

Teaching The Teachers

Possession of a teaching certificate doesn't make one a teacher.

By Almut Wurzbacher

Ever since I was in high school, I wanted to become a teacher of physical education. Gymnastics, summer camps, team sports, coaching — I loved it all. All my courses and extra-curricular activities were selected with an eye to a future career as a teacher.

I worked very hard during my four years of university, because I knew that I needed exceptionally high marks to get into a faculty of education. The feelings of pressure and worry were always there. But I never counted the cost — not even the \$100 I had to pay each faculty of education just to apply — because I wanted to be a teacher so much.

I was thrilled to be accepted by a faculty of education, and the beginning of September found me at my chosen faculty of education, about to be magically transformed into a teacher.

Unfortunately, my courses were not at all what I expected. The best way I can describe it is to say that I felt as if I, a 27-year-old university graduate, had been placed back in grade one. Not only was I condescended to as if I were a child, but also my courses had little or nothing to do with what I had come there to learn.

What We Studied

- Psychology of education
- History of education
- Philosophy of education
- Audiovisual devices
- Computers
- Navel-gazing

What We Didn't Study

- Testing
- Reporting to parents
- Discipline
- Planning courses of study
- How to conduct lessons
- How to use textbooks
- Establishing routines

Oh, there were exceptions. One workshop was useful in that I learned how

gathering dust in my basement. I wasted \$5,000 and a year of my life.

My experience at the faculty of education has turned me off public education. With my husband (another not-so-proud possessor of a teaching certificate), I own and run a health food store. My children will be home-schooled or attend private schools.

The requirement that all teachers spend a year at a faculty of education not only leaves a bad taste in the mouths of its graduates, but also it screens out talented people who are unwilling to waste a year of their lives.

We are letting many potentially excellent teachers slip through our fingers. Why are we not taking advantage of the willingness to contribute of such people as 40-year-olds interested in a career switch or recent retirees who would like to teach one course a week or idealistic young college graduates who are eager

to serve their nation by teaching in inner-city schools for a few years before they join a big law firm?

Of course, most people can't just walk in off the street and take over a classroom. Alternative arrangements, such as a requirement to demonstrate teaching competence and subject mastery and/or a year of internship, will be necessary. But, in my opinion, students would be better served if aspiring teachers were not required to spend a year at a faculty of education.

(Mrs. Wurzbacher can be found at her health food store in Baden, Ontario.)



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to quilt. Another course taught us about teachers' rights and what to do during a strike. Mostly, however, I learned how to cope with boredom.

I did have two good weeks of teaching practice, but it wasn't nearly enough. During my practice teaching, by the way, I was totally on my own. No one from the faculty of education ever observed or guided me in any way.

By February, I had started skipping classes a lot, going home early. And on March 18, I had a baby, spelling the end of my time at the faculty. I nevertheless was permitted to graduate with a teaching certificate. It is a meaningless piece of paper that is now