

# Challenges of Teacher Educators

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Every generation depends on its school system to prepare its future citizens. Living in a changing world where technological developments, as well as political upheavals, create changing and flexible environments in which student teachers are going to work, requires a special kind of teacher preparation. The process of teacher education depends on a double approach: on one hand, becoming teachers require sound knowledge in the discipline they are going to teach, and on the other hand, they need acquaintance with the nature of their future students. Both these domains are not stable, and require adaptation of the process of teacher education. The best kind of such an adaptation depends on two basic features: the first is the perception of teachers as learners who continue to develop their knowledge base throughout their career as teachers. The second feature is related to teachers' perception of students. Because of large scale demographic changes in many parts of the world, the nature of students tends to be flexible. Any wave of demographic movement, such as from African countries to Europe, will express itself in the composition of classrooms. As an outcome of such demographic changes, a classroom might include students from different cultures, religions and mother tongues. This situation creates enormous difficulties for teachers, who as experienced professionals acquire some expectations concerning their students and develop their own individual style of teaching. Both these features develop overtime, and are resistant to change. Still, preparing teachers for the next generation cannot be divorced from the notions of political action and social change.

Teachers have to learn to recognize the specific nature of the students, and to adapt their teaching to the perceived needs of students. Such knowledge includes awareness of cultural background, hopes and fears, and a basic trust of the education system. A central implication of this situation is the development of innovative ways of teacher preparation.

Instead of conducting this process in one education environment student teachers will have opportunities to get to know a variety of education circumstances. This process has to be planned carefully so it includes different environments from teaching new immigrants to teaching of students with outstanding abilities in certain domains. The outcome of such a carefully planned process of teacher education is not the creation of experts in teaching diverse populations. Such expertise can be achieved only after practicing in concrete environments. Still, students teachers who have some experience with diverse student populations will be aware of the fact that teaching in present day complex societies requires flexibility in adapting the teaching process to student needs. Teacher education is a proper environment for experiencing such adaptation attempts.

At the end of each program of teacher education, teachers will have more knowledge concerning adaptation of teaching to learners. Another positive outcome will be a literature of documenting the different adaptation processes.

