

Bernard J. Shapiro *

Scholarly Concerns of a Faculty of Education

Preamble

I would like to begin by thanking Dean Lawson, Professor Ortez y Miranda, and their colleagues at The University of Calgary both for having developed the challenge of this particular conference and for having invited me to participate in it. I was, indeed, delighted to accept your invitation not only because I was interested in the subject but also because the conference was to be held at this particular faculty, at this particular university. I have only visited the Faculty of Education at The University of Calgary once before — during the 1975-76 academic year — and at that time, or at least so it seemed to me, the faculty was suffering the pains of particularly low morale and self-esteem. Since then, I have watched with pleasure the Faculty's advancing maturity, and I feel privileged to be participating with you at this symposium. My only regret is that my previous commitments do not make it possible for me to stay here at the University for the full length of the Conference. Not, of course, that my absence will be any particular loss to each or any one of you. It will, however, limit my own opportunities for learning.

Introduction

To return, however, to "the right blend," it is hard to imagine a topic more precisely in tune with the temper of our times. It would appear that in the years immediately ahead, there will be a period of general uncertainty, one that will introduce doubt about the appropriate purposes not only about university faculties but of all our social institutions and arrangements. This would appear to be the case whether one takes the "long" or the "short" historical view.

Thus, from the long, or perhaps, "Toynbeesque" point of view, one can see the last several centuries as ones in which we have passed from the classical period of the untrammled magic of the "invisible hand" through the "public interventionist" period in which the power of the state was introduced to compensate for what we came to regard as unacceptable consequences of the free market, whatever that same market's more general advantages, were seen to be. At present, even this special combination or mixed model seems no longer able to bear its burden. We are, in fact, coming to suspect that we may not be able either to avoid the iron law of oligarchy or to countenance the social costs of the adversarial system so embedded in our present arrangements. We are, thus, beginning to cast around for new models — either more cooperative or more authoritarian ones. In the light of these at present half unconscious explorations, all of our institutions will be re-examined.

Even on a much narrower historical scale, the forty years since the end of the second world war, the changing social/psychological contexts of our society virtually ensure further institutional evaluation. The period immediately following 1945 was, it seems to me, characterized by the triumph of the work ethic, saving for the future, and the building of the national reserve or, more mundanely, the gross national product (GNP). During the two decades following 1960, a new approach emerged. We took this GNP for granted and focussed instead on individual self-realization — in both its positive and its self-indulgent sense — and a redistributionist "fix" for those of our citizens who had, through no obvious fault of their own, not received their fair share of the

* Director, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

economic pie. Again by contrast, we are at present less buoyant on the economic seas of the future, and this has led, not surprisingly, to a general questioning of the institutional and political arrangements upon which the necessarily ambiguous social contract has come to be based.

Within universities, this development has been especially marked not so much, however, because we of the university community are committed in principle to social inquiry. It is rather a result of the apparently surprising ease with which governments and the public constituencies which they represent have been able to withdraw financial and emotional support from our university institutions. The resulting decline in relative financial resources has produced, within the academy, much agonized "platonic" dialogue on the essences of these institutions. Which of our activities or subjects are truly central? Which peripheral? Which appropriate? Which inappropriate? Which basic to our real purpose? Which ephemeral? This conference is but one example of this ongoing consideration although an example of particular personal interest.

Within faculties of education, of course, this general phenomenon has been heightened not only by the continuing threat provided by education's sometimes unfair but, nevertheless, relatively low status on our various university totem poles but also, again of course, by the general public disappointment that our schools, whatever their very substantial accomplishments, have not lived up to either our or their rhetoric as the putative cathedrals of the twentieth century through which we would transcend our past and realize a future both richer and more redemptive.

The Idea of a University

It is in this context that we must consider the matter of the scholarly concerns of a faculty of education. Since, however, faculties of education are by definition placed within university institutions, this matter can only be taken up and understood in relationship to some prior understanding of the idea of a university and the role of professional education within it. It is to these ideas that I now wish to turn. In doing so, I do not wish to suggest that there exists any general consensus in these areas. What I will outline in the next few minutes are, therefore, my own views, ones which have been very much influenced by others most prominent among whom are Cardinal Newman (1853), Michael Cameron (1978), Robert Nisbet (1971), Cyril Belshaw (1974), and, in particular, Andrew Bjeering, who was Assistant Provost at the University of Western Ontario during the time that I served as the institution's Vice-President (Academic).

One way of looking at universities is to confront one or other of the special challenges facing them at the moment. Thus, one might, for example, discuss either the fall-off of public confidence in and financial support of education or the "anomie" revealed by a certain loss in the standards of judgment within the academy itself - frequently resulting in "the substitution of intellectual karate for intellectual inquiry." I however, would like to take a step back from these more particular contexts to reflect on the general idea of a university.

The idea of a university is not, of course, a monolithic one. Nevertheless, for present purposes, when I refer to the university, I have in mind what is commonly referred to as the multiversity. The institutional values of multiversities are knowledge and expertise. Since its norms are cognitive, rational, and meritocratic, and since its authority is understood as basically grounded in the judgment of peers, it is not surprising that the university — one of the last surviving medieval institutions — has always been organized aristocratically. It can only appear democratic when viewed, as Robert Nisbet (1971) has pointed out, rather narrowly from inside the favoured faculty caste.

This university should have two primary objectives as a centre of learning. These are, as suggested by Belshaw:

- (a) the engendering in all of its members an ability to ask questions linked with generalized knowledge and to use evidence, logic, and intuitive judgment to provide answers:
and
- (b) the adding to our cultural capital through additions to knowledge, insight, and material innovation.

This is a very general statement, but it does encompass the three basic programme missions of the universities, i.e., general education, research, and professional training. More particularly:

- (a) it provides for the liberal education of students irrespective of their occupational futures;
- (b) it stresses the mission of the university as a civilizing one rather than an economic one based on the alchemy of turning knowledge into gold or anything that gold can buy;
- (c) it develops the appropriate context for professional studies as related to inquiry and disciplined judgment rather than to sets of particular technique; and
- (d) it establishes the need for academic freedom — in terms of the lack of any final anatomy of knowledge, and of academic responsibility in terms of the university's basic objectives as these have been described.

The statement assumes that knowledge is good in itself, and that, therefore, helping others to acquire knowledge and to learn the ways of knowing is also good. Most important, the university professor is not merely a researcher but a scholar/teacher. The statement does not, of course, provide a demonstration of the actual effect of a university education. It remains to some extent an article of faith that university educated men and women act creatively in society and, therefore, will be a moving force within it.

The reference to society is not, of course, accidental, for the university is a social institution, and in this regard, the common metaphor of the university as a cloister seems totally inappropriate. The university should be concerned with service to society, but it cannot serve both its own mission and provide directly a wide range of other services — whether, for example, of a consultative, a therapeutic, or a social welfare kind. What is required is an understanding that the university will provide service to society indirectly both through its research programs that can provide at least some of the knowledge base so central to a modern and technological society and through its teaching programs, programs which must be continuously reconceptualized so as to produce men and women who, as suggested earlier, will act creatively in contemporary society and, therefore, be a moving force within it.

This view of universities although not nearly so conservative as some university practice is, nevertheless, hardly a radical vision. Its core is the claim that it is only in the combination of both teaching and scholarship that the university will make its essential contribution. Both are necessary; neither is sufficient to the day, and with regard to education only if both individual professors of education and our corporate faculties of education can operate productively in both arenas can professional education be considered an appropriate member of the university community.

The University and Professional Training

It is, of course, a commonplace that our universities are, in fact, engaged in many professional training programs. At the undergraduate level, we prepare teachers, engineers, foresters, nurses,

and computer scientists — to name only a few. At the graduate level, all programs are essentially vocational in nature, the most interesting distinction being the extent to which the vocations in question are practiced inside or outside the university community. Nevertheless, the debate over the proper role of universities in training people for vocations has a long history.

Without any attempt to resolve all of these debates, I wish to suggest that a profession must be characterized by (1) some social good which is produced by the practice of the profession, and (2) some key body (or bodies) of knowledge which is (are) required for the practice of the profession. In addition, the professional group should be self-critical, in the sense that the linkage between social practice and the theoretical disciplines is the responsibility of the members of the profession to maintain. Each of these properties is clearly possessed by the classic professions of law, medicine, engineering, and theology, and, perhaps, to a lesser extent by such professions as teaching and the long list of relatively recent social practices deriving their theoretical base from the social and behavioural sciences. What is crucial for our purposes is that the presence of these properties is the conceptual basis for a particular professional programme within a university. This claim, of course, further implies that part of the preparation for professional practice is acquiring the command of a body of theoretical knowledge and assuming the responsibility to maintain and extend that literature. Moreover, any suggestion that a purely clinical training program be established at a university would have to be rejected out-of-hand as inappropriate to the fundamental mission of the university to provide truly professional training. Even a significant classroom--as opposed to a clinical — component would not be sufficient if that formal instruction focussed simply on talking or theorizing about the clinical experience. The crucial thing that makes a professional program appropriate to the university is that in addition to its important clinical components, the program (1) bridges the gap between professional practice and the relevant body or bodies of theoretical knowledge exiting for their own sake, and (2) provides a part of the future professional's general education.

It is important to add that the relationship between professional and other university programs should be a mutual one. The professional faculties and the professional orientation of their faculty members, can and do contribute much to the vitality of the university itself through, for example, their own fundamental canon of knowledge and/or their special relationships with the non-university world which do so much to make manifest for the university community the relevant context for general education. The role that professional programs can play in providing a context in which practical problems posed by the human concerns of the professional schools can motivate and stimulate the process of basic research in related disciplines is continuously underrated and undervalued. Thus, its potential value has yet to be fully realized although it is clearly more adequately developed in medicine than in education. Oddly enough, however, on a *priori* grounds, I would suggest that a faculty of education is uniquely well positioned to link research knowledge from the many disciplines on which an understanding of it obviously depends with the world practice.

It is not, however, only in this inter-disciplinary context that scholarship in education has not matured. Despite enormous achievements in some areas of educational research and despite the fact that education as a profession clearly has at least the emergent characteristics posited as appropriate for university faculties, I believe that it remains true that faculties of education have not succeeded in making themselves congenial homes for teacher/scholars if only in the sense that far too many of my colleagues in education have not defined their own work in terms of this double obligation of university faculty members.

Faculties of Education

This situation may result from an oversimplified understanding of the purposes of a faculty of education. Bernard Gifford, Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Berkeley has listed these purposes as five in number. They are:

- (1) preparation of individuals for classroom teaching and other positions in the profession of education.
- (2) training of scholars and researchers for service in colleges and universities, policy research organizations, foundations, government agencies, etc.
- (3) advancement and dissemination of knowledge concerning educational policies, processes, practices, and problems.
- (4) application of knowledge about learning, teaching, and organizational management to educational institutions, with a view toward improving educational practice and policy.

and

- (5) public advocacy of the improvement of education.

Despite the fact that with the possible exception of the last or advocacy objective, all of these goals are intimately connected with the development of scholarship, I do not think that there would be wide disagreement within the profession on Dean Gifford's conception of a faculty's role. What seems not to be so quickly recognized or appreciated is the extent to which the conception of university and professional education outlined earlier, implies an approach to teacher training — to which most faculties of education devote the bulk of their albeit limited resources — that cannot be undertaken — by either faculty or students — independent of scholarship. Further, it is not sufficient that the teacher training programs be based in terms of their design on the best available knowledge (an even this is not currently the case); what is required is that faculty and students come to accept the notion that the practice of their profession whether as classroom teachers or as university professors requires a commitment to and involvement with scholarship in the extension of professional knowledge.

Interestingly, however, education as an area of study has a particular advantage as it seeks to progress in this area, and that is that education is not, in a conceptual sense, an academic discipline. That is, it is not an area of study characterized by either a clear central core of knowledge or a central paradigm of inquiry. Like many other areas of professional work, it is concerned with a certain range of phenomena, i.e., those observed in educational settings. To the study of these phenomena, it is willing, and moreover, anxious to bring to bear a whole variety of methodologies and models of inquiry borrowed, in many cases, from other disciplines. This catholicity of taste is not admired by all of our colleagues within the disciplines themselves, and these same colleagues can point quite appropriately to the enormous power of the academic disciplines as a framework for the organization of knowledge. I grant this point but wish to add one of my own, namely that the difficulty with the academic disciplines is that they are all "bootstrap" operations: one is always having to pull oneself up from within. This makes it extremely difficult to ask new questions, to see, that is, the forest from the trees. In professional inquiry, this problem can be much less marked. Thus, within educational scholarship, what can be seen in other perspectives as the tyranny of the academic disciplines can be transformed, for us, into a special opportunity.

In order, however, to capitalize on this opportunity, we must find ways to recruit more frequently either from within or without our particular university to our faculties of education individuals who have both very strong disciplinary and experiential backgrounds *and* a commitment to education as a field of study and primary focus of interest. Faculties of education should have no room for psychologists, historians or other academics whose major source of concern has been their inability to secure either a post or a recognized success in another field. Moreover, once recruited, on either a full-time or part-time basis, these individuals should not restrict their activity to graduate programs and specialized research institutes. If the faculties of education are to realize their goals, scholarship must become an integral part of the full range of faculty programs.

Of course, one cannot expect that many, let alone each, of the members of a faculty of education will be a fully developed renaissance scholar — and that toward the end of the twentieth century. Thus, productive scholarship in education is much more likely, in future, to be the result of a group rather than an individual undertaking. It is crucial that the several fields of study which contribute to our knowledge of education be more strongly integrated for purposes of educational inquiry and it is in this context that a faculty's place within a university can be so important. The phenomena of education are inherently multi-disciplinary. For example, one cannot effectively teach or conduct research in mathematics education without some understanding of the various psychological theories explaining how students acquire problem-solving skills. One cannot design programs to increase students' problem-solving skills without an understanding of the social structure of the school. Strong integration and interaction both among the disciplinary fields represented in a faculty of education and between the faculty of education and other university faculties are probably essential. Too often, however, researchers in different fields of education are isolated from one another, as well as from their colleagues in the disciplinary faculties. Too often our colleagues in the disciplinary faculties confine their interest in education to snide remarks about those of their number actually struggling to make sense of that field. We need to create mechanisms to break down these barriers, both for the sake of educational inquiry and for the benefit of work in the basic disciplines themselves. As suggested in our discussion of the role of professional education within the university, we have not yet fully appreciated how important the world of professional practice is not simply as an object for the application of knowledge but as a subject for its development.

Interest in multidisciplinary approaches should not, however, keep us from insisting that scholarship in faculties of education should, in general, be focussed on education as a first-order question, that is where the educational value of the work is of primary concern and where the link to actual or potential application in the field is the essential stimulus for inquiry. The study of education as a second-order question, that is inquiry into non-educational phenomena whose explication might have consequences for practice has, of course, some value for our faculties of education. These distinctions are, after all, a question of degree. Nevertheless, the place of such approaches with faculties of education should be decidedly secondary. Research and research training are, as has been often repeated, essential missions in the university, but within faculties of education, research and training must be applicable to the real situations faced by our schools and other educational agencies. Too often, however, the perceived low status accorded work on "practical" problems has prompted faculty members to concentrate solely on "basic" theoretical concerns with little or no relevance to educational practice. Judge (1982) asserts:

The trouble with schools of education is that the inexorable logic of the market has obliged them . . . to distance themselves from the contaminating world of practice and training . . . the culture has not grown, at least not in sufficient numbers, scholars with a commitment to improving practice based upon research.

Many universities give few incentives or rewards to faculty members for work on professional problems and, in addition, they tend to denigrate work outside the basic disciplines. Unless this situation is changed, we cannot expect adequate attention to the problems of the field of education. That the situation can be changed is attested to by the fact that some professional schools in some universities have already succeeded in doing so.

It is, of course, rather especially easy in a conference of this sort to create and/or leave the impression that no substantial scholarship is ongoing in faculties of education. This is clearly untrue or we would not at present have the reasonably strong knowledge base that exists in such areas as classroom effectiveness (Brophy, 1983); school effectiveness (Pukey and Smith, 1983); staff development (Joyce, Hersh, and McKibbin, 1983); leadership of principals (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982), and planned change (Fullan, 1982). Although these are only examples, there still remain many glaring weaknesses in our knowledge base even with regard to the relatively narrow but important field of teacher education. We actually know very little about how to integrate theory and practice for pre-service teachers. For one thing, the real issue is how to integrate many theories and many practices since teachers at any stage will be faced with a variety of teaching models, subjects, theories, and the like. We have not even carefully defined the epistemology of theory and practice. Are there, for example, differences between practical and theoretical reasoning? What do we mean by procedural knowledge? What we probably need in this particular area is not an abstract typology of knowledge, but a program and a field-based analysis of theory and practice components of existing curriculum and teaching activities. We also need case studies of clinical attempts to integrate theory and practice especially at the pre-service and induction levels. In the world of educational inquiry, some progress has been made, but it has not been, I would suggest, commensurate with our investment in either universities or their faculties of education.

We must, of course, move forward from where we are rather than from either the beginning or where we would like to be. In this effort, we can, however, take advantage of considerable under-utilized capital. Such capital, lying in some sense fallow, within our faculties of education is of two types. First, there is the often interesting but almost as often unpublished experimental work completed by many education faculty members as part of their teaching and supervisory responsibilities. For example, many fascinating variations of curriculum have been carefully worked out on the basis of accumulated experience and insight; many marvelous intuitions have been developed into effective practice. These efforts suffer, however, either from lack of careful conceptualization with regard to broader categories of knowledge and/or from not having been put in a form which can be tested through dissemination beyond the immediate colleague/student group. Thus, a potentially valuable contribution to general knowledge is reduced to the level of an ephemeral personal experience. Second, there are individual faculty talents and backgrounds of experience — in schools, faculties of education, and in other university faculties — which although currently dormant relative to participation in scholarly inquiry have, nevertheless, potential energy for the future. In all these cases, relatively small but focussed marginal efforts might bear early fruit not by individual exhortations to more exemplary activity but by more discrete attachment of such individuals to in the first instance the periphery of colleague groups actually working in research. One of the consequences of the fiscal crisis currently facing many Canadian universities is the general weakening of the research infrastructure upon which many active scholars had come to depend. Such scholars will now, I would suggest, be more receptive to developing colleagues than they might have been in a period of more opulent funding. Clearly, such strategies will not work in all cases; we can, in fact, expect they will not even work in half the

cases. Nevertheless, they represent an opportunity that we neglect at the peril of our general mission and of our fundamental responsibilities. Moreover, to the extent that such strategies succeed, we will all have acquired new colleagues or at least colleagues working in new and different ways. It may not be a substitute for the year in which I was able to double the size of the faculty in the department of which I was then chairman, but it is likely to be an attractive alternative to continuing to whine about the problems that beset us. Moreover, if successful, such approaches might contribute toward the creation of an environment that would actually mobilize our social will in such a way as to end the current scandal, frequently reported in the research literature, that instructional programs in universities in general and in faculties of education in particular notoriously tend to ignore in actual practice the results of well established findings in the research literature.

I would like to conclude this perhaps somber consideration with a cautionary tale adapted rather freely from the autobiographical musings of Kurt Vonnegut. It is a short, short story. It is called Triage.

Yes, and I was a mediocrity in the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago after the second world war. Triage was practiced there as it is practiced everywhere. There were those students who would surely be anthropologists, and the most winsome faculty members gave them intensive care. A second group of students, in the opinion of the faculty, just might become so-so anthropologists, but more probably, would use what they had learned about homo sapiens to good advantage in some other field, such as medicine or law, say.

The third group, of which I was a member, might as well have been dead — or studying chemistry. We were given as a thesis advisor the least popular faculty member, untenured and justifiably paranoid. His position paralleled that of the waiter Mespoulets in the stories of Ludwig Bemelmans about the fictitious Hotel Splendid. Mespoulets had the table next to the kitchen, and his speciality was making sure that certain sorts of guests at the hotel restaurant never came back again.

This terrible faculty advisor of mine was surely the most exciting and instructive teacher I have ever had. He gave courses whose lectures were chapters in books he was writing about the mechanics of social change, and which no one, as it turned out, would ever publish.

After I left the university, I would visit him whenever business brought me to Chicago. He never remembered me, and seemed annoyed by my visits — especially, I suppose, when I brought the wonderful news of my having been published here and there.

One night on Cape Cod, when I was drunk and reeking of mustard gas and roses, and calling up old friends and enemies, as used to be my custom, I called up my beloved old thesis advisor. I was told he was dead — at the age of about fifty, I think. He had swallowed cyanide. He had not published. He had perished instead.

If this is the dark side of our commitment to scholarship, and to the conception of the centrality of the scholar/teacher within the university and the faculties of education, there is also a bright side. Quoting more or less freely from Tiger and Fox's (1971) *The Imperial Animal*:

There is nothing specific in the genetic code about initiation ceremonies. There are no instructions about, for example, circumcision whizzing around the bends of the alpha helix. But neither are initiation ceremonies pure cultural inventions. They occur because we are biologically wired the way we are . . . so all societies find ways of taming and using the young . . . and of forcing them to identify with the system.

Of course, the particular transaction between older and younger people called initiation does not always result in a specific ceremony; but it is always at very least, a process. Young Braves are subjected to it; so are students . . . of course, the initiation need not always 'take'; for example, one might argue that some of the difficulty universities throughout the world are having with the simple problem of discipline — let alone the more trying one of actually teaching and discovering — is that as a system of initiation, the university is far too arbitrary, unsatisfying and undemanding for the young concerned. (Who) would count it a particular honour to triumph in history at Berkeley or Bombay? The challenge is somehow inadequate

and the challengers themselves vaguely laughable and inept . . . we may have to be prepared. . . . to consider novel and unexpected ways of reordering our educational practices . . .

Within faculties of education, an imaginative embrace of appropriate scholarship will both capitalize on some of our best current work and yet lead, one expects, to the development of increasingly interesting and novel vistas.

References

- Belshaw, C., *Towers Besieged: The Dilemma of the Creative University*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).
- Brophy, J., "Classroom organization and management," *Elementary School Journal*, 18, (1983), 265-286.
- Cameron, J., *On the Idea of a University*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).
- Fullan, M., *The Meaning of Educational Change*. (New York: Teachers College Press, Toronto: OISE Press, 1982).
- Joyce, B., Hersh, R., & McKibbin, M., *The Structure of School Improvement*, (New York: Longmans, 1983).
- Judge, H., *American Graduate Schools of Education: A View from Abroad*. (New York: Ford Foundation, 1982).
- Leithwood, K. & Montgomery, D., "The role of the elementary school principal in program improvement." *Review of Educational Research*, 52, (1982) 309-339.
- Newman, J. H. (1853). *The Idea of a University*. Edited by I. T. Kerr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).
- Nisbet, R., *Degradation of the Academic Dogma*. (New York: Basic Books, 1971).
- Purkey, S. & Smith, M., "Effect schools: a review," *Elementary School Journal*, 83, (1983), 427-452.
- Tiger, L. & Fox, R., *The Imperial Animal*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971).
- Vonnegut, K., *Palm Sundays*.