EDITORIAL

> When we asked Pooh what the opposite of an Introduction was, he said "The what of a what?" which didn't help us as much as we had hoped, but luckily Owl kept his head and told us that the opposite of an Introduction, my dear Pooh, was a Contradiction; and, as he is very good at long words, I am sure that that's what it is.
> A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner.*

INTRODUCTIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

The years of the 1960's and 70's have been exciting, if frustrating, times for scholars and practitioners in education. It is easy to describe our times as a period of unparalleled change and thereby excuse our own confusion and gropings; however, the changes in thought and social arrangements that have worked their way through modern society have clearly effected a major revolution in education. When the first waves of dissent began to crack the layers of conventional wisdom — calling into question western society's most cherished institutions — it seemed to many observers that they were witnessing a radical transformation of western society. When the same shock waves ran through the other monolithic power bloc, visions of universal personal and group liberation danced in many heads. But the changes have not been as unidirectional as many commentators anticipated.

For educationists, the questioning, probing, and scholarly urban renewal (if not slum clearance) were welcome opportunities to break free of attitudes and institutional arrangements that seem unable to answer to the interests of scholars and practitioners alike. With regard to academic educationists, while appreciative of the work and scholarly output of the generations preceding them, there were signs of growing impatience with existing assumptions, perennial questions, and modes of research that had locked educational studies into the academic equivalent of a medieval mystery play.

No matter how significant the earlier traditions of educational studies had been to *their* generations, they appeared to many educationists as the dead hand of the past. Work that had laid the basis for development of such fields as comparative education, philosophy of education, sociology of education, and history of education, were no longer jumping off points but rather obstacles to further inquiry. Instead of an Introduction, the earlier scholarship was a Conclusion that needed to be put aside. The growing interest in the 1950's to establish links between educational disciplines and related humanities and social sciences was an early sign of the movement to reshape ultimately the nature of the study and writing of education.

For many educationists, especially younger scholars, the way out was to assimilate their educational specialties in "parent' 'arts and sciences disciplines. Thus, educational historians became historians of education, educational philosophers became philosophers of education, and educational sociologists became sociologists of education. Although still concerned with educational phenomena, the "new" scholars of education could appeal to the standards and criteria of

the parent disciplines. As with others seeking to change their reference group, however, the educationists found themselves caught up in the revolutions that were to occur in most areas of scholarship in the 1960's.

In particular, many younger educationists were eager to escape what appeared to them to be the monolithic and dead-end nature of much educational thought and research, that is, the sense that the very questions being asked were based on assumptions that determined the answers to the questions. Then too, educationists had been repeatedly told that the "real world" existed outside the formal institution of pedagogy and were concerned to move their area of interest (schools and universities) into that "real world."

Moving into the "real world" meant demonstrating the relationship of education, especially formal education, to major institutions and processes of society. The older educational scholarship that emphasized the internal growth and logic of educational institutions and processes was to be replaced by a perspective that stressed the social context. However armed (statistical techniques, new assumptions, or logical acuity), the new scholars were ready to attack new problems and new data.

Although one cannot deny the outpouring of scholarly studies since the 1960's (and here, I comment only from the work done in history of education), we are confronted by the dilemma posed by Owl, namely, that the opposite of an Introduction is a Contradiction. Without denigrating the work of earlier scholars in education, it was obvious by the 1950's that we had to set our minds and hands to new tasks. To ask fresh questions, to operate with new assumptions, and to seek out neglected evidences were essential if educational studies were not to go the way of theology.

If the older scholarship were a litany of the progress of schooling and western, industrialized society, much of the new scholarship seems to have substituted a new monolith for the old. The almost unquestioned acceptance of social control interpretations of schooling in scholarly writing should caution us not to fall into the same trap as our predecessors did. If we come to believe that a set of assumptions or a perspective is the "truth," then we have arrived at Owl's Contradiction. We have not put aside with respect but without regret part of our past in order to confront and understand that which is in our interest. Rather we are in the process of creating an Introduction that is a Contradiction of our hopes for educational scholarship that is vital and self-renewing.

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