Teacher Preparation in the Jesuit Tradition

Rockhurst University, one of the 28 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States, provides a distinctive context for the professional preparation of teachers. Jesuit higher education is rooted in the philosophy of the founder of the Jesuit order, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), who devoted his adult life to advancing the teachings of Jesus. It aims to prepare men and women for “service to others” through a comprehensive liberal education. It is only in service to others, according to the teachings of St. Ignatius, that one becomes more fully human and hence, more fully divine. The Department of Education at Rockhurst University is committed to the preparation of teachers in this tradition. Thus, our programs emphasize three interrelated themes of Jesuit education: a focus on moral reflection, teaching for social justice; and the liberal treatment of subject matter. The themes of Jesuit education and their significance for our programs will be described below.

A Focus on Moral Reflection

One theme of Jesuit higher education is its emphasis on the development of values. According to Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, “Jesuit education is value oriented. There is no aspect of education, not even the so-called hard sciences, which is neutral. All teaching imparts values” (1999, p. 14). Jesuit higher education is decidedly explicit about the values it promotes and the faculty is urged to make these values transparent and pervasive in our work. For example, Jesuit higher education embraces the dignity and worth of
each individual, the prizing of the whole person, the promotion of social justice, and intellectual freedom. In forming men and women in service to others, Father Kolvenbach (1999) noted that the aim “is to challenge our students to reflect upon the value implications of what they study, to assess values and their consequences for human beings.” (p. 14). For the Jesuits, values are cognitive, affective, and direct action. In other words, values are not mere contemplations but are anchored in the head, heart, and hand (Kolvenbach, p. 14). Values provide motives for actions and without them, “one floats, like driftwood in swirling waters” (p. 14).

This emphasis on values is doubly important for students who are preparing to become teachers. Teachers cannot be of service to others unless they, themselves, have reflective value commitments and an understanding of how their decisions necessarily promote some values and inhibit others. As noted above, values provide the basis for purposeful action. Dewey (1938) pointed out that the alternative to a life directed in this way is enslavement to either the whims of an external authority or internal whim, neither of which provides a basis for professional teaching.

Historically, teacher education as an institution has not given emphasis to values deliberation. Teacher education and its political context have changed little since Rugg (1952) reflected that historically, “the standard pattern of teacher education taught that the school was to pass on the social heritage; it was not to appraise the social order, let alone try to change it” (p. 22). Teacher education in this apparently value-neutral tradition contributes to the phenomenon that Lortie (1975) called “reflexive conservatism,” in which teachers unreflectively reproduce the practices in place in schools. Lanier and Little (1986) describe the very practical “show-me/tell-
“me” orientation of teacher candidates, who are anxious to master the technical aspects of their craft. All too often, the processes of schooling and the curriculum as it exists are assumed to be true and natural and the teacher’s job is to acquire technical skill alone.

In our teacher education programs which reflect the Jesuit tradition, this traditional perspective toward schooling is rejected as fundamentally miseducative. Teacher preparation for service to others cannot obscure the value-laden nature of all education or the importance of values inquiry for the teacher. As students deliberate, they may well make choices that are different from the ones that we would make. We steadfastly embrace as one of our values a respect for diversity in perspectives and independent thought. In accordance with the mission of the college, however, we promote inquiry into the larger social and moral consequences of teaching practice and discourage the view that teaching is a merely technical activity.

We also recognize that there are different conceptions of reflection, ranging from the Aristotelian model which relies on the analysis of practical arguments (see, for example, Fenstermacher, 1986) to Dewey’s work in How We Think (1910), which describes what he called “a complete act of thought.” The department of education embraces a pluralistic approach to reflection, but we are agreed that the development of values and moral inquiry are a key emphasis of our programs. While some research in teacher education has supported the idea that values issues are a “mature” concern of learning to teach and that technical and practical concerns must be addressed first, we posit morals, values, and ethics as the professional foundation of technical and practical decision-making.

The implications of this emphasis on moral reflection in our course work are twofold.
First, faculty articulate their own value positions, as they inform our course work and our relationships with students. Course syllabi, the structure of programs, the kinds of questions we ask in class, the relationships we have with students, are all manifestations of our own values. We strive to make clear that these practices reflect our values, that we continually engage in reflection regarding the consequences of our choices for others, and our values are subject to reconstruction. In short, we model the kind of moral reflection we seek in our students.

Second, the content of our course work gives emphasis to reflection on values and the moral embeddedness of teaching. In other words, values themselves are at the center of inquiry, although they do not exhaust inquiry. Again, Father Kolvenbach notes, “Each academic discipline, when honest with itself, is well aware that the values transmitted depend on assumptions about the ideal human person and the ideal human society which are used as a starting point.” (1999, p. 14). Indeed, these questions form the foundations of study in the discipline of educational studies. In methods course work, emphasis is given to issues such as gender equity, as well as the significance of diversity for the classroom. Instructional methods cannot be considered apart from an analysis of the differential impact they may have on individual learners. In short, the Education faculty is committed to cultivating values and moral reflection which unite the head, heart, and hand in teaching practice.

Teaching for Social Justice

Teaching for social justice is a second theme of Jesuit higher education that informs our teacher education programs. Father Arrupe, who served as Superior General of the Society of
Jesus 25 years ago, wrote, “Just as we are never sure that we love God unless we love our fellow human beings, so we are never sure that we have love at all unless our love issues in works of justice” (1999, p. 11). According to Father Kolvenbach, “The service of faith through the promotion of justice remains the Society’s major apostolic focus.” (1999, p. 14). He explained that the Ignatian perspective calls upon all of us “to educate all--rich, middle class and poor--from a perspective of justice” (p. 15). With a special emphasis on serving the poor, Kolvenbach called for Jesuit institutions to challenge their students “to use concern for the poor as a criterion, so that they make no significant decision without first thinking of how it would impact the least in society” (p. 15).

Although no specific conception of social justice is advanced by the church, Father Arrupe set forth the following propositions regarding education from a social justice perspective. First, “we must have a basic attitude of respect for all men and women” (1999, p. 11). This attitude of dignity and respect prohibits using persons as means to personal profit. Human life is an end in and of itself and not an instrument of any other person or of the State. A second principle is a commitment to not use power and privilege to one’s own benefit. Finally, the Ignatian world view demands “a decision to work with others toward the dismantling of unjust social structures so that the weak of this world may be set free to grow as complete human beings.” (1999, p. 11). While charity is an important component of service to others, it does not fulfill the obligation to service.

The idea that teachers have a role to play in social transformation has a history in this country dating back to the Depression era. During the 1930s, the curriculum tradition known as
social reconstructionism advanced the idea that teachers should play a leadership role in advancing democratic social reform. Social reconstructionism never became a dominant curricular force in teacher education or in the public schools. More recently, however, scholarship in the sociology of education, multicultural education, gender studies, critical educational theory, as well as other fields, provides insight into the structural mechanisms within the institution of education through which social inequality is maintained and/or exacerbated. While the education faculty at Rockhurst does not expect its graduates to remediate society’s inequities, the department does expect its candidates to think of the poor first, and practice basic pedagogical principles of teaching for social justice. For us, teaching for social justice includes the following principles, which are drawn from the work of Cochran-Smith (1999).

1. Engage all students in significant intellectual study. This principle stipulates that our teacher candidates need to hold high expectations for, as well as support, the intellectual accomplishments of all of their students. According to Cochran-Smith (1999), “student teachers who enable significant work assume that all students are makers of meaning and all are capable of dealing with complex ideas. They have high expectations for their students and provide opportunities for them to learn academically challenging knowledge and skills” (p. 119). Setting high expectations for learning, with an emphasis on intellectual understandings and inquiry, is the first step in expanding opportunity to learn. Teacher candidates need to know how to help students meet those expectations. They need to know their subject matter, principles of curriculum design, models of teaching, and sound assessment practices. In particular, they need to develop specialized knowledge related to teaching low SES students (see for example, Knapp
2. Teach for critical literacy. This principle signifies that our teacher candidates need to view their learners not as empty vessels to be filled with information and skills, but rather as makers of meaning engaged in interpretation. Critical literacy approaches encourage students to not just learn to read, but to place what they are reading in context and to be able to extract meaning from text. Critical literacy approaches focus on the social construction of knowledge, ideological and technological biases in the mass media and textbooks, and developing an accurate interpretation of one’s social reality.

3. Develop curriculum responsive to students’ interests, concerns, and resources. In short, teacher candidates should develop curriculum that builds on the students’ home languages, firsthand experiences, and interests and view these as resources in curriculum making. Teacher candidates need to exploit the knowledge that students bring with them to school. Again, Cochran-Smith (1999) points out that “it is important to construct curriculum that is multicultural and inclusive so that students can connect meanings in their own lives to innovative as well as traditional curriculum” (p. 122).

4. Work with families and communities. Teacher candidates manifest respect for their students when they support the families and communities to which their students belong. This principle stipulates that teacher candidates learn about the communities in which they teach. In concert with the Jesuit mission of Rockhurst University, they need to seek out resources that support the needs of low SES children, in particular. “Particularly important here is that the teacher demonstrate that she or he is connected to, rather than disengaged from, or (worse) afraid
of, her or his students as individuals and as members of groups or larger communities,” (p. 127) according to Cochran-Smith. Rockhurst’s new literacy center is a manifestation of this effort to be supportive of families and serve the needs of the local community.

5. Develop a commitment to professional growth and affiliation. Teacher candidates who are men and women “for others” need to critically understand the history of their own occupation and the institutional realities which shape their work. Nearly 40% of all teachers defect from the profession within the first five years of teaching. Statistics such as these are indicative of the importance for teachers of seeking out like-minded peers and professional organizations that support their efforts. They need to learn to reach out to teachers at different levels and across specializations who share their commitment to service and growth.

The Liberal Treatment of Subject-Matter

Emphasizing the humanities, the Jesuit tradition in higher education “cultivates the mind, develops the imagination, and enlarges the spirit” (1999, p. 48). Jesuit education places a high value on inquiry and critical thinking, as well as the practical application of knowledge in service to others. Several important premises of Jesuit education point to the priority placed on rigorous intellectual study. First, according to St. Ignatius, God is found in all things. According to Father Callahan, “Since God is found in every thing, in every circumstance, in every movement of the heart, seeking to know ourselves and the world becomes a religious act...In Ignatian spirituality, teaching the humanities, science, and technology is teaching about God’s partnership with human beings in creating an ever better and more just world.” (1999, pp.41-42). In the
Jesuit tradition, there is no conflict between reason and faith. Second, a search for knowledge and understanding of the world is the foundation upon which service to others must be grounded. Social problems can only be understood through rigorous disciplinary perspectives and inquiry. As Fr. General Kolvenbach warned, Jesuit education “judges slip-shod or superficial ways of thinking unworthy of the individual, and more important, dangerous to the world he or she is called to serve.” (1989, 6).

Rockhurst University manifests its commitment to rigorous liberal arts education at the undergraduate level in part through “the core,” a set of general education requirements that all undergraduate students must fulfill. What is distinctive about the core is that it is organized around the idea of “modes of inquiry.” The seven modes of inquiry are the artistic mode, the historic mode, the literary mode, the scientific-causal mode, the scientific relational mode, the philosophical mode, and the theological mode. The courses that satisfy the distribution requirements for “the core” are designed to introduce students to the epistemological foundations of the various liberal arts disciplines and to sensitize students to the different ways in which knowledge claims can be justified.

While “the core” provides a substantial portion of teacher candidates’ liberal arts education, liberal study continues through their course work in the department of teacher education. Our course work is continuous with “the core” in a number of ways. First, as in most liberal arts education, the subject matter of our courses is treated as a basis for reflection and inquiry, rather than as information to be memorized or de-contextualized skills to be acquired. The emphasis on the grounds of knowledge claims continue through the student teaching
semester, as we link their educational studies to the idea of the modes of inquiry. At the graduate level, the Department of Education requires a 14-hour core curriculum which “ensures a consistency and continuity of experience and provides a broad foundation in the theoretical and practical matters involved in teaching and learning” (p. 1). The graduate core curriculum requires study in the psychological and social foundations of education, as well as an introduction to classroom research, teaching, and literacy studies.

We expect student teachers at the undergraduate and graduate level to manifest an understanding of the major concepts and sources of justification in their discipline and qualify knowledge claims, make the sources of claims explicit, and articulate an appreciation for the tentative nature of knowledge. In these ways, teachers manifest a sophisticated knowledge of subject matter (see Raths, 1999) that serves the Jesuit mission well.
Missouri Standards for Teacher Education Programs

Standard 1: The pre-service teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) within the context of a global society and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the subject matter meaningful for students.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher

1.2.1.1 knows the discipline applicable to the certification area(s);
1.2.1.2 presents the subject matter in multiple ways;
1.2.1.3 uses students’ prior knowledge;
1.2.1.4 engages students in the methods of inquiry used in the discipline;
1.2.1.5 creates interdisciplinary learning.

Standard 2: The pre-service teacher understands how students learn and develop, and provides learning opportunities that support intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher

1.2.2.1 knows and identifies child/adolescent development;
1.2.2.2 strengthens prior knowledge with new ideas;
1.2.2.3 encourages student responsibility;
1.2.2.4 knows theories of learning.

Standard 3: The pre-service teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher

1.2.3.1 identifies prior experience, learning styles, strengths, and needs;
1.2.3.2 designs and implements individualized instruction based on prior experience, learning styles, strengths, and needs;
1.2.3.3 knows when and how to access specialized services to meet students’ needs;
1.2.3.4 connects instruction to students’ prior experiences and family, culture, and community.

Standard 4: The pre-service teacher recognizes the importance of long-range planning and curriculum development and develops, implements, and evaluates curriculum based upon student, district, and state performance standards.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher

1.2.4.1 selects and creates learning experiences that are appropriate for curriculum goals, relevant to learners, and based upon principles of effective instruction (e.g. encourages exploration and problem solving, building new skills from those previously acquired);
1.2.4.2 creates lessons and activities that recognize individual needs of diverse learners and variations in learning styles and performance;
1.2.4.3 evaluates plans relative to long and short-term goals and adjusts them to meet student needs and to enhance learning.
**Standard 5:** The pre-service teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.5.1 selects alternative teaching strategies, materials, and technology to achieve multiple instructional purposes and to meet student needs;
1.2.5.2 engages students in active learning that promotes the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance capabilities.

**Standard 6:** The pre-service teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.6.1 knows motivation theories and behavior management strategies and techniques;
1.2.6.2 manages time, space, transitions, and activities effectively;
1.2.6.3 engages students in decision making.

**Standard 7:** The pre-service teacher models effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.7.1 models effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
1.2.7.2 demonstrates sensitivity to cultural, gender, intellectual and physical ability differences in classroom communication;
1.2.7.3 supports and expands learner expression in speaking, writing, listening and other media;
1.2.7.4 uses a variety of media communication tools.

**Standard 8:** The pre-service teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continual intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher:
1.2.8.1 uses a variety of formal and informal assessment techniques (e.g., observation, portfolios of student work, teacher-made tests, performance tasks, projects, student self-assessments, authentic assessments, and standardized tests) to enhance, monitor, and evaluate student progress and to modify instruction; uses assessment strategies to involve learners in self-assessment activities and plans;
1.2.8.2 evaluates the effect of class activities on individuals and class as a whole, collecting information through observation of classroom interactions, questioning, and analysis of student work;
1.2.8.3 maintains useful records of student work and performances and can communicate student progress knowledgeably and responsibly to appropriate audiences.
Standard 9: The pre-service teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually assesses the effects of choices and actions on others. This reflective practitioner actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally and utilizes the assessment and professional growth to generate more learning for more students.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.9.1 applies a variety of assessment and problem-solving strategies for reflecting on practice, influences on students’ growth and learning, and the complex interactions between them;
1.2.9.2 uses resources available for professional development
1.2.9.3 practices professional ethical standards

Standard 10: The pre-service teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and educational partners in the larger community to support student learning and well-being.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.10.1 participates in collegial activities designed to make the entire school a productive learning environment;
1.2.10.2 talks with and listens to students, is sensitive and responsive to signs of distress and seeks appropriate help as needed to solve students’ problems;
1.2.10.3 seeks opportunities to develop relationships with parents and guardians of students;
1.2.10.4 identifies and uses appropriate school personnel and community resources to help students.

Standard 11: The pre-service teacher understands the theory and application of technology in educational settings and has adequate technological skills to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

*Performance Indicators:* The pre-service teacher
1.2.11.1 demonstrates an understanding of technology operations and concepts.
1.2.11.2 plans and designs effective learning environments and experiences supported by informational and instructional technology.
1.2.11.3 implements curriculum plans that include methods and strategies for applying informational and instructional technology to maximize student learning.
1.2.11.4 applies technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies.
1.2.11.5 uses technology to enhance personal productivity and professional practice.
1.2.11.6 demonstrates an understanding of the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding the use of technology in PK-12 schools and applies that understanding in practice.
**Standard 12:** The pre-service teacher understands that teaching is necessarily a value-laden activity and can reflect on the moral consequences of instructional and curricular decisions. The pre-service teacher:

12.1 demonstrates the ability to be a reflective practitioner promoting inquiry into the larger social and moral consequences of the teaching practice.

12.2 demonstrates a capacity to teach for social justice which includes treating all students with dignity and respect.

12.3 promotes a rigorous academic environment engaging all students in significant interdisciplinary study of subject matter.
References


