

## Does PBTE Mean Reform?

*William H. Drummond*

**S**EVERAL months ago I received in the mail an unsolicited, marked manila envelope from a small college in the Midwest. In it was a long but friendly letter from the chairman of the education department entreating me to review an enclosed stack of course outlines. According to the letter the chairman had assumed leadership initiative at his college and, with the approval of his president, had directed his faculty to move immediately, if not sooner, to a performance-based teacher education (PBTE) program.

The college, the chairman wrote, wanted to be one of the first in the region to offer performance-based programs. His department faculty had studied, he said, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education publication, *Performance-Based Teacher Education: What Is the State of the Art?* (written by Stanley Elam), and had applied the criteria for PBTE programs found therein. The chairman said he wanted me to read their materials and to endorse them, if I were of a mind to do that sort of thing.

You can guess what my reading of the course outlines revealed: The faculty of the college had kept the same courses as before. Each professor had analyzed the midterm and final examination questions he/she had been using and, based upon those questions, had developed extensive lists of behavioral objectives which were included in the "new" course outlines.

Although dismayed by what I read, I had to admit that their work had at least two redeeming features: (a) the professors who taught different sections of the same course had had to work together to develop a common set of objectives; and (b) the students enrolling in a course would know at the outset the substance of the materials upon which they would be examined. But what about the overall effect? Why would a chairman, or a department faculty for that matter, want to change the trappings but not the substance of a program? Why would a group of intelligent people go to all that work just to be able to call a program "performance-based"? What caused them to miss the meaning or intent of the "State of the Art" paper?

I have taken pause in recent weeks to reflect on the communications I had with the department chairman of that Midwestern college, his misinterpretations of PBTE, and, indeed, communications in general about

the meaning of PBTE. I have wondered: Have the intentions of people who have been associated with the PBTE movement been clear? To most people involved in teacher education and staff development in schools and colleges, is PBTE seen as a set of empty slogans? Or do most people see PBTE as a means for reform, an effort which might change the way students and teachers work together in schools? How can we encourage leaders in education to deal with the broader issues of preparation, personnel development, professionalism, and democratic management as they consider PBTE?

### What Are the Issues?

What are the key issues in PBTE? Here is the list I came up with:

1. Can some of the important elements or features of the dynamics of teaching be observed, described, and learned by adults who want to be teachers?
2. Do we have an adequate research base or the necessary assessment measures to field PBTE programs?
3. Should PBTE programs prepare people for a variety of educational roles, variously described, with a variety of styles and models for teachers, administrators, educational specialists?
4. Will the prespecification of objectives or motives limit the subsequent options or freedom of choice of learners undergoing preparation experiences?
5. Do we have the instructional materials and facilities we need to field quality PBTE programs?
6. Should teachers at all levels be viewed as autonomous professional people capable of working independently on some problems, of working cooperatively on others, of making sensitive and rational decisions based upon a body of recognized professional knowledge?
7. Should educational decisions be decentralized so that more of the control of educational resources is placed at the building level where parents and teachers can influence resource allocation?
8. Is it necessary that practicing profes-

sionals at all levels share in the governance of professional preparation?

9. Should access to the professions (medicine, law, education, etc.) be more open and less susceptible to institutional racism?

10. Must teacher education and staff development be viewed as career-long?

### Systems and Power Sharing

The issues given are not new, nor are they peculiar to PBTE. As one reviews the list of issues one can place most of them into two larger topics or problem areas: (a) the application of systems technology to teacher education, and (b) power sharing. (The reader should note that neither of these topics usually is greeted with warmth or joy; but let me not digress further.)

Most of the people who have been leaders in the PBTE movement are good people. Most have felt that the conditions for learning and teaching in American schools and colleges need to be changed so that there is more interest, more involvement, more happening. Most have seen PBTE as a means for that reform. Most PBTE leaders would admit, however, that we (all of us) do not have an adequate research base for reform, that we do not have adequate assessment measures for fielding highly specified PBTE programs, that instructional materials suitable for PBTE have not been field-tested and are not available.

Yet most of these same leaders would say emphatically that these necessary and proven elements will not be created or developed unless PBTE and systems technology are introduced into ongoing programs. These leaders are convinced that the installation of a regenerative feedback system into teacher education is the only way they know to force the expenditure of funds for the scientific investigation of the conditions for learning and teaching. PBTE is the only way they know to get the data needed to justify the costs of changing school conditions. They would say that PBTE provides a feasible process for change.

The real "sticky wicket" in PBTE is power sharing. Most of us identified with

the teaching profession at any level have espoused the notion of sharing power theoretically—of allowing students to become self-directive, of encouraging the individual teacher to be relatively autonomous, of making the school or college setting a place for freedom of expression. But as one examines the way we work in our schools and colleges as they exist today, the concepts of power sharing, decentralization, and openness seem shallow or almost nonexistent. We need to face it: when we get down to cases, most teachers and most professors do not want to share power. The little power we have we seem to need to keep.

In my opinion most of the major controversies in the PBTE movement are and have been related to power sharing. Will classroom teacher unions call the shots? Will professors in the educational foundations no longer be needed? Will the college of education have to move off campus? In sum, will *I* no longer be needed (have power)?

Students have been arguing for major change in teacher education since *I* can remember. Teacher educators have urged the broadening of the base of participation

in preparation programs. But only recently have classroom teachers and minority groups organized themselves so that they can demand a rightful share of the power regarding who may work in the schools. In my opinion, a change is here; the governance of teacher education and certification will be shared, and soon. Those who have worked in PBTE have learned that interinstitutional and interorganizational collaboration already is required.

Faith in the future, faith in science, faith in the American democratic ideal are indeed hard to come by in a period of rapid change—especially change in the institution with which one is identified and in which one works. The anxieties associated with change are felt by everyone, and these feelings of fear serve to cause us to be less open and less able to consider further change. What is needed is a process for evolutionary change—a way to use tested experience to change both the direction and the operational characteristics of the system. In my opinion PBTE, if applied with sensitivity, can provide such a process.

—WILLIAM H. DRUMMOND, *Professor of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville.*



bservational  
methods  
in the  
classroom

Edited by  
Charles W. Beegle  
Richard M. Brandt

Practical, and practiced, techniques for supervisors in improving instruction at the classroom level.

Stock No. 17948 96 pp. \$3.50

Discounts on quantity orders of same title to single address: 10-49 copies, 10 percent; 50 or more copies, 15 percent. Please make check or money order payable to ASCD. Order must be prepaid unless on official institutional purchase order form. Shipping and handling charges added to billed purchase orders.

Order from:  
Association for Supervision  
and Curriculum Development  
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Copyright © 1974 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.