become more academically and professionally oriented. Therefore, it is argued that the term training should only be employed sparingly and cautiously, if at all, in reference to contemporary teacher preparation programs. In short, this article maintains that the primary reference should be to teacher education, and not to teacher training.

Clarification of Terms

Although such etymological distinctions may at first seem trivial, present-day definitions warrant a final reassessment of the two concepts. Indeed, according to Rowntree (1981), the phrase teacher education,

...is wider than **teacher-training** in that it includes not simply a teacher's vocational training (whether **initial, pre-service training** or subsequent **in-service training**) but also whatever general **post-secondary education** he has that contributes to his growth as a person regardless of his future profession. Thus, teacher education courses include the study of one or more **academic disciplines** as well as educational subjects and **supervised teaching practice**. (p. 313)

In other words, education is,

The process of successful **learning** (usually, but not necessarily, aided by teaching) of **knowledge, skills and attitudes**, where what is learned is worthwhile to the learner (in the view of whoever is using the term) and usually (in contrast with **training**) where it is learned in such a way that the learner can express his own individuality through what he learns and can subsequently apply it, and adapt it

flexibly, to situations and problems other than those he considered in learning it. (Rowntree, 1981, p. 75)

In contrast, training is,

The *systematic* development in a person of the **knowledge, attitudes and skills** necessary for him to be able to perform adequately in a job or task whose demands can be reasonably well identified in advance and that requires a fairly *standardised* performance from whomever attempts it. (Italics author's) (Rowntree, 1981, p. 327)

Hence, in this context, education becomes the global concept in that the expression teacher education includes both the theoretical and practical components of a teacher preparation program. The term training is confined more to "well identified" instructional activities which require "fairly standardized performance."

Additional support for this semantic modality is provided by Hawes and Hawes (1982). Specifically, teacher education is defined as,

The very *broad* field of study and instruction concerned with professional preparation for careers in teaching, administration, or other specialities in education, particularly in the levels of preschool, elementary, and secondary education. Also called professional teacher education. (Italics author's) (p. 225)

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the expression "professional teacher education" appears as well within the term education which includes,

1. Any process, formal or informal, that helps develop the potentialities of human beings, including their knowledge, capabilities, behavior patterns, and values. 2. The developmental process provided by a school or other institution that is organized chiefly for instruction and learning. 3. The *total development* acquired by an individual through instruction and learning.... 5. The area of study concerned with teaching and learning, including *professional teacher education*. (Italics author's) (p. 73).

Once again, the phrase "total development" would suggest that education is indeed the global concept. Reference to training is separate from education in that training is limited to,

1. Instruction in carrying out *specific* functions.
2. Supervised practice to develop functional skills and knowledge as in on-the-job training. (Italics author's) (p. 234)

Most noticeably, neither source refers to the expression teacher training. The word training, when defined, pertains to either "standardized" or "specific" duties. As the latter definition reveals, such skills are frequently obtained through "on-the-job" internships. In teaching, such internships might best equate with certain activities related to the practicums. For example, classroom management, field supervision, and certain administrative functions would typically fall within this domain.

Perhaps Hills' (1982) version of the two concepts is most helpful in that a split is made between knowledge acquisition, on the one hand, and knowledge application on the other. That is,

Education deals a great deal with the *acquisition* of knowledge. Training deals more with the *application* of knowledge. Thus, within one learning system, we can find elements of both. (Italics author's) (p. 273)

Further,

...training is a process using a wide range of techniques to modify attitudes, knowledge or skill behaviour so as to achieve effective performance (usually defined as experienced worker standard) in a particular task or set of tasks. It tends to be results-oriented, although within this constraint much training emphasises the development of individual abilities. (p. 273)

The term education, then, includes the total intellectual, emotional, and social development of the individual. Expanded, it comprises the philosophical, professional, and pedagogical components of a teacher preparation program. Conversely, the word training is restricted more to specific, systematic, standardized, well identified, job related, results-oriented practices. Consequently, training involves activities that relate to the mechanical, technical and vocational aspects of the teaching process; activities which might be aptly labelled rote, ritualistic, or repetitive.

It is therefore posited that the expression teacher education should only be employed when referring to contemporary teacher preparation programs. The term training itself might be applied to particular aspects of

the teaching act, but the phrase teacher training should be avoided when referring to present-day teacher preparation programs. The expression teacher training may have been appropriate at a time when teachers were technicians, but surely that era has passed.

Discrepancies

Yet, unfortunately, the literature, past and present, remains plagued with the phrase teacher training. In fact, the expressions teacher education and teacher training continue to be used synonymously and interchangeably throughout most professional and scholarly journals, magazines and newsletters. The question, of course, is why? Why do teacher educators, researchers and school administrators fail to make this crucial distinction? The answer, in part, lies, no doubt, in the fact that many of the earlier sources (Blishen, 1969; Deighton, 1971; Sills, 1968) did not clearly differentiate between the two concepts. For instance, Deighton (1971) uses the titles "professional training" (p. 70), "teacher education in universities and colleges" (p. 78), "in-service training" (p. 79), "sources of training" (p. 80), and "types of in-service education" (p. 81) indiscriminately. Moreover, the distinctions that were made were often conflicting, confusing or contradictory. Good (1973), for example, distinguishes correctly between the terms education and training, but then proceeds to treat the expressions teacher education and teacher training as synonyms. Elaborated, education is defined as,

(1) the aggregate of *all* the processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior of positive value in the society in which he lives;... (3) ordinarily, a general term for the so-called "technical" or more specifically classified professional courses offered in higher institutions for the preparation of teachers and relating directly to educational psychology, philosophy and history of education, curriculum, special and general methods, instruction, administration, supervision, etc.; broadly, the *total* pattern of preparation, formal and informal, that results in the professional growth of teachers: see *teacher education*;... (*Italics author's*) (p. 202)

Alternatively, training is supposedly limited to,

(1) the special kind of teaching and instruction in which the goals are clearly determined, are usually readily demonstrated, and call for a degree of mastery which requires student *practice* and teacher guidance and appraisal of the student's improved performance capabilities;... (3) in a derogatory sense, a process of helping others to acquire

skills or knowledge by *rote*, without reference to any greater framework of knowledge or comprehension. (Italics author's) (1973, p. 613)

Obviously, these definitions parallel those of Rowntree (1981) and Hawes and Hawes (1982) in that education is defined as the major concept and training is defined as the minor concept. The confusion, however, arises with the definition of teacher education which purportedly includes,

(1) *all* the formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume the responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively; (2) the program of activities and experiences developed by an institution responsible for the preparation and growth of persons preparing themselves for educational work or engaging in the work of the educational profession. Syn. **teacher training**. (Italics author's) (Good, 1973, p. 586)

And, herein lies the paradox. Teacher education is defined in terms of education, not training, but Good (1973) insists that the two concepts are synonymous. This posture is further reinforced on pages 587 and 619 where teacher training is again equated with teacher education. To say the least, such subtle contradictions are confusing, especially for those planning a career in education.

At the same time, though, one must be careful not to blame all earlier sources for present-day conditions. Indeed, as early as 1943, Rivlin proposed that,

Teacher education refers to the *whole* range of activities that constitute preparation for, and improvement of members of, the teaching profession. It includes pre-service education for those who have not had teaching experience and in-service education for those who are actually engaged in teaching. The elevation of quantitative and qualitative standards for the profession is reflected in the use of the term "teacher education" rather than the older term "teacher training". Whereas teacher training suggests the development of a rather *narrow* proficiency in the skills or methods of classroom teaching, teacher education connotes the *broad* professional preparation needed for the highly complex task of teaching in the modern world. (Italics author's) (Rivlin, 1943, p. 793)

Shortly thereafter, Munroe (1950) likewise recognized that,

..."teacher education" refers to the *total* educative experiences which contribute to the preparation of a person for a teaching position in schools, but the term is more commonly employed to designate the program of courses and other experiences offered by an educational institution for the announced purpose of preparing persons for teaching and other educational service and for contributing to their growth in competency for such service. (Italics author's) (p. 1374)

In addition, this positive change in attitude was first reflected in the *Education Index* in 1955. That is, "teacher training" ceased to be employed as a major heading in the June, 1953 to May, 1955 edition of the *Index* (Carpenter, 1955, p. 1257). In June, 1955, "teacher education" became the major heading (Carpenter, 1957, p. 1339) and has remained so throughout the years, the latest edition included (Hewitt, 1985). As well, the expression teacher education has been the only term of reference in three successive editions of the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Ebel, 1969; Harris, 1960; Mitzel, 1982). It would seem, therefore, that the blame for the continuous misuse of the phrase teacher training should not lie entirely with our predecessors. In fact, much of the blame rests solely on the shoulders of those authorities (Dejnozka & Kapel, 1982; Knowles, 1977; Page & Thomas, 1977) who presently persist in the indiscriminate abuse of the two concepts. Knowles (1977), for instance, continues to employ the rubrics "teacher education" (p. 4063, "teacher education and training" (p. 4069), and "teacher training" (p. 4070) loosely while Page and Thomas (1977) define the word training as

1. Systematic practice in the performance of a skill.
2. Industrial training.
3. Teacher education. (p. 346)

Conclusion

Surely, by now, the phrase "teacher training" is an antiquated concept. Certainly, the expression "training college" has been widely accepted as an anachronism for some time (Blishen, 1969; Good, 1973; Gordon & Lawton, 1984; Page & Thomas, 1977). Yet, ironically, the expression teacher training remains part of the educator's so-called professional vernacular. Plainly, there is inconsistency in the employment of the two concepts. Either the title of the institution is a misnomer or the program itself is incorrectly labelled.

In the final analysis, of course, this distinction is germane if, and only if, the institution is perceived as a university faculty or college rather

than some sort of pseudo-degree granting community college. And, assuredly, this statement strikes at the heart of the matter. Teacher educators will have to decide shortly, either the colleges (faculties) of education are university colleges (faculties) or they are not university colleges (faculties). If they are university colleges (faculties), then the established vernacular should correspond to the level of the program, which, in this case, would be teacher education, not teacher training. If, on the other hand, they are training or community colleges, the most apt descriptor is, in all likelihood, teacher training.

So, which one is it? A unanimous decision is long overdue. The confusion must cease; there must be consensus in the titles of educational institutions and their respective programs. To date, most educators have slipped badly in this regard, and unless there is an immediate about-face, educators could be relegated, if they have not been already, to the rank of second-class citizens in scholarly and scientific communities.

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