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The Education Professor and the President's People: The Relationship of the Faculty of Education to the University Administration — A U.S. Perspective

I. Prologue

I suppose I speak for all of you when I say that the theme of this conference is intriguing and challenging. As we individually pursue our careers in professional education, it is inevitable that we would reflect from time to time on the status of our profession, on where it stands in relation to other professions and to other university studies.

Yet, in spite of the continuing interest in this question, there has never been, so far as I can remember, a conference convened to discuss this topic. Accordingly, I think we owe a debt of thanks to Professor Evelina Orteza for identifying this problem as a proper focus for a conference, and to Dean Robert Lawson for organizing it.

My presentation is in three parts: First, I shall offer a brief historical sketch of the development of faculties of education in U.S. universities. Then I plan to turn directly to my topic and review the relationships that prevail today between faculties of education and their university central administrators. Finally, I would like to turn to three ideas that represent new opportunities for professors of education in improving their condition on the campuses of North American universities.

II. A Brief Historical Sketch

Teacher education originated in the 19th century. Institutes which came to be known as "normal schools" developed and were responsible for acquainting future teachers with the "norms" of teaching. They were primarily vocational in orientation and were attended almost exclusively by females.

Some of these normal schools became teachers colleges. A few of them developed still further into multi-purpose institutions, achieving the status of universities. On another track, normal schools were sometimes absorbed into existing universities and incorporated as clinical adjuncts of psychology departments. These new units, in turn, developed into schools or colleges (or as you call them, faculties) of education. In rare cases, these university schools of education came to dominate their mother institutions and served as the prime mover of institutional policy-making. For example, Western Michigan University began as a normal school, grew into a four-year teachers college, then came to be called Western Michigan College of Education, and finally — some time in the 1950's — assumed the rank of Western Michigan University.

The training of teachers in both our countries has now come to be institutionalized in the school or faculty of education in the university, existing alongside the arts and sciences unit and other professional schools on the campus. The question before us is the set of relationships prevailing between the faculty of education and the chief executive officers of a given campus.

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III. Relationships Today

A. *The "Bread-and-Butter" Division*

Over the past twenty years, enrollments in United States universities have surged erratically to higher levels, and massive shifts from one professional specialty to another have occurred without warning. During most of these two decades the school of education has been viewed by university officers as the one reliable student recruiter — the professional school with the most stable, and often rising, student demand curve. As such, the school of education became the primary unit in generating tuition income and thus in guaranteeing the basic revenue, other than government appropriations, on which every university depends.

During the recent downturn of the economy in the United States, coupled with the cooling off of enrollment pressures, most universities have turned to "enrollment-driven" budgeting procedures. The steady reliability of the school of education in attracting fee-paying students has been highly valued by university officers. Particularly has this been true during summer terms, when the school of education has remained the prime mover of university operations.

B. *The Pariah in the Budget Scramble*

Notwithstanding the steady stream of teachers seeking both pre- and in-service university training, schools of education have typically been relegated to pariah status when budget time comes around each spring. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. In many situations, the school of education is a recent addition to the university's fiscal planning. As a latecomer to the competition for funds, it has not yet built its intramural political connections to the point of equity with other units and schools.

2. As noted in other commentary before this conference, the school of education suffers from a fuzzy intellectual identity. Its theoretical foundation is not clear, and its close identification with a purely vocational type of training leads academic planners not to take the education faculty seriously in its persistent requests for funds.

3. The school of education in the U.S. has always been politically weak, both on and off campus. It is weak, first of all because the school of education is responsible for the education and training of school teachers who are considered public servants. And the interests of the public sector, served by these public servants, have always been subordinate to the interests of the private sector in the American political economy. Close identification with the public sector weakens the image of schools of education. The school of education is weak also because it is identified with a low-prestige, low-pay occupation. Schools of medicine, law, and engineering, on the other hand, have leverage in seeking funds for their programs from university officers because they are identified with powerful, prestigious, high-income occupational groups. Finally, schools of education are weak politically because they are tied to an ambiguous social institution in America — the public school. The American people have a love-hate relationship with their public schools. On the one hand, they have great faith in their schools, believing them to be the salvation of American society, the protector of the future (especially of their own children), and indeed the last best hope for western civilization itself. On the other hand, the American people are convinced that their schools are woefully inadequate in fulfilling their main tasks and meeting their responsibility to the public. The spate of national reports on the allegedly sorry state of schools in the United States is only the most recent manifestation of this attitude.

For all of these reasons, the school of education has always had to fight for its rightful share of

the fiscal pie, and it has often been treated as a pariah among the other, more prestigious faculties on the typical U.S. university campus.

C. *A Rising Respect and a Place in the Sun*

Having said all this, I must report that in recent years many schools of education have begun to shed the "pariah" label and to redress the university community's low estimate of their contribution to academic life. A number of developments in the United States provide a partial explanation for this new phenomenon:

1. Most visible is the fact that schools of education have tapped new, highly vocal political constituencies and pressure groups as their friends in high places. Public interest, indeed public *demand*, for education of the handicapped has generated political pressure at the highest levels. Our Public Law 94-142 by the U.S. Congress has poured millions of dollars into the teacher training industry for special programs. Congress and many state governments have also legislated large appropriations for the training of teachers of the disadvantaged, for programs directed at various minority groups, and for extensive offerings in bilingual education. And schools of education in U.S. universities have been the primary beneficiaries of these funds. Schools of education have recently developed sophisticated "grantsmanship" strategies. Understandably, university administrators take notice when new outside moneys arrive in large amounts.

2. Schools of education are also becoming more aggressively adroit in scholarship and research. Their hiring practices are increasingly aimed at the scholar-investigator. Their reward systems place higher premiums on publication and national visibility in the scholarly community.

This effort is given national encouragement by the creation of the National Institute of Education, the research arm of the Federal Department of Education. Schools of education are the primary recipients of sometimes large grants from this agency. In addition, faculties of education are more active on their own campuses in initiating development laboratories and research centers devoted to educational questions. These faculties, in their off-campus affiliations, increasingly identify with the American Educational Research Association — one of the largest professional organizations of its kind in North America and one in which many Canadian scholars are active.

In addition to these contributing factors, schools of education in the United States are increasingly called upon by local school boards to conduct special studies and investigations focused on specific teaching-learning problems or on policy questions relating to educational finance and school closings. Many local school boards are creating their own research departments, and these in turn call on university faculties of education to collaborate in their research inquiries.

Finally, a new research field has opened up in the form of evaluation research. Schools and institutions interested in the bottom line effectiveness of their programmatic offerings frequently request university schools of education to evaluate their work. Program design and evaluation has thus emerged as a new specialty in many American university schools of education; it represents an explicit response to the ever-growing demand for *accountability*.

By virtue of these new excursions into the world of research and scholarship, schools of education have attracted more notice in the upper echelons of their universities. The president's people take notice when their education faculties aspire to and obtain national recognition in the research community.

3. Partly as a companion movement to the above, education faculties are showing more political muscle on their own campuses (in Chicago, we call this "clout"). Professors of education are

less defensive than they used to be about their discipline. They know it has an intellectual base and have developed theoretical, conceptual structures to support it. Moreover, on many campuses, they are sought out by and collaborate more easily with academic departments in the arts and sciences and the other professional schools.

Clearly, professors of education are becoming more political within the university community itself. They are capable of participating actively in the deliberation over responsible and just distribution of economic goods. In this connection, schools of education in many places have developed "grantsmanship" to a high art. In some places, a successful grants application is considered a legitimate criterion for promotion and tenure decisions, along with teaching, research and service. As grantsmanship begins to pay off, deans of education are in a better position to lean on the University president's people for reciprocal recognition in obtaining more generous budget allotments.

4. Finally, schools of education in the United States are receiving greater visibility in the American press. The recent reports of the National Commission on Excellence, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Education Commission of the States have aroused public attention to the fact that American schools are in need of major overhaul. As a consequence of these reports, a new vehicle has been provided for faculties of education — especially those in the policy fields of history and philosophy of education and in educational politics and finance — to share their theoretical perspectives with the reading public. In guiding public debate on these questions, professors of education are showing up more often on the opinion-editorial pages of American newspapers, carving out a new role for themselves as the university's "expert witness" in the public dialogue. Understandably, as professors of education gain more visibility not only in the national research community but also in their local political environment, University Administration becomes more attentive to what they have to say.

IV. Some New Relationships to Think About

I turn now to three suggestions that may offer possibilities for the future. In considering these proposals, it is important to remember that universities in the United States have no special head start advantage in these areas. Nor is there anything particularly exotic about these ideas. In one way or another they have been suggested before but never properly exploited. I think they are worth thinking about as strategies to enable faculties of education to improve still further their political and academic position on the university campus.

A. *Watchdog of the Lower Schools*

Most American universities pay little attention to the elementary and secondary schools from which their students come. This is surprising in light of the fact that the caliber of so-called "feeder" schools bears directly on the quality of incoming students. Perhaps universities have considered the task too vast, and have contented themselves with "raking from the rubbish," to use Jefferson's term, the best and brightest for college and university level education. Nevertheless, there is a growing need for active involvement of university people in the problems and prospects of the lower schools, and faculties of education are the natural inheritors of this mantle of responsibility.

It has been noted above that many school districts among the 16,000 in the United States have established their own research departments. In so doing, they often approach neighboring universities for assistance in designing studies examining their own operations. A natural extension of this would be a similar effort to review and critique their administrative structures and their policy-

making apparatus. Education professors in the policy areas could easily provide consultation and expertise on these questions.

The central administration of any university has an obvious stake in this increased involvement in elementary and secondary schools, for the caliber of incoming freshmen is necessarily a function of the overall competence and organizational integrity of these lower schools. In the long haul, it is unfortunate that we in the United States have permitted the governance of the lower schools and of higher education to become so separate and isolated from one another. An active involvement by university officers in the problems and concerns of their educational colleagues at the primary, elementary, and high school levels would help to further the essential oneness of educational preparation from kindergarten through the graduate school.

B. *The Entrepreneur of a New Major*

Why is it that education is not an undergraduate major in the liberal arts college in the United States? We have majors in economics, in political science, in sociology, in anthropology, in government. These departments devote themselves to the study of America's social institutions: the economic system, the government, social class structures, the family, the church, the social club. Why is the school absent from this list? The school touches everyone; it is at least as pervasive as our political and economic institutions. Yet we ignore the systematic study of this institution in the social science curriculums of the typical college of liberal arts and sciences.

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the fact that historically the study of education has been a practical, professional, and purely vocational pursuit. As such, it has been excluded from the liberal arts as being too practical, too closely connected to the world of work, too *useful*. The liberal arts are supposed to be useless in the best sense of that word; they are intended to be deliberately removed and disconnected from the world of making a living.

All right, then, I have an answer. Why not design a liberal arts major in education which is not a teacher training program? Why not prepare American citizens, future parents, to understand educational theory and specifically how theory flows into the formation of educational policy in a free, education-driven society like yours and mine? Where better to do this than in a major in education?

And where would the brainpower come from to design such a program? The president's people can find it in the faculty of education, especially those scholars and specialists in the history and philosophy of education, in educational economics and the politics of education, in comparative education, and in educational sociology and anthropology. Collaboration with liberal arts departments in these areas would be a natural alliance for the development of new interdisciplinary studies on the educational industry in our two countries.

C. *A Sharper Focus for Research*

There has been a good deal said at this conference — and I have reiterated it here in this paper — regarding the research and scholarship of faculties of education. What we have developed so far, both in Canada and the United States, is adequate and getting better. But most of it has focused on the client — on how he behaves, how he learns, how his motivations for schooling can be manipulated and orchestrated for maximum pedagogical effect.

This is all well and good. But the new focus of educational research must direct its attention at *teaching*. This means that the behavior and motivations of the teacher, his or her work patterns, his

or her strategies for instruction, his or her special artistry in making learning and thinking exciting — these become the new target for our scholarly inquiries.

We have heard earlier in this conference from other participants on their research into teaching in different formats. We have also learned new things about the linkage between teaching theory and pedagogical practice. Educational research ought to focus more on these matters.

In this shift in emphasis for our research, it is important not to try to imitate the other social sciences. We need not attach ourselves to any particular scientific or investigatory paradigm in order to pursue the kind of knowledge we want, namely, an understanding of *teaching* as a specialized professional skill.

In this connection, the Dean of Education at the University of Alberta expressed concern about the prospect of some research largesse, were it to come to his institution. Would his faculty, he asked rhetorically, be prepared to seize the opportunity represented by such an allocation from the Province of Alberta? I trust he is planning to have his faculty get to work on this right away even before the money becomes available. The educational questions still unanswered are legion, and we should proceed forthwith to design our research studies and plan out their execution even before we have the wherewithal to actually conduct them. A faculty that makes its own opportunities by being ready when the funding begins cannot help but be impressive in the eyes of the university president and his people.

If, as I say, teaching (rather than learning) should be the expanded focus of educational research, then it follows that teacher education itself would be a closely allied companion study. On both sides of the border we need to be more imaginative about our research in this area. Why not collaborate more closely with an academic department in preparing teachers for that given specialty? Let these professors — of English, mathematics, biology — get into the schools themselves to see what the problems are. Then let an evaluative team monitor the product of this collaborative endeavor. Why not work more closely with a neighboring school system to see what their contribution might be to the preparation of teachers for their own classrooms or for teaching positions elsewhere? What special blend of insight would be added to teacher preparation programs if school teachers and administrators worked more closely with education faculties in this task? Perhaps local teachers' unions and principals' associations could join with a faculty of education in the training of a teacher. Could not this combination at the pre-service level serve to ameliorate the adversary relationship so often found between principals and classroom teachers? These are legitimate research questions, and it would be exciting to get the answers.

Finally, faculties of education are now in a position to exploit the new research specialty of program design and evaluation. This type of research involves many disciplines, from educational psychology to curriculum theory to policy analysis. As evaluation specialists become more sophisticated in their investigations, they will inevitably win the greater confidence of the general public, and especially the politicians who are reluctant to support education when they have no way of knowing whether their support actually has an effect on the educational product. Well designed evaluation research studies could tell them where their money goes, what it does, and what the bottom-line payoff actually is. If the legislators in Edmonton, Alberta, are still not sure of the new support package for educational research, then the education faculty should step forward with detailed plans to demonstrate that the impact of such funds can be clearly documented.

Here are some avenues of development that would come naturally, one would think, to a professional faculty of education. They represent initiatives that reflect an interest in the quality of

the schools, a desire to raise the level of public discourse on educational policy, and an intellectual curiosity about educational questions.

President Myer Horowitz, University of Alberta, closed his very interesting address with the thoughtful admonition that university presidents, in the last analysis, are impressed by honesty, integrity, and academic quality in their dealings with faculties of education. I would like to add another: university presidents are impressed with *results*.

If a faculty of education can demonstrate its expertise by taking the lead in these areas, its members would certainly stand higher in the esteem of the president and his people, and accordingly enjoy a wider regard among their other university colleagues.