

## ARTICLES

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### Welcoming Remarks: The Right Blend

The title of this conference refers to the question of the mix of the two tasks of a professional school, the one addressing the criteria and demands of the profession, the other addressing the standards and traditions of the university. The synthesis, or even accommodation of these two represents a problem not unique to Education, but perhaps especially problematic in light of the scope and responsibilities of a Faculty of Education. We find, for example, that, while other faculties may be able to draw clean boundaries around the subject or methodology of their work, we are faced with an ever widening range of subjects and groups to which we are expected to respond. Just currently, in addition to the normal tasks and organizational connections which will be familiar to members of this audience, we are in Alberta responding to a review of the School Act, a major review of secondary education in the province, a review of teacher education, and a review of cultural tolerance and understanding, all of which have called for a response from the Faculty of Education, and one which hopefully shows our ability to take some leadership in the respective areas. In addition, internally we find it necessary continually to review our curriculum as to the appropriateness of content standards, and as to the effect of new demands on the coherence of the undergraduate training program and the capability of the graduate program. We find it responsible to intensify our consideration of admissions criteria, manpower control, and placement. We find it necessary to address our efforts to the educational needs of groups disadvantaged in the society, such as the disabled or cultural minorities. We, like others, face the need to revolutionize our teaching, research, and administration methods through computer technology, but unlike others, we must do this in some connection to an array of other educational organizations. In all of this as well as our normal run of activities, we operate in a tension field between the expectations of the academic community, and the expectations of the professional education community, sometimes the wider public.

The tension manifests itself in certain specific problems which I will briefly summarize. First there are basic *administrative* problems. Education is not usually considered the most needy or most deserving faculty in the university, no matter what our specific situation is. Conscientious management of enrollment is likely to exaggerate rather than to moderate the problem. Some type and degree of manpower control is probably necessary in any professional faculty, and is perceived, especially in a low teacher demand market, to be imperative for a Faculty of Education; yet philosophically, as well as in practical administrative terms, this conflicts with the right of students in Canadian universities to make free choices on what they will study, and to make their own decisions as to the promise of later employment.

The curriculum problem is essentially how to maintain the academic standards accepted in the university and at the same time to relate in some immediate ways to the real world of practice. This

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problem is manifested in many specifics, and may be the most stubborn of all. General statements are of little use here, but at least three basic premises pertain to the problem:

1. We have not succeeded in defining "scholarship" appropriate for a Faculty of Education in such a way as to gain agreement among the faculty, let alone in the university;
2. The curriculum machinery of the normal faculty and university cannot normally respond to the dynamic program requirements of a Faculty of Education, i.e., there is no way for a faculty to cut through its own and the university's deliberative and approval machinery fast enough to meet changing demands in the school and community;
3. Quite simply, the funding support for the capability to mount the concentrated and consistent research effort necessary to improve teaching training is not available.

The research problem is fundamental, but is not even recognized as a proper task or problem of the Faculty of Education, at least not in any specific way, by either the university or the field. It is not understood in the university that Education has the requirement not only to do research that is more than a dilution of a discipline into "methods" but also that Education has the requirement of relating that research to field practice. On the side of our colleagues, then, they simply do not comprehend the nature of educational research. On the side of our field associates, they tend either to reject research or to label any information gathering as research, thus effectively destroying the professional base of support for the most fundamental research. Our own failure, for whatever reasons, has been in both directions, and is therefore most culpable. We have not built adequate theoretical structures, nor have we given more than passing attention to research translations which would be of immediate practical use to teachers.

The problems of the Faculty of Education in the university often seem to result in a stand-off of passive antagonism, but the problems related to the field relationships and communication tend to be active, with occasional hot spots. The relative success or failure of these relationships tends to be manifested in practice arrangements. No matter how much success there is, or how much deans of education may point to such successes, the atmosphere is generally characterized by mutual suspicion, competition for control, and "contract" negotiations, rather than by any genuinely cooperative spirit. The fact that the activities associated with teaching practice are never fully recognized in the university, either for the unit or for individuals, further strains the relationship. The deeper problems are less visible however. There appears to be a lack of criteria for the use of expert advice in the solution of field problems, either immediate or long-range, and probably most dramatically in the planning and policy areas. The tendency to ignore some of the best work of Education researchers, relying either on system experience or current "pop educationists," can only proceed from an assumption that *study* is irrelevant to decision making or to professional practice.

Teachers, having graduated in the main from their local universities, and forming the pool for senior administrative positions in their system, should be expected to continue their ties with the university and to maintain a reciprocal relationship with the Faculty of Education as a centre of professional development both in the individual and collective sense. That this is not generally the case, or at least not actively the case for the professional community, is a matter of serious concern.

The problems of teacher education have not gone unnoticed in recent public criticisms of Education. In the flurry of activity in the United States over the past two years, specific responses

to those criticisms have been both constructive and destructive. Among the constructive responses have been the call for genuine university support to faculties of education, government support and recognition for in-service needs of teachers, and comprehensive proposals for improvement. Among the less helpful responses have been the proposals for certification without any professional training and plans for extremely detailed competency testing for teachers. Canadian responses are not yet so specific, but they range over the same ground.

It is simply an institutional fact that the Faculty of Education must base its work 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 "right blend" of activities designed to meet those two sets of criteria will hopefully yield a synthesis which can properly characterize our endeavor. That calls for some solutions that we have not yet found. Those solutions will start with self criticism and move through study and informed discussion to specific propositions.

It is our hope that the papers contributed to this conference will assist in that process.