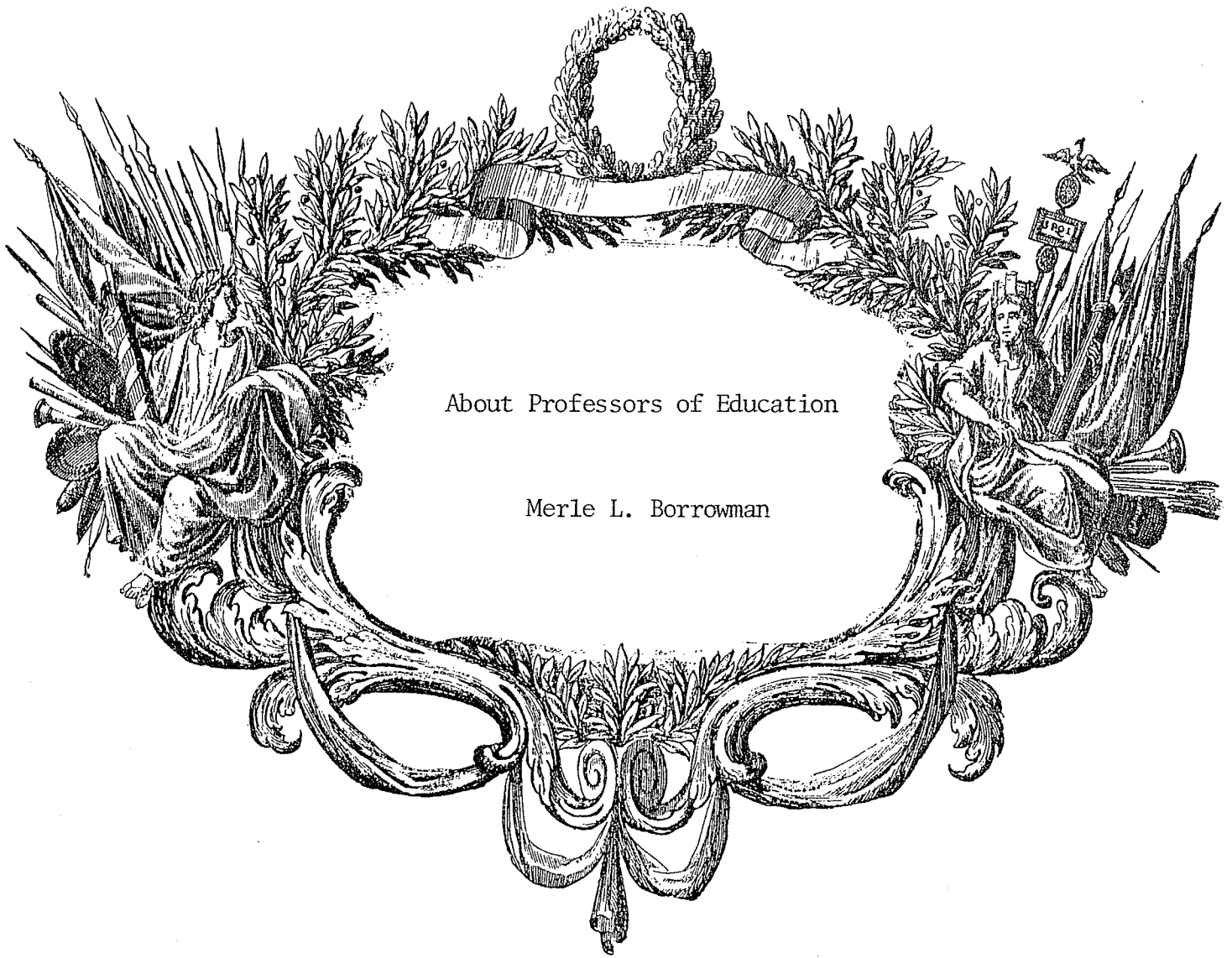


Part Two

The old order changeth, yielding place to new . . .

The Passing of Arthur
--Tennyson



About Professors of Education

Merle L. Borrowman

Presumably we are to explore what future we should project for a group of individuals who accept the label of "professors of education." We are to examine what social functions such individuals might exercise, and to consider what patterns of association on university campuses and in national organizations are likely to be most fruitful to these individuals and the society they serve.

It is not necessary to assume that professors of education will long exist.

Many vocational categories come into brief existence, reflecting a temporarily useful technological process or social organization, and then shortly disappear. While deliberate teaching, and even the organization and management of schools, have characterized social activity for at least several thousands of years, it should be noted that for all practical purposes only a few generations of professors of education have existed. I fancy there somewhere lives a person who directly remembers

one of the first twenty professors of education in America and who has recently met one of the most recent individuals to acquire that title. Quite possibly the latter will live in an age in which the title is no longer used.

The title, as such, is a relatively trivial thing. To identify persons for bookkeeping purposes on a college or university campus, a nine-digit number would serve more efficiently. I suppose the title becomes important in defining a community which, it is presumed, functions as a deliberative and political force in the larger society. Presumably such a community deliberates effectively and is politically successful because it shares certain knowledge, symbol systems and values. In so far as its political ventures involve more than a self-interested pursuit of power, prestige, and affluence, such a group presumably has social legitimacy in the sense that its esoteric knowledge is genuine and genuinely useful to the common weal of the larger society.

In one sense, then, our inquiry pertains to the continued function of a sub-profession sometimes called the "professoriate of education." Those of us on the panel today are asked to comment on whether we believe such a "profession" will and should continue to exist. Perhaps, too, we might comment on the conditions which we believe may warrant or insure such a continuation.

I think it is important to note that the continuation of the functions which people bearing the title "professors of education" is not at all dependent on the continuation of the sub-profession itself. Indeed one might argue that in so far as individuals take too seriously their affiliation with a sub-profession of "professors of education" they may be less effective in carrying out these functions.

Consider, for example, the function of the conduct of critical inquiry on questions relating to education. Quite clearly the scientific principles, the basic concepts, the statements of educational values and much else in which we ourselves currently place greatest confidence were generated by individuals with no particular sense of affiliation with the professoriate of education. Since there were no professors of education until recently, we are not surprised that our historically venerated inquirers are philosophers such as Plato, politicians such as Cicero, and theologians such as Aquinas. But even in the 20th century, the seminal authorities on whom we rely include Piaget, Dewey, Coleman, Ilich, Skinner, and Bruner, none of whom considered themselves "professors of education." If one takes the roster of the National Academy of Education as a guide concerning current leadership, it is again clear that identity as a professor of education is not directly relevant to repute as an inquirer into education. A look at the program for AERA meetings reveals that professors of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science produce a substantial share of the inquiry reported at these meetings. Finally, if one examines the recipients of federal and foundation research support, granted ostensibly to improve the processes of education, it is again clear that considering oneself, or being considered, primarily a professor of education is scarcely a necessary or sufficient cause for being considered a promising inquirer into educational problems.

Yet, the number of professors of education is still increasing, even though at a decreased rate. So is the number of potential researchers who, if not known as professors of education, will at least operate on the basis of a doctoral degree in education. But in relative terms, my hunch is that the portion of significant education

inquiry and research being conducted by professors of education is, vis-a-vis that conducted in other segments of the university, on the decline. On the Berkeley campus, for example, there are six professors of education who are defined as experts in higher education and who continuously do research in this area. In other schools and departments of this campus the number of individuals whose basic research is on problems of higher education must be at least four times that large. Three historians of education in the department of education are outnumbered by four professors in the history department who do continuous and first rate research about schools and schooling. Similar comparisons can be made with respect to psychologists, sociologists, public policy experts, and specialists in a host of other fields. In all candor it is quite clear that much less than half the important educational inquiry conducted on the Berkeley campus is done under the auspices of the professors of education.

Now the interesting problem is: to what extent is the quality of research and the credibility of recommendations based on that research enhanced by efforts to maximize the interaction of research persons with other professors of education at the expense of interaction with professors from other disciplines who are asking similar questions. My own experience has been that few of my education professor colleagues were the least bit interested in my inquiry, and of those who were interested, even fewer were informed enough to offer the most useful criticism. But history professor colleagues have not always been helpful either. Interaction with diverse types has tended to be more useful than repeated shop talk with the membership of any particular group.

However, the point is that the conduct of inquiry concerning education will continue, and, I expect, expand regardless of the continued existence of a self-conscious professoriate of

education. It will probably continue also independently of the continued existence of departments and schools of education as we currently conceive them. In saying this I am neither advocating nor predicting the demise of schools of education. I suppose that they, too, will persist.

What has been said of the conduct of inquiry concerning education can also be said of the preparation of educational inquirers. Quite obviously a doctoral student on any major university campus can be prepared to conduct serious and useful inquiry about education in any of several departments or faculties. And it is highly likely that interaction with several different sorts of professors might be more fruitful for them than coming under the exclusive tutelage of any one group including the professors of education.

But the professoriate of education did not emerge out of the need for inquiry. Historically at least the central function of this emergent profession was the training of teachers and other practitioners. The era in which professors of education came into existence as a sub-profession was perhaps more unusual in the history of vocational education than we have realized. The unparalleled expansion of formal schooling which occurred in the United States between 1860 and 1930 created an almost instant demand for literally hundreds of thousands of teachers. Moreover this expansion occurred during a period in which the society was absorbing vast numbers of immigrants with alien habits and in which the social institutions, particularly technological and political, were undergoing rapid change. Hence the management of schools and the politics of education--in those days euphemistically denoted as "educational leadership"--were more energy consuming than were such functions in more traditional cultures. The number of managers and administrators needed thus expanded even more rapidly than did the numbers

of teachers.

The impact of the need for school teachers on American higher education as a whole has not to my knowledge been carefully explored. Historians of higher education have been more interested in other college and university functions, such as general education, the training of researchers, and the education of professionals in fields of high prestige (law and medicine) or obvious economic utility (engineering and agriculture). Yet teacher education, in terms of sheer enrollment, may account for more than 50% of the expansion of higher education in the period 1870-1930.

This great multiplication of practitioners of teaching and school management in America occurred at the time when there were no significant numbers of highly qualified practitioners to prepare the necessary number of novices through an apprenticeship system. Nor were the people attracted to college teaching inclined as a whole to engage in any kind of vocational training. One tended to become a college professor because of a love of books and speculation; later, for some, because of a love for laboratories and experimental apparatus. For such people vocational training is not an interesting enterprise. People more oriented to action than thought are more likely to find vocational training pleasant.

There is an interesting contrast in the history of professional education for teachers as compared to professional training in several other fields. The Bar, for example, had the capability and was generally willing to provide both the preparation and induction into service of all the lawyers needed in American society. Professional schools of law did not emerge because we needed more lawyers than could be prepared under reasonably effective apprenticeship arrangements. Professors of law replaced practitioners as teachers

because of a fundamental conviction that a better--not more abundant--product would ensue. So, too, the medical practitioners were willing to provide the preparation of the necessary numbers of new physicians and surgeons. Again the quality of new professionals, not the number quickly to be produced, dictated the movement of part of the professional education of physicians from the practitioners to the professors. One can make the same argument with respect to the professional education of the engineers.

In contrast to developments in the education of lawyers, physicians, and engineers, the expansion of teacher education was a "crash" program. Qualified practitioners were too few in number to take on the necessary load, and professors, even those interested in inquiry concerning education, were ill-disposed to involvement with the vocational training of teachers. Hence, a specialized "training cadre" was called into existence. In large measure professors of education are the remains of this cadre.

So far as I can tell, the legitimacy of the professors of education has never been fully granted by either practitioners, other kinds of professors, or, indeed, by the public at large. So long as the shortage of practitioners was acute and sharply felt, all groups tolerated professors of education as a necessary if somewhat embarrassing nuisance. At least on most major university campuses the prevailing mood has been that someone on the campus should do the teacher training job and since only the professors of education would take it on, they must be tolerated.

Practitioners, on the other hand, have been more deeply conflicted in their attitude toward the professoriate. For teaching is a genuinely troublesome vocation, and, like parents, teachers are often at their "wits' end"

In trying to know what to do. In such a condition they do seek the help of people with sufficient leisure genuinely to explore the possibilities of education. If the professors of education do not always seem wise, and in fact are rarely very helpful, they nonetheless constitute the only portion of the university faculty which appears to be informed and concerned about the phenomena which trouble teachers. Still, most teachers believe that they acquired their most important insights on the job and that they could provide an apprenticeship situation which would be more valuable to novice teachers than the instruction provided by professors.

Now, the demographic situation which called the professoriate of education into existence has obviously changed. We have, it is believed, more teachers and administrators than we need. Moreover these practitioners are themselves highly educated. In many cases even their formal academic credentials match those of the university departments of education. Virtually every major school district in America has nearly as many employees with doctoral degrees in education as have the universities and colleges from which these districts recruit teachers. And under the rubric of in-service education or faculty development, most major school districts have themselves assembled a kind of teacher-training department.

Moreover, the professional organizations of administrators as well as teachers now have expanded bureaucracies which include highly trained individuals with a keen sense of their own ability to conduct workshops and other professional improvement activities. Between these professional organizations and the school districts it is quite clear that the human resources exist to train most of the currently needed crop of new teachers. Certainly so far as the technical--or skill training--elements of professional education are concerned, one can make a respectable argument that the practitioners are at least as well

prepared as the professors of education to reclaim responsibility for teacher preparation.

The squeeze is apparent. If professors of psychology, sociology, philosophy and other disciplines are at least as qualified as professors of education to inquire into the theoretical problems of education and the practitioners are as proficient (at least) as professors of education and can assume full responsibility for the technical training, who needs professors of education? The demographic conditions are now such that a new division of responsibilities between the professors (not of education) and the practitioners is realistic. Harking back to the trite and obviously limited analogy of medical education, it seems that the best School of Medicine Faculties are made up of pretty standard Ph.D. types from biochemistry, physiology, genetics, etc., and of unabashed practitioners of surgery, radiology, etc. There are few middlemen, i.e., non-practitioner "social foundations of obstetrics" professors around anymore.

This line of argument obviously leads to the conclusion that the general purpose professor of education--the person with a keen sense of the practicalities of schooling and at least a nodding acquaintance with theoretical and normative propositions which could or should guide the practice of schooling--was the product of a rather unusual demographic and social era which is now past. In the preparation of doctoral students in education we seem clearly to recognize that such is the case since we program at least those students who we see as destined for professorships in major research-oriented universities rather narrowly on some disciplinary line. With the exception of this particular group (i.e., the Professors of Education) our organizational practices suggest also that we perceive most urgently the need for interacting with people whose questions and paradigms of inquiry nearly parallel our own. In

candor I should say that I do not find this conclusion obnoxious.

However, to grant that the category of "professors of education" *per se*, is no longer essential to ensure that the traditional functions of such people are well exercised, is not to deny that new functions might have emerged, or might yet emerge. It would be interesting to examine what these new functions might be.

Though I do not find it unpleasant to conceive of a day when no one is thought of as a generalist "professor of education," I would deplore the passage of certain values which those historic persons celebrated. And, I would urge the preservation of institutional forms designed to preserve these values. For example, I doubt that any individual can combine the competence of a really talented school principal with that of a sophisticated inquirer into the political economy of schooling; but we do need continued expression of the dependence of such people on each other. Moreover, we need institutional forms in which they can come together to explore their complementary interests and insights. One cannot, I think, overstate the propensity of speculative minds to lose all perception of reality nor the tendency of practitioners to lose their perception of possibility.

I am also concerned that the functions of criticism and responsive action be properly related and balanced. The responsible actor must believe in what he does and operate with vigor to make it work. The critic must, in the words of Emerson, describe a "popgun as a popgun." Yet, though the critic undercuts the actor, he must recognize that the actor is doing the essential work which keeps the society alive and, incidentally, provides the critic's *raison d'etre*. So, too, the actor must know that without continued improvement based on the critic's perception, his own efforts will become ever less

fruitful. We need individuals disposed to carry this message and institutional forms in which it can be heard.

It is commonly thought that the critical divisions among professors of education, and between them and their potential colleagues, are conceivable on a continuum from theory to practice. Philip Jackson, in a companion paper, speaks of the "disciplinist," "the pedagogist," and the "generalist." These categories have construct validity.

If, however, one views professors of education as somehow standing between the university and the schools, then I believe a different distinction is needed. It is the distinction between the critic and the actor. There are those whose function is to explain and to criticize; there are others whose function is technological, i.e., to keep the wheels of society moving effectively. Understanding without action is futile; action without understanding is deadly; whimper or bang, we expire. I believe the function of a professional school, and its faculty, is to mediate the critical and the operational functions. Whether as an individual one is a "disciplinist," "pedagogist" or "generalist" may be less important than whether one understands keenly enough the worth of both critic and actor.

