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Variations in Search of a Theme

There is little doubt that leading institutions of higher education feel they must do something to improve the standards of teacher education. This is not the only group that feels so obliged, but the term "leading institutions" implies a special mission. For convenience I shall construe such institutions as modern universities housing undergraduate programs in the academic disciplines for general education, graduate programs for academic specialists, and professional schools. A College of Education on such a campus is caught between demands from scholars in the disciplines and the well-established professions on the one hand and the demands of the public schools and classroom teachers on the other. As matters now stand, colleges of education seem to satisfy neither. Can they hope to do both? should they try?

The College of Education is not alone in this bind. An article by Jonathan Friendly in *The New York Times* of June 3, 1984 is headed "Journalism Schools are Long on Students, Short on Respect." "Steps taken by journalism schools to stay in the mainstream of academia, with its emphasis on published research and criticism are generally ignored by the industry, which considers much of the work irrelevant." In the same issue Donald Henahan, the music critic says, "Perhaps all but the strongest willed composers lose their artistic identity in trying to fit into the academic environment . . . Mr. Rochberg was one of the first important members of the academic community to point out . . . the composer's need to justify his position on the campus alongside scholars whose disciplines demand an essentially objective ideology and attitude."

Improving the standards of teacher education can mean making it more satisfactory to the schools and the public supporting them or the values implicit in the academic guilds or perhaps both. The College has a number of options. One is not to train teachers at all, and devote resources to graduate studies that will prepare personnel for teachers of teachers, researchers, administrators, supervisors and the like. Another option is to supplement the general studies required for the baccalaureate with education courses for prospective teachers and sub-contract the practice teaching and methods courses to other institutions, community colleges, for example. Still another route is to consider offering a genuinely professional degree in teaching, analogous to degrees in engineering, accounting, and architecture some of which, by the way, are still in undergraduate programs. The option that, to my mind, is no longer open to this group is to patch up the current certification program and persist in calling it "professional." Arousing professional expectations from classroom teachers and preparing them rather skimpily for paraprofessional performance is the mischievous illusion that in every decade prompts a wave of criticism of teachers and the institutions that prepare them for accreditation.

There may be good reasons for not professionalizing the preparation of classroom teachers, not the least of which is that none of the well-established professions has nearly three million members and paying them genuinely professional salaries may not be what the public has in mind as it clamors for excellence. The compelling reason for doing so is that to maintain its standing as a professional school in "the leading institutions of higher education" the College will have to

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examine carefully the extent to which its concepts of a profession and a professional curriculum match those entertained implicitly or explicitly by other professional schools on the campus.

This examination includes:

1. The special function of a profession and the guild structure that promotes and protects it.
2. The instructional components of professional education and how they are used by the practitioner.
3. Comparing the standard teacher education curriculum with that of other professions.

A profession is characterized by a set of special functions: healing for medicine, litigation for law, various types of construction for engineering, design of structures for architecture, etc. Each profession defends itself on two fronts: one to resist responsibility for everything outside of its special domain, the other to enlarge that domain and to protect it from impostors.

Classroom teaching has an occupational identity — instruction. Unlike other more established callings, however, it does not have full-control over the conditions of instruction. Nor can the teacher disclaim some responsibility for the family background, social status, economic, psychic and physical health of the pupils. It is difficult to find what is *not* the school's and the teacher's responsibility.

As to excluding impostors, the teaching "profession" relies on accreditation, usually at the state level. Teachers' unions try to keep unaccredited personnel out, but inasmuch as accreditation is itself blamed for poor teaching by many of the schools' critics, this safeguard has more political clout than intellectual credence. Indeed, while impostors in the well-established professions are haled into the courts even though their clients adore them, in teaching the contrary is likely to be the case. The unaccredited teacher who makes a hit with the community is hailed as a creative innovator.

A professional curriculum is characterized by (1) body of theory from which generalizations about its special problems can be derived (2) procedures and technology rationalized by the theory, and (3) some sort of practice in the field or a sample of the field, in the form of clinical experience and internship. If the education of teachers is to make claims to the professional tag, it too has to embody the same strands of the curriculum. Paraprofessionals usually begin with level 3, procedures or rule-governed behaviors in standardized situations developed to a high degree of reliability. Professors of education are often accused of not getting to level 3 and prospective practitioners often resist being hoisted to levels 1 and 2.

Theory Base

As to the body of theory to ground the goals and means of instruction, education lacks neither. On the contrary, it is hard to see the pedagogical forest for the conceptual trees. The College of Education cultivates a field of richly assorted flowers, fruits, and vegetables, not to mention such nuggets of research as "The pupil learns best if motivated properly," "The more time spent on task the better the results." The theory base is a bewildering agglomeration of concepts, taxonomies, models, and approaches. To top it off, there is the loyalty to individual differences of pupils, a virtue that becomes a vice when interpreted to mean that no generalizations are permissible.

This profusion leads to confusion and a lack of what Thomas Kuhn called the paradigms that regulate the topics and literatures of a discipline, its mode of inquiry, and canons of adequacy. Research and scholarly work in education are not subjected routinely to critical scrutiny; members

of the guild are not constrained to read them, let alone respond to them. The result is a potpourri of studies that accumulate in diverse books and journals without being cumulative. Any effort to professionalize teacher education or even to make sense out of excellence cannot assume or demonstrate a consensus of the learned on subject matter, terminology, modes of inquiry, and analysis of problems. Yet every academic discipline and every well-established profession relies on such a consensus for the training of new members. Invention, creativity, and controversy are displayed at the frontier of the discipline, and even there the fundamental rules of controversy and the criteria of merit remain relatively constant. Until we can find some semblance of such paradigms for the curriculum of teacher education, we are subject to attacks from many sources. Our defense relies on many well-meaning, for the most part thoughtful, disorganized irregulars.

Pedagogical Technology

Do we have teaching technologies that are rationalized by theories of education? Various schools of psychology are available for learning theory from which methods are derived. There is no lack of theory-based technology in the teaching of reading, for example. For didactic forms of teaching the procedures have been around for centuries. They consist pretty much of introducing the task to be mastered, presenting the task, making sure it is understood and that the criteria of success are clear. Practicing the task. Trial testing. Correcting errors. Final testing. For heuristic (Socratic) and philetic (personal relations) teaching the paradigms are less clear, yet there are models available for teacher training.

Here also we are in a bind. On the one hand, whether teachers in adjacent classrooms use the same taxonomies of learning theory, or teaching style is a matter of chance. It depends on the school from which they received the degree or the textbooks adopted by the system. On the other hand there is the temptation to learn the method or technique without bothering with the theory. "Ours is not to reason why; ours is but to err and try" might well be the motto of the classroom teacher. Our friends on the university campus reserve their more bitter remarks for method courses.

This is the critical dividing line between the professional and paraprofessional training. The former tries to provide theory for the understanding of practice as well as skillful use. The latter aims only for highly reliable routines in standardized situations. The issue is not between theory and practice, but rather that in a professional curriculum the practice is grounded in theory and in a craft or art it need not be. The distinction is crucial because it differentiates between the abstraction levels of curriculum and the scholastic ability to negotiate it. The distinction is not lost on the campus critics of "education" courses. The Platonic ethos of the university is that theory people are not only smarter than practice people but also better — the best are, so to speak, the brightest.

Uses of Knowledge

There is a difference in the way instruction is used by the paraprofessional and the professional. The paraprofessionals replicate the instruction they receive and by drill overlearn a skill to a high level of reliability. The professional not only learns the skill, albeit often not to the level of the paraprofessional (some paramedics and nurses, I am told, are more proficient with some of the apparatus than are physicians), but *applies* a theory from which the practice is derived and by which it is justified. Para-legals, para-accountants are now becoming a recognized training specialty. The *applicative* use of schooling is found for the most part in professional or vocational life. It requires an exhaustive familiarity with the field, the state of the art, research, the methods of inquiry, criteria of recognition, as well as guild gossip. General studies are not replicated in the

non-vocational life of the educated citizen. Rather they serve as lenses or stencils of *interpretation*. The several disciplines provide these conceptual stencils. They do not solve problems; they site them properly in the schemata of the disciplines. The general studies, especially the arts, also furnish an associative store of language, images, ideas, and values that are summoned to give meaning to experience. The *associative* and *interpretive uses of schooling do not replicate* or *apply* items of instruction yet are indispensable for thinking and feeling *with*. They remain functional long after the recipient has lost the ability to pass an end-of-course examination in them.

Suggestions for Curriculum

These four uses of schooling may help in organizing the curriculum for professional teacher education. Some of the studies are for associative and interpretive uses — usually supplied by the program of general studies required for the baccalaureate. They are needed not only by professionals but by everyone who values the educated mind, for what is this educated mind but the tendencies to think, feel, and act with the schemata of the arts and sciences? They are the context building resources of the educated citizen's understanding and appreciation. In our haste to supply the basics of literacy we may forget that the comprehension of language depends heavily on the associative and interpretive resources of the reader. This mechanical coding and decoding skills will not supply.

The professional theory base for teacher education is made up of (a) studies that will be applied to understand and justify the rules of practice and (b) those that are used to site problems of education in their historical, psychological, philosophical, and societal contexts. These foundational courses are not an intellectual luxury. On the contrary, many of the problems in teaching are rooted in such contexts and many of the criticisms of the public schools are rooted in the ignorance of them. Put into their appropriate contexts many educational problems cease to be matters of technique. For example, it is futile and mischievous to assess the competence of teachers without understanding the change in the surrogatory rules of the school with respect to the family, the community, and the culture.

In addition to studies that bear directly on the teaching act, are academic disciplines cognate to the teaching speciality. Courses in dramatic production and film for a high school English teacher may properly be classed as professional courses even though they are not given in the College of Education and do not bear an educational number. Inasmuch as many universities provide for a field of concentration in addition to general education requirements, this might be the area from which the cognate studies could be chosen as appropriate for the various specialties in classroom teaching. Some of the content may be used applicatively, for example, courses in linguistics, and some contextually, as in the history of a subject or a field.

Appropos of which the control of a sizable portion of the units required for graduation in the baccalaureate degree has to come under the jurisdiction of the College of Education, both for admission to the teacher education program but also for specialized cognate studies. How a course is to be used is more important than the rubrics of the catalogue. If it is to be used professionally, i.e., applicatively, then it is expected to function differently from the way it functions as general education.

In sum, the theory base includes:

1. Foundation courses in philosophy, psychology, history and sociology of education.
2. At least one course in the foundations of the vocational specialty.

3. Courses in the subject matter to be taught and cognate studies relevant to the teaching of them.

The Technical Curriculum

In every professional curriculum the problems of practice are central so the student has to be introduced to them either by direct experience with them or as they exist in the world, or with suitable samples of them. But even highly theoretical courses rely on laboratory exercises to illustrate the applications of theory. It would be highly desirable for courses in education wherever suitable to incorporate the analogue of the laboratory. Lab schools were supposed to be used as laboratories for illustrating and testing theory. While their use to provide models of superior schooling is admirable, it does not quite meet the connotation of the laboratory or the laboratory course. Stress on the laboratory component of all courses taught for application might go far in improving the quality of many education courses. The practicum component of the curriculum is often the site for such experimentation. It is reasonable to expect that the technical curriculum will familiarize the student with the research methods used in education.

However, the Achilles heel of teacher education may well be practice teaching, which is a combination of observation, clinical study, and apprenticeship.

There has been, since 1963 at least, much loose talk about clinical teaching and clinical teachers (professors). James B. Conant argued that a major in a subject embedded in a baccalaureate degree plus clinical teaching are sufficient for teacher education. But what is a teaching clinic and what is done there? In medicine, law, and business schools there are standard cases that illustrate the problems and the principles of treating them. In a medical clinic the student encounters real cases of gastrointestinal difficulties, heart disease, etc. Clinical experience requires (1) real cases, (2) theories which by consensus apply to the diagnosis and treatment of these cases. The student "practices" both under the *tutelage* of the clinical professor. The intern has responsibility for diagnosis *and* treatment, but is still subject to supervision. Prudence in the use of "clinical" professor and clinical experience is advisable in teacher education where (1) there is no consensus of the learned as to theory, (2) few standard cases of practice to be diagnosed and treated. Practice teaching as usually conducted is not a clinical experience. Since there are no generally recognized paradigmatic cases and no unified theory for diagnosis and treatment, the student teacher takes the role of a teacher aide and learns by doing what the teacher prescribes. And what that may be is anyone's guess.

If the analysis is on the right track, colleges or schools of education should try to construct "cases" to be used in methods courses, (theories of pedagogy) clinical experience and internship. With the help of modern technology, this is a feasible and rewarding task. Whether such "cases" would become standard in the field is another matter, but it is not unreasonable for an institution to insist that they be paradigms in its own program. I cannot think of a more productive research program than the production of video tapes that can be used for analysis or reference in virtually every course of the professional portion of the program. It would stabilize the program within the college and it just may be possible that other institutions will follow suit.

Epilogue

Is such a professional program feasible? Could it be accomplished in four years? Will the public pay entry salaries to justify the cognitive strain such a curriculum would entail?

I see no theoretical impossibilities. It could be accomplished in four years, but a fifth year to

provide a paid internship in selected schools would be highly desirable and would help distinguish clinical teaching from practice teaching. Would the public schools pay the graduates a suitable salary? Some communities might very well do so. Some might do so for a proportion of their staff. For it is not inconceivable that schools could operate efficiently with paraprofessionals — with help from the new technology — if there were a cadre of professionals to make the decisions that only a fully professional educator can provide. Many institutions can and may choose to provide paraprofessional training for teachers, but it will be in the university that the theory base for such training will have to be developed and the practitioners who use that theory applicatively and interpretatively on a professional level are educated.