

**Papers Presented at a Conference "The Right Blend,"  
University of Calgary, 11-13 July, 1984**

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### **Introduction and Acknowledgements**

There is a myth among some members of Faculties of Education that a number of our problems are inventions of some sectors of the public or of University who are alleged to be intent in ejecting Faculty \*\* out of the University community, expressing their public odium regarding the academic quality of Faculty achievements. At times, this myth reaches proportions of inevitability, somewhat akin to a metaphysical force of nature (if it has this force), giving way to a sense of hopelessness. Instead of encouraging this manner of thinking, far better to find out if, indeed, Faculty has problems which must be solved because they are crucial to its existence and status as an academic unit and as a professional school of a University. And there is no more opportune time than now to examine critically questions and issues which continue to contribute to the ambiguous status of Faculty when so much scrutiny of public education is taking place and when much of that scrutiny leads back to teacher education which is a responsibility of Faculty.

For this purpose, Faculty of Education, The University of Calgary, held a conference called "The Right Blend," 11-13 July, 1984, and addressed the following topics: The Erosion of Professional Schools, Faculty of Education: Current State and Future Development as an Academic Unit of the University and as a Professional School, Scholarly Concerns of a Faculty of Education, Linking Theory and Practice — Cooperative Research, Linking Theory and Practice — The Right Blend, and The Faculty of Education and its Relationship with University Administration.

In his welcoming remarks, Dean R.F. Lawson of The University of Calgary, identified current and on-going problems of Faculty, among them, administrative problems, definition of scholarship and research, all in light of Faculty's double obligation to meet academic requirements of University and to address school and public demands. Faculty activities consist of academic and professional tasks, the former commonly referred to as theory and the latter, practice. But what to do or what has been done, for example, in terms of organizational structure, research activities, rewards, assignments of duties, etc. in order that academic/theoretical and professional/practical activities and achievements could inform and complement each other in a way that a "right blend" may be achieved has not been resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved. Even so, Faculty activities must be judged on two sets of criteria, namely "that its work must be based on standards and means acceptable in the academic community and must simultaneously address that work to the functioning of teachers and administrators in schools and systems answering directly to children, parents, and the general public." The seriousness of these tasks must be met with resolve.

Like other societal institutions, Faculties and Universities are necessarily affected by societal, economic, and political problems. The interrelationships of societal institutions are brought out

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\*\* 'Faculty' to be read 'Faculty of Education.'

more clearly in times of urgencies and crises. The papers by Dr. Gerald Cortis, Faculty of Education, The University of Birmingham, England, Dr. Carl F. Berger, Dean, School of Education, The University of Michigan, and Dr. J.W. George Ivany, Vice-President (Academic), Simon Fraser University, discuss more concretely how some of their problems and solutions were affected by societal calls for compulsory redundancies and retrenchment.

Dr. Cortis describes some of the events and processes that led to a fall of sixty per cent in student numbers in the public sector of teacher education in England and Wales from 1972-1981. He discusses some problems of relationship of government with its institutions, its policy and decision making processes, sometimes dubbed "the high-handed and secretive manner of the mandarins at DES," especially when such decisions have far-reaching implications affecting a number of people. The closure of a number of Colleges of Education in England was, of course, intended to improve teacher training/preparation, relieving them of the criticism of the monotechnic and isolated training they provided to teachers-in-training.

While there have been reviews of different Faculties of Education in the United States and in Canada undertaken by committees appointed by University administration and, perhaps, by provincial governments, there have been no drastic moves similar to those made in England. Consider, for example, the reports of Dr. Berger and Dr. Ivany regarding their respective institutions.

The decision to review the status of The School of Education, The University of Michigan, in 1983, led to a budget cut of 40% over the next five years, resulting in reduced programs which now must address the question of research raised by the review, namely, that it is not coordinated but isolated and fragmented, insulated and imitative of research techniques of other disciplines. The strengths of The School were identified and made the bases for developing a set of activities that promise increased research possibilities and connections, hopefully, providing solutions to crucial problems. Nonetheless, Dr. Berger warns:

We in education have not accumulated a body of theory that can be used to test new practice. We have not been able to show that with years of effort the professionals we train and are in the field have techniques that are better than the folk myths of teaching. We must start to be able to answer the questions that will move the education profession forward and not appear to be a collection of interesting research findings that have little chance of improving K-12 education.

Much of the attraction of Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, is its organizational set-up which also seems to be a factor responsible for its prestige and survival. Says Dr. Ivany: ". . . we are a small, *research oriented and productive Faculty* but one which, yet, has a large commitment to very practical, school-based teaching and pragmatic service." (Italics mine.) Much of the responsibility for the latter tasks are relegated to master teachers ("talented practitioners") hired as Associates on short term appointments.

In these papers one notes a fugue-like strain that dwells on research and hints on the question whether or not there is a cumulative body of knowledge peculiar to the teaching profession or if it is needed (if there is such). Discussions on closure of Colleges of Education in England raised this question also. And if there is now no consensus on what constitutes professional knowledge or how the necessary knowledge and skills are best taught, but only claims to knowledge about teaching which are not falsifiable but, like fads and fashion, only fade away, could this be because teaching may not be appropriately considered a profession in the same manner that engineering, law, and medicine are?

Dr. Harry Broudy provokes us to wrestle with this question, once again. Persuasive and

compelling in his efforts to present the facts of teaching, *as they are*, his conclusions are sobering, if not disturbing. What if he is correct?

Considering that the setting of Faculties of Education is the University community, questions of scholarship necessarily arise. But what is the scholarship of education? Does it have a set of scholarly concerns that renders a Faculty distinctive from every other Faculty? What are scholarly concerns? Addressing these questions indirectly, Dr. Bernard J. Shapiro draws attention first, to the tasks of a University, and, second, to the place of professional training in it. In the context of a University, a professional program is appropriate if it: "(1) bridges the gap between professional practice and the relevant body of theoretical knowledge existing for its own sake and (2) provides a part of the future professional's general education." Dr. Shapiro judges Faculty to have failed in this responsibility of achieving a "blend." More positive in his thinking about teaching as a profession than Dr. Broudy is, he notes ways of promoting and developing research activities of Faculty.

In response to Dr. Shapiro's paper, Dr. Robert Weyant agrees that Faculties of Education enter into cooperative ventures with other parts of the University. More specifically, he suggests possibilities for Faculties of Education to offer a joint degree, B.A. — B.Ed., with Faculty of General Studies to students in education, securing their liberal education concurrent with their professional training.

Agreeing with Dr. Shapiro that one of the main tasks of the university is intellectual cultivation and supportive of Dr. Broudy's analysis regarding teaching, Dr. R.L. Schnell's response addresses, in part, the matter of undergraduate teacher education programme. He proposes two types of teacher training programmes: one for professional teachers and another training for para-professionals. Broad liberal education, befitting University education, is required for professional teachers, considering that "even the most mundane matters connected with teaching are eventually cast in the enduring problems of policy and ethical concerns." An accurate understanding of theory and practice relationship, namely, that their relationship is not governed by a set of rules which one applies in a one-to-one manner, hence, a specific rule for applying every specific theory to every specific practice (cook-book style) but, rather, that relating theory to practice demands much sound judgment and discernment on teachers' part is more likely secured with such an education. Indirectly, Dr. Schnell suggests that a number of problems relative to public education and to teacher training programmes stem from either a lack of appropriate understanding or wrong understanding regarding one of the teachers' central tasks, namely, initiation of the young into a life of the mind. Other curricular changes are also suggested. He describes the Office of Dean of Education as "the intellectual centre of the Faculty," charging it with the responsibility for promoting scholarship of Faculty.

Continuing the topic on relationship of Faculty with University community, Dr. Van Cleve Morris addresses the question of the problems of Faculty as a newcomer or latecomer to the competition for funds activities in the University. Several observations are made on the somewhat fuzzy intellectual identity of Faculty. Nevertheless, Dr. Morris says that there are indications of increasing respect for Faculty in University communities because of its opportunities to do research for others and to secure government research funds and grants. And, of course, Faculty is becoming politically conscious and astute! Two suggestions are offered for serious consideration: that research in Faculty should focus on teaching and to develop a liberal arts major in education (he does not, however, say who exercises jurisdiction over the programme). Many more suggestions for expanding and developing new relationships with other entities are made. Like other

speakers of the Conference, Dr. Morris urges Faculty to stop whinning and seize opportunities now that could produce results!

From concerns closely linked with the University, the Conference papers proceed to address problems that confront teachers in their classrooms, schools, and in their relationship with school administration. The paper presented by Dr. Alice Boberg identifies problems that are judged by practitioners to be crucial to their professionalism, among them, lack of or no participation in the determination of their own tasks, inadequate teaching in theory, lack of collaborative activities, inapplicability of positivistic research to teaching-learning situations and political pressures that prevent them from doing what they judge they ought to do. How to deal with some of these problems are discussed by Dr. J. Torney Purta, Dr. K. Dueck, and Dr. D. Roberts.

Dr. Purta concentrates on collaborative research with classroom school teachers as a way of linking theory and practice, encouraging participation of teachers in determining their tasks, in short, professionalism. She argues that collaborative research has an untapped potential for promoting the reflective analysis of educational problems leading to reform, a more productive long-term relationship between teachers and faculty members. Another level of collaborative research is between nations, say, the United States and Canada. Dr. Dueck's paper identifies a number of practical problems relative to the "right blend" of theory and practice. She concludes with helpful insights ("hunches") regarding the nature of and possibilities for the blend of theory and practice, clarifying some accompanying difficulties in *one's* attempt to achieve a "right blend." That she identifies the *person* of the teacher to be a crucial element in relating theory and practice, achieving a "right blend," or even only a "blend," is a point that ought to be seriously considered. Indeed, Dr. Roberts does just that. Instead of addressing theory and practice in the abstract, he looks critically into the actions of student teachers as they attempt to translate what they know about their subject, what they know about the objectives of their teaching the subject, etc. into teaching acts hoping to secure teaching ends. He notes that students' thinking is dominated by theoretical causation notions that events are linked causally without reference to a personal agent. In thinking that things will happen in the way they are expected to, student teachers fail to exercise *strength of will* to bring into existence certain *intended* teaching ends. When such ends are not secured, the interpretation is that relating theory to practice is difficult, if not impossible. But, in this case, their theory is not applicable to teaching acts and their understanding of teaching is not correct. In teaching, one must make certain decisions, informed by one's relevant knowledge regarding one's teaching tasks, act on them by *strength of will*, causing certain desirable results to ensue. Teaching is an intentioned activity which intentions are derived from the agency of the teacher. Teaching and learning do not merely happen. The paper concludes by encouraging collaboration between Faculty and school teachers, considering that there are enough common concerns between and among them.

Given that teaching and research are of concern to Faculty, the Editorial Board of JET judged the paper "The Relationship between Teaching and Research: Clear Answers to the Wrong Questions?" pertinent to this issue, hence its inclusion. It is not part of the Conference Proceedings. We like to say that there is a relationship between one's teaching and one's research. This research paper, however, shows that little or no relation, for whatever reasons, has been found to exist between them. Many other related questions need to be explored before acceptance of these present findings and interpretations may be made.

All Conference papers identified research to be central to academic status and respectability of Faculty in University community. But engagement in research by Faculty has not always led to

such a status. On the contrary its research has also been identified as, perhaps, contributing to some Faculty problems, specifically, its relationship with schools, teachers, and the general public. Why? Simply because its research activities have not always resulted in improved quality of school teaching. This suggests that the kind of research presently accepted and practised by Faculty, while, perhaps, fulfilling University demands and requirements, does not always relate to practical problems of schooling, teaching, and learning. Its research or theorizing fails to inform practice, let alone improve it. Faculty is perceived to fail in meeting its most open responsibility to schools, teachers, learners, and, therefore, to the public. Within University communities there are sometimes suggestions that Faculty research is a poor imitation of research in other Faculties (noted in the review of *The School of Education, University of Michigan*).

The question that must be addressed, therefore, is: what kind of research should members of Faculty, as academicians, engage in? On what problems should collaborative research between Faculty members and school teachers be? What kind of research should this be? And, given their different purposes (it is assumed to be different), what is the relationship between these different kinds of research? Are they entirely two separate research activities? Securing different ends?

Closely connected with research is the question of scholarship in education. Is there a scholarship peculiar to Faculty? If so, how may this type of scholarship be said to be distinct from scholarship traditionally understood?

In turn, both questions suggest that there is a need to demarcate the range of interests and to develop a kind of research methodology which may be labelled "education." It is to render "education," either as a discipline or field of study distinct from every other study by identifying concepts central to it, developing its research methodologies appropriate to its problems, and developing its assessment and validation procedures. Surely, not every problem, topic, or issue that is judged "educational" is necessarily a problem, topic, or issue, that belongs to Faculty of Education.

The observed tendency of Faculty to carry about a "territorial mentality," sometimes resulting in their attitude toward school teachers as not professionals could be judged, employing the language of psychology, a learned behaviour. It can, therefore, be unlearned. How? By thinking that teachers are not mere passive, docile recipients of information and transmitters of knowledge, subservient to the wishes of society and its vested interest groups. Rather, they are active, critical inquirers into their tasks, capable of exercising rationality in deciding matters of practice and policy and of being masters of their own house. For this thinking to come about and for teachers to act in this way, equipping them with bits of discrete behavioural competencies, survival kits, and modules, in short, with *mere technical training, mastering skills*, will not do. To determine their own agency and to continue to exercise critical vigilance over their tasks and purposes, they need to engage in a broad educational scholarship, grasping the historical, social, political, and philosophical dimensions of their tasks, encouraging intellectuality among them.

The challenge before Faculties of Education is primarily epistemological. And so it should be. Set in the context of a University, Faculty naturally rises to its demands, namely, to create and invent knowledge, to assess and refine knowledge claims so that what is true about objects, people, relationships may be established. The body of knowledge about education, schooling, teaching, and learning that Faculty generates and develops could become, in a significant way, a part of the total body of knowledge. To engage in epistemological problems is one of the main tasks of Faculty and, as befitting an academic unit of a University, its chief delight.

In conclusion, I would like to express appreciation to the University of Calgary Endowment Fund, Special Projects Fund for supporting my application to hold this Conference, sponsored by The Faculty of Education, The University of Calgary. Without its support, initial planning could not have been made. To Dr. R.F. Lawson, Dean, Faculty of Education, The University of Calgary, who encouraged me in planning the Conference and supported it throughout its different stages of development, I acknowledge my indebtedness. Without Barbara Stevenson, Administrative Assistant to the Dean, I would have been lost in the many details that must be attended to and questions that must be answered before even a facsimile of a Conference could be envisioned. The time and effort she invested in these matters are invaluable. The Conference Office of Faculty of Continuing Education gave expert and professional advice, enabling the Conference to run efficiently. To the Office, commendations are due. I also express appreciation to the Graduate Students who took time out of their busy schedule to help attend to the various tasks related to the Conference. And to the Speakers and all who attended the Conference, I am grateful. Finally, to Dr. Patricia T. Rooke, JET Editor, and to the JET Office, I am appreciative of their expert advice and assistance in producing this Special Issue. I trust all of us who attended the Conference found it worth our while to have been there. To all, I say, "Thank you."