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ISSUES CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL STUDIES AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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The decision to grant university recognition to the colleges of education in Ireland is made the point of departure for a consideration of the requirements of teacher education and of the nature of educational studies The position developed is then applied to support some critical remarks about the provision which Irish universities have up to now made for the study of education and to give substance to some worries which the colleges may have about their recognition by the university

For over a hundred years in Ireland, the preparation of primary teachers for their profession has been carried out in colleges of education or training colleges, as they have been frequently called These have carried out this function exclusively and, for the most part, have worked in isolation from other third level educational institutions †

The character and makeup of the colleges, which previously had varied little, have, over the last decade, undergone a very great change Whereas up to 1971 St Patrick's College Drumcondra, for instance, was confined to male students who, with rare exceptions, had completed their secondary education in the immediately preceding year, it now accepts students of both sexes and of a wide age range In addition, it runs a one year course for university graduates who wish to qualify for the primary teaching profession, which in its initial year (1971 1972) catered for 25 students and now has an annual intake of about a hundred Since 1961, the College has offered a full time one year course in its Department of Special Education for teachers of handicapped children, and since 1966, it has maintained on

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† The Church of Ireland College in Rathmines has been an exception to this, maintaining as it has, a special relationship with Trinity College Dublin With respect to the other colleges the only notable deviation from this general pattern was the arrangement known as 'common entrance' whereby a student of a training college on the results of his final examinations in Irish English and two other academic subjects could gain an exemption from first arts and should he wish to pursue a BA course could commence his university studies – invariably at night – in second year

its campus an Educational Research Centre Moreover, the general course for students, of two years duration, and for long recognized as inadequate, became in 1974 a three year course This has happened as an overdue response to the growing complexity in the type of knowledge and skill which the teacher must acquire in the sciences and technologies that underpin the teaching task

Against this background of ongoing change and development in the the colleges of education, the opinion was steadily growing that the basic qualification of a primary teacher should be a university degree Accordingly, the Minister for Education, in May 1973, invited the university to enter into discussions with the colleges of education with a view to formulating proposals for granting university degrees to students who satisfactorily complete the new three year course at the colleges The brief given by the Minister was apparently an open one it was without prejudice as to what substantial re organization of existing educational structures might be undertaken, or what new structures might be devised, in order to implement it It therefore seemed to offer an ideal opportunity for re-examining the rationale as well as the effectiveness of present arrangements for the study of education and the preparation for teaching at all levels A juncture was reached in the practical engineering of institutions which clearly called for a fresh analysis and appraisal of the underlying issues involved It is as a contribution to this analysis that the present paper is intended

Probably the main motivation for the proposed entry of the colleges of education into the university system was the desirability of establishing a unified teaching profession, or at least reducing the differential in status between primary and secondary teachers by removing the main grounds for such a difference While this is a worthy motive, it is not in itself a sufficient reason for the changes which were mooted In this paper, the intrinsic educational reasons for the linkup, rather than its more extrinsic motives, whether sociological or political, will be examined This is not to imply that the sociological issues are unimportant, or that concretely they do not affect the educational ones Nevertheless, the two can be distinguished, and it is with the latter that I am concerned

A series of questions can be raised What is the essential understanding of primary education that is to be shared by those responsible for the pre service course for student-teachers? Based on this understanding, what type of course should be offered? Are there good grounds for believing that Irish universities, with their particular traditions and competences, are suited to the task of organizing and validating such a course? If there is no clear

convergence between the discernible interests of universities and the requirements of student-teachers, what changes in its own assumptions and organization must the university make if it is to avoid a procrustean operation on teacher education? (The whole question of the proper nature and identity of a university arises here not only a normative concept of its proper functions, but also an historical analysis of the kinds of forces to which Irish and British universities have in fact been responsive, especially with respect to the selective admittance within their portals of different areas of professional training.) And more practically, what kind and degree of autonomy will a recognized college have in respect to the university which recognizes it? To what extent will the exercise of imagination, judgment and decision in the college be governed by, or displaced to, the university? What measures must be taken to ensure that whatever transfer of authority that may eventuate will be a healthy one?

In pursuing these questions it will, I think, become clear that many important issues are implicit in them. I shall begin by attending to the most basic questions, and try to establish a position with respect to them which may serve as a general context within which more specific issues can then be considered.

THE NATURE OF PRIMARY TEACHING

The first issue, and obviously the most basic of all – even if it only remotely figures in the awareness of third-level educators – concerns the nature of primary education. This is such a major topic, and one involving such basic presuppositions, that an adequate discussion of it cannot be entered into here. But there are two cardinal points which need to be emphasized.

The first concerns the valuation of primary teaching – the significance that it is judged to have within the overall context of a person's life and education. As regards this valuation, there is a widely held and deeply seated prejudice that primary education is less significant than post primary education, whether secondary or tertiary, because the 'content' with which it is concerned is simpler, less advanced or recondite than the 'content' of the latter. And this prejudice is often buttressed by the economic interest which sees in the higher levels of the educational system the most proximate source of economic yield– in terms of 'skilled manpower' or 'human capital' – a high priority, obviously, in a society for which education is an investment.

The term prejudice is used here because the significance of childhood itself, as a life phase, has been pre judged It is a prejudice to which adults are peculiarly prone and perhaps it is not the least of the difficulties of educational systems that they are run by adults who have largely forgotten, and indeed been made to forget, their own childhood It is a prejudice, nonetheless, that has never been shared by the great 'intuitive' thinkers of mankind, nor is it supported by the most searching developments in human science in our own century One need only think of the insights into the profound significance of childhood experience which have been opened up by Freud's psycho analytic theories or by Piaget's genetic studies of the mentality of children It is, perhaps, a mistake to mention two names in particular, each of which may elicit the raising of ideological drawbridges, may it suffice to say that there is overwhelming evidence from a wide range of theory to suggest that childhood is a period of extraordinary plasticity, and that we can now come to know a fair deal about the dynamics whereby this plasticity is shaped 'The child is father to the man' is a poet's sentiment, but it is one which contemporary theory does nothing but confirm

This enhanced understanding and valuation of childhood can underpin a different conception of primary teaching to that based on the more extrinsic and superficial criteria of 'content complexity' or economic advantage We may come to see that what is at stake within a primary school classroom is not just the amount of elementary 'knowledge' that children are to acquire, but more crucially the primary relation to the world, other people and themselves that will be the root of their later personality And to stress this fact is not to jettison education in favour of psychology or psychotherapy or anything else, it is, on the contrary, to admit that only in the most superficial view of education could it ever have been ignored

A second point about the nature of primary teaching follows on from the first and concerns the type of expertise or skill that it involves That teaching is a skill, or set of skills, none would deny, but it is a contentious point to decide on the relevance of knowledge which may be called theoretical to the exercise of this skill In many people's minds, teaching in a primary school is an eminently practical job – where 'practical' is conceived as antithetical to, or exclusive of, 'theoretical' This get-on with the job mentality would see the classroom as a relatively non problematic arena where a set of straightforward methods and traditional rules of thumb are applied, and where, in the process, children happily, or un-

happily, learn

A different conception of the teacher's role sees him/her certainly, as a practitioner dealing with a myriad of concrete problems (and one is tempted to say, seeing our present teacher/pupil ratios, a myriad of children and, of course, often it seems that the children *are* the problems), but as a practitioner whose judgment and decision, being constantly exercised by these problems, need to be informed by a deep understanding And such an understanding is scarcely to be acquired outside the context of an initiation into the knowledge and theory systematized in such disciplines as philosphy, psychology, sociology and curriculum development This is not to deny that the concrete application of the theory calls for flexibility and discrimination, and that these are qualities of mind which are not contained in the disciplines themselves But this admission, far from showing the irrelevance of these disciplines to the student teacher, only calls for the most careful attention to the manner in which he learns them, and to the opportunities that are made available to him for reflecting on the ongoing process of their implementation

Neither is this stress on the theoretical component in teaching an implicit attack on the 'intuitive teacher' 'Intuition', however difficult it may be to define, is surely to be cherished, and the genuinely intuitive teacher, however rare, is surely a boon to any class * But it is not out of place to mention that while there are such people (or so I believe) as intuitive healers, our society does not entrust the care of its health to a profession of such people And indeed if the claim that teaching is a practice that can only be adequately mediated by a wide range of theory seems extravagant

* There is a sense of course in which every teacher is 'intuitive in that his initiatives and responses in the classroom have a quality of immediacy But for most people this quality itself if it is to have beneficial effects needs to be cultivated by processes other than intuitive ones It needs to be informed by the growth of understanding and the acquisition of habits And it is wrong to suppose that this growth and acquisition can occur spontaneously for most people quite independently of any explicit reflection or organized course of study Indeed I am rather inclined to say that there are some types of skill in the classroom that no one could perform adequately simply by relying on their untutored intuitions It follows from this that the helpful distinction to make is not between 'intuitive and 'non intuitive' teachers – which I seem to have made in the text – but rather between skills which can be executed naturally 'flowingly' by some people on the basis of their life experience and other skills which do require some systematic specialized attention and practice Even with regard to the first of these I should say that it is worthwhile to try to construct a conceptual framework which can interpret and explicate the spontaneous behaviour For such a framework – which in part at least is what the behavioural sciences are about – adds to our knowledge and may also help towards a wider replication of the behaviour

or unjustified, then the analogy with medicine may be worth pursuing For the doctor, as a general practitioner, meets concrete problems demanding individual diagnosis and decision Yet few would deny the relevance of the sciences of physiology, anatomy and pathology to the carrying out of his daily duties To ask or settle for less in the case of the teacher and the human studies mentioned above, is to admit a lag between the best contemporary understanding available to us and the education of our children And if anything calls for justification, surely this does

A COURSE FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

I should like to consider next the type of course best suited for student teachers The substance of what I have to say on this issue will follow from what has already been said about the nature of primary teaching itself

Just as few people doubt that the primary school teacher must be an extremely versatile performer, so there is general agreement that the course which will adequately prepare him must be a wide ranging and, in many ways, heterogeneous one But it is this very heterogeneity that causes the real problem For all too easily a course can degenerate into a dis jointed medley of bits and pieces, lacking any coherent centre or overall orientation To avoid such a situation, there is a need for some principle of integration, for the identification of some core learning to which all the other learning can be coherently related And there is no easy or unanimous solution to this basic problem

In working towards a tentative proposal on this issue, let me first specify four areas for which strong claims can be made in any teacher education course (i) Disciplines related to education such as the philosophy of education, psychology of education, sociology of education and history of education (ii) Curriculum theory and practice, including the pedagogics of individual curriculum areas such as language, mathematics, art, drama and environmental studies (iii) Immediate classroom experience of the practice of teaching and observation and discussion with teachers (iv) Elective subjects such as Irish, English, history, French, mathematics, philosophy, music, – without any direct reference to the teaching of such subjects to younger children

Related Disciplines

Of the four component areas of teacher education, the first three seem to belong together in a way that the fourth does not, they comprise what we may call educational studies or 'education' A great part of our confusion at the present time stems from our lack of any coherent conception of what this Education is I don't mean education in the first order sense of those processes and transactions through which people are educated, but in the second order sense of the theory devoted to understanding these first order processes I should like to propose that there is a need for, and there is now emerging, a whole set of educational disciplines deriving their character formally from their parent discipline (be it philosophy, psychology or sociology), and materially from their specific concern with the problems and issues of education as a socio personal reality

Each of these is substantial in itself Think of the range of the psychology of education – learning and its facilitation, motivation, teaching, inter personal transactions, evaluation, intellectual and aesthetic development Or of the problems of philosophy of education in say, clarifying our concepts of knowledge, of tradition, of self, of 'curriculum', in probing the basis of an educator's authority and the tension between this and a pupil's freedom, in inquiring about the social control of an educational system, and the respective rights of parents and of governments Or the sociologist's concern with say the school as a socializing agency, with the school system as an instrument of social selection, with correlations between educational achievement and socio-economic background and the various factors underlying such correlations In each case, the issues, all of them important, multiply And together, these disciplines constitute a set of truly formidable proportions

Perhaps the major issue that arises within this set is the need for inter-disciplinary co-operation In this respect, educational studies merely reflect the key emergent problem of the human sciences generally, the problem of overcoming the partialities and fragmentations of specialization without losing the gains in rigour and precision that this specialization brings As the problem of establishing conversation and cross-fertilization between the various human sciences and of forging some integral viewpoint for their proper pursuit is only now beginning to be faced, it would be unfair to expect educational studies to have satisfactorily resolved it But, I may remark, that in the area of education, this problem is especially acute

For, educational studies as a set have a more direct tendency towards application or practice than is the case with the inclusive set of human studies generally And application, which is always concrete and soiling its hands with the involvedness of the actual, cannot rest in the abstract distinctions which, for a purely theoretical and specialized concern, are legitimate and necessary

And yet, if it is not to deteriorate into purely reactive routine, practice needs to be informed by the insights of different theoretical domains The problem, then, is to devise a way in which different theories and disciplines can contribute their voices to practice so that none loses its distinctive idiom and yet all complement each other in a coherent conversation It is not accidental that I have resorted to metaphor in describing this problem, for it is the central long term challenge that confronts educational studies, and as yet we are only feeling our way towards an appreciation of its moment, not to mention an adequate way of meeting it

Curriculum Theory and Pedagogics

This problem comes more clearly into focus when we remember that 'Education' comprises not only the educational disciplines which are specializations of general disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and history, but also the unique area of curriculum theory and its particular applications in the different 'subject' areas Here we confront the fact that the formal educating of young persons has been, and is, transacted through the media of different 'subjects' such as history, geography, mathematics, metalwork, physical education, English and Irish I cannot here allude to all the problems that arise in attempting to interpret these 'subjects', the modes of organization of knowledge or experience they exemplify and the grounds of their differentiation from one another But it is surely clear that there is here an immense area for study And if students are to be concerned with eventually teaching these 'subjects', then obviously they need to attend to their basic structure, and to the type of significance and procedure proper to each They need to work out learning sequences within them that combine logical and pedagogical considerations, as well as to design strategies for complementing them with each other, for teaching a unified or 'integrated' curriculum

In this work there is need for collaboration between those with the relevant pedagogical expertise in various aspects of the curriculum, subject specialists and philosophers, psychologists and sociologists, for the problems

of teaching these 'subjects' are but different aspects of the overall problem of fostering the bodily, intellectual, aesthetic, interpersonal and moral development of children at different age levels and usually in the setting of large groups of their peers, where these contain wide ranges of individual differences along many parameters And contain, also, all the problems of group organization and control – not the least of which is the problem of 'discipline' – with which the teacher, largely on his own, is expected to cope

In this context, the teacher needs to have a developed sensitivity to the 'hidden curriculum' of the school That is to say, he needs to be aware that in many ways the most important learnings of the child are not derived from the subjects of the 'overt' curriculum, but are the basic attitudes he acquires from the structure of his environment and from the quality of the interpersonal relations that contain him Indeed, curricular subjects come to enliven and illuminate the child only to the extent that these basic attitudes are good, and the attitudes themselves – to authority, to learning itself, to individual initiative and personal judgment, to discrimination and rigour and style – remain as dispositions in the person after much of the information learned in school has been long since forgotten

Teaching Practice

This brings me to the third section of education or educational studies for the student teacher, that is, classroom experience or teaching practice, as it is usually called It should be clear from what I have already said that I do not envisage the apprenticeship system of a student modelling himself on an established master as being by itself an adequate contemporary prepar ation for the potential teacher The crucial mediating role I have ascribed to theory rules out such a system It remains true, however, that teaching is a practice and so any reasonable preparation for it must include, as an essential ingredient, practical experience

Indeed it would hardly be going too far to say that teaching practice provides the locus for the verification, as well as the application, of many of the propositions contained in theoretical courses It is, in other words, in many ways the legitimate testing ground for some of the insights offered in these courses The problem, then, is to devise an effective graded sequence of teaching practice periods that will be symbiotically related to the college based courses that precede and succeed them Such periods of practice must provide real opportunities for testing ideas in practice, for experimenting and improvising and must provide data for further analysis

and reflection that can re orientate further future practice, so that an ongoing self correcting process is established where theory and practice dynamically interfuse and illuminate each other

The basic reason for this emphasis on teaching practice is that teaching is a skill (or an art) and one cannot become accomplished at any skill (or art) without frequent exercise or 'practice' and the feedback that this exercise provides But there is a further aspect to this, with ramifications not just for teaching practice but for the conduct of the entire course This is the fact – all too obvious, and scarcely ever taken seriously – that it is the whole person who is to teach and not an abstracted intellect or a programmed operative And so any course that does not attempt to involve the whole person is inadequate This is true of all education, but it is true with a particular pointedness in the case of the education of teachers It is the feelings and emotions of students perhaps that are most easily bypassed in the pursuit of courses, and yet these feelings, for good or ill, are most powerfully at work later on in the classroom An adequate preparation then, must surely provide the student with an opportunity for coming to recognize and clarify the various feelings he may have, of hostility, or frustration, threat or aggression, or whatever, in all the many situations that can arise in dealing firstly with children, then with parents, other teachers, principals, managers and inspectors It is not, of course, easy to devise effective structures to cater for this much neglected aspect of the education of feeling, but I am convinced that there must be ample facility for the student to discuss in small groups, and within the context of some of his courses, the intimate problems that most concern him in the classroom And similarly, much of the theorising of the lecture hall may be fully 'realized' only after its elements have been personally and vitally identified in the classroom, and reflected on in the tutorial room

As an example of this process, I take a putative series of lectures in say philosophy or psychology of education on corporal punishment A student may well assent to the coherence and cogency of the arguments which may be presented against the use of corporal punishment, and yet only in the remotest and most perfunctory way relate all this to the horrors of frustration that he himself may feel when confronted with a bunch of unruly ten year olds A connection must be made between the conceptual understanding of the topic and the student's own experience And my point is that while lectures may serve well to present the conceptual under standing, they are of extremely limited value in facilitating this connection And for this reason they need to be greatly supplemented by other types

of learning situations for the student -

Elective Subjects

The question of personal formation which I have been adverting to, leads me on to a brief consideration of the fourth possible element in a teacher education course mentioned earlier, that is, one or more academic subjects, chosen from a range of possible options Although the study of these subjects would be part of the student teacher's education, they are to be distinguished from 'education' in the sense of educational studies as outlined above There remains then the question of justifying the place of these other subjects in a course for potential teachers and of explaining their relationship to what I should consider the more central area of educational studies

The most obvious rationale of these subjects is that they provide a student with an opportunity of developing his own understanding or skill in an area that is of special interest to him, and that such personal experience of the excitement and joy, as well as the pain and difficulty of learning, being itself an instrinsically valuable experience, is an essential require ment in one who would teach or facilitate the occurrence of learning in others There are philosophical presuppositions in question here about the interiority of knowing and the irretrievably 'tacit' dimension of much communication, which I shall not dwell on here The position might be captioned by saying that a sensitive human mind and the most sophisticated computer are qualitatively different, and that there is an impassable gulf between a good teacher and the best teaching machine And there is a sense, we may add, in which a genuine educator can never disavow the old sentiment *'Humani nihil a me alienum puto '* It is to be noted also that his viewpoint being, in its most general form, topic neutral, is hospit able to all subjects – from philosophy to music, from mathematics to wood craft – and so would support as wide a range of choice as possible

I accept the general validity of this 'liberal' argument, but am cautious about its application to a teacher education course In particular, I should not like it to be taken to imply that education itself, with its many constituent disciplines, does not offer the student rich opportunities for the sort of development in question It is, in my view, unfortunate that the 'liberal' argument has often been attended by this bias, either implicit or explicit, that education, being not much more than a set of practical recipes, is devoid of any serious intellectual or personal challenge

And if one wants to resist this implication, as I do, then one might go on to say that teacher education is essentially a professional one, and that in a relatively short course where priorities must be established there is no room for anything other than education One might further point out, in defence of this, that while doctors or engineers would doubtless benefit from a more liberal education, their professional courses are not often designed to provide this But here one would, I think, be going too far For, quite apart from the questionableness in the education of a student of present professional courses in medicine and engineering, these disciplines, as they have historically assumed an identity, are not explicitly concerned with the development of mind, whereas education is so concerned, and cannot therefore as readily prescind from the subjects or disciplines through which this development has historically articulated itself

The question remains, then, of explicating the relationship between education and one of these subjects This is an extremely vexing question that raises large issues in the philosophy of knowledge I shall confine myself here to considering it in the particular context of the education of primary teachers and shall make just a few points without elaboration

In the first place an adequate course in curriculum theory and the pedagogics of these subjects in the primary school – as should be clear from what I have already said – will involve the student in thinking seriously about them Indeed these subjects can become perspicuous to a person in a unique way when he is confronted with the problem of teaching, that is, of explaining or communicating through them Moreover, it ought to be more generally known – in order to counter the prejudice about the simplicity of subjects in a primary school – that some of the most interesting recent work on curriculum construction, especially in America, has been done by interdisciplinary teams that have included Nobel prizewinners, at the very frontiers of their respective disciplines It is not the case, then, that any challenging reflection in and about these subjects can only be through studying them in an academic way And an argument in favour of the study of academic subjects for primary teachers must not therefore be premised on an outdated and watered down conception of curriculum studies

Granted then that curriculum studies are a formidable area of study, what is the relationship between them and advanced study of an academic area? To bring the matter to a head, what is the relationship between studying, say, history at university level and teaching history in a primary

school? History at university level has its own conceptual assumptions and canons of significance, its own modes of imagining and procedures of verification, that constitute it as a distinct form of knowledge Now one of the confounding things is that in modern views of primary education, with their emphasis on such ideas as an open classroom and an integrated day, separate subjects only exist with a much lesser degree of autonomy than was previously the case If we use the same word history, then, to denote, on the one hand, a course on university syllabuses, and on the other hand, aspects of the child's experience and attention in the primary school, we should not be bewitched into thinking that we use it in both instances with anything like a univocal meaning Indeed it is extremely important for one who has studied history to a fairly advanced level and who would teach in a primary school, to appreciate just how and why the bracketing and conceptual organization which is the stock in trade of the historian, may elude the concrete imagination of the child

At the same time, it is precisely the transition from the latter to the former, from an undifferentiated to a differentiated state of consciousness, that is one of the main goals of education There is a point, then, it seems to me, in providing a student teacher with good experience of what approx imates to the *terminus ad quem* of education in one of its important media (subjects), even if his own pupils will not aspire to this level while immediately in his charge What is to be achieved by this is a sense of the unity of educational experience over time, a sense of perspective within which a focussed concern with one moment (the primary one) does not become myopic, but rather remains open and hospitable to further moments in the total process If it is legitimate to think of the teacher as representing the values of a culture to his pupils, then the deeper his own appreciation of these values, the more authentic, and successful a representative he can be

It is right, that student teachers should have the opportunity for third level study of one of the realms of cultural value that the curriculum embodies Such study may provide a background of knowledge that can enhance the student's understanding of curriculum theory and practice It may better enable him to 'impart judgment' as well as to 'instruct in information' *

* These are the terms which Michael Oakeshott uses to make a crucial distinction in his philosophy of knowledge and of teaching (cf 6 7) The distinction itself, with terminological variants, occurs in most theories of knowledge and, by extension of teaching

But there are complicated dynamics of mediation and transfer in question here which are themselves matter for educational theory, and which I shall pursue no further It is the case, then, that the study of one subject besides education, without subtracting from the seriousness of the latter, can deepen the student-teacher's awareness of some of its aspects

There is a further organizational consequence of this matter that deserves a mention From the point of view of the primary teaching profession as a whole, it is desirable that its members have a diversified range of expertise that extends beyond the primary school curriculum A team of teachers in a school is strengthened by the different types of competence and interest that its individual members may have and opportunities are thus created for greater flexibility in the type of initiative and service that they may provide in the school This consideration is relevant not only to graduates in the traditional academic areas, but also, and perhaps more so, to specialists in such expressive fields as drama, art, music and physical education These latter have been areas of great neglect in the traditional pattern of Irish education

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Having set out some basic points about the conception of primary teaching, and of a pre service course for it, which would be adequate to contemporary developments, I want to say something now about the institutional arrangements for such a course As the preceding sections of this paper will have made clear, I regard a deep and comprehensive study of the constituent disciplines of education as the core of any course for primary teachers A point of crucial importance to the devising of institutional structures remains to be made, however It is this that educational studies and teacher education are not coterminous either in content or in function Educational studies is the wider and more general concept It consists of areas of inquiry and research that can be pursued by an individual or group quite independently of a desire to enter the teaching profession It recognizes that the problems of the education of persons, and their educating, being of such extraordinary complexity as well as such great importance – both for individuals and for society– require the disinterested and methodical concern of theoretical under standing

Indeed it is worth pointing out that in the first great awakening of theoretical understanding in Greek philosophy, the problem of *Paideia*

or educational formation, occupied the very centre of attention And we may ask whether in our own more 'advanced' society, with its economism, its mass production, its propaganda, we do not need to think as hard or as systematically about these problems as did the Greeks

It seems to me then, that to restrict education theory to the requirements of a professional course for teachers is an undue limitation on the development and scope of educational theory * Adequate institutional arrangements for it should ensure the fostering of specialized research and postgraduate study They should also provide courses relevant to other roles in the educational system besides that of teacher at primary or secondary level – school managers, principals, inspectors, as well as policy makers and administrators A crucial point, of course, in this matter is that the bias of educational studies would not be directed exclusively towards the servicing of roles in the present educational system On the contrary, an important part of its function would be a continuous analysis and evaluation of the assumptions of our present system We might expect, then, radical experiments in curriculum construction and such activities as 'youth work' and 'community development' no longer to remain as comfortably isolated from education as they presently are Nor should we expect that all this would be politically neutral or irrelevant to the determination of basic socio-economic options in our society Nothing less than the de domestication of education is at issue here

I have been stressing that educational studies set up a wider context than teacher education alone At the same time, it seems to me that teacher education itself can best be conducted within, and not apart from, this wider context It is a commonplace to say that present student teachers, who will be teaching well into the next century, will require great flexibility and a capacity to respond to an ever accelerating rate of change It is the case also that Irish education has been very monolithic, with experimentation or divergence from a standard pattern pitifully rare The training of teachers in a wider orbit than has been the case up to now seems desirable then, if we are to seek for greater flexibility and diversity These are but two aspects of the general desirability of having professional training carried on in a setting that is animated by the active pursuit of research

* A significant if small step in the direction here proposed is indicated in the Lelievre report, 'As a result of our own discussion and the evidence submitted to us we have been much attracted to the idea of undergraduate courses which provide for a study of Education without any necessary commitment to teaching and without any training element (5, p 7) '

The courses provided for non teaching professionals would also be indirectly to the advantage of teachers themselves For while the engagement between the teacher and his or her pupils is the irremovable centre of the educational system, it still remains true that the quality of this engage ment is greatly affected by the boundary conditions which are not established by teachers That those who do control these conditions should be informed by a broad concern for educational issues is obviously important to teachers A managerial system, for instance, explicitly based on ecclesiastical position rather than educational competence would hardly have survived if educational studies had been given appropriate institutional recognition Nor would the concentration of power and initiative have remained vested in a centralized government Department of Education Wider issues about the 'democrat ization' of education and indeed the ambiguities between specialized professional competence and general lay participation are involved here But my present point is that the establishing of educational studies along the lines I have suggested, far from being a purely 'academic' matter, would have repercussions on the present status quo in education

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

In the light of the foregoing general remarks, I should like now to come to a more immediate consideration of the decision to bring the colleges of education within the ambit of the university It seems to me that this decision is to be welcomed insofar as it will entail the granting of a qualif ication to primary teachers equivalent in status to that of other professions, insofar as it will make the basic education of teachers open-ended with respect to further postgraduate study, and insofar as it will enhance the quality of education, and ensure more adequate institutional provision for it These three issues, it seems to me, provide the essential criteria for evaluating the entry of the colleges of education into the university setting The crucial question seems to be how far may we expect these criteria to be satisfied by the concrete arrangements that are actually made?

With regard to the first issue, the essential determinants of the status of a profession are the socially shared valuation of its service to the community, and the complexity of its required knowledge and skills, as well as the length of time needed to acquire them The fact that the professional training of primary teachers has up to now been confined to two years of non university education has contributed to the low status

it has enjoyed relative to other professions *

The argument implicit in my earlier discussion would certainly be in favour of a raising of this status And it is probably the case that this would happen if the sort of course I have outlined were to be conducted within a university At this point, however, it would be disingenuous to pretend that more subtle sociological and historical factors than the intrinsic ones of service, knowledge and skill do not enter into the question of status It is the case that the university per se confers a status on a qualification independently of its inherent value, and it is also the case that universities have, by and large, colluded with the established or emergent status valuations of society at large, expressed mainly in terms of remunerability, in their sponsoring of professional training † Such factors should, I believe, carry very little weight in judging the desirability of university recognition of the courses for primary teachers This is especially the case when the traditional university monopoly of third level education is slowly being broken, as we come to recognize the need for greater diversification

This first issue of status, then, when rationally considered, resolves itself into the other two issues Enough will have been done to underwrite the status of the profession if these other two criteria are fulfilled

How then will education fare under university auspices? The most substantial evidence we have for answering this question, that is, the past record of the university in its provision for education, gives little grounds for optimism The main provision for the study of education has been and is a one year part time diploma course This course betokens the university's sidelong and rather casual concern with the vocational interests of its Arts graduates, rather than any serious effort to enable students to face the wide ranging theoretical and practical problems of education Saying

* The implicit values of a society which requires five years preparation for its vets – custodians of its animals' health – and only two years for its primary teachers – guardians and guides of its young people – warrant some scrutiny Perhaps this situation would be changed if we could develop healthy overseas markets for the sale of our 12 year old children and if we could boost such sales to the level where our economic prosperity would be as dependent on them as on the sales of cattle and other agricultural merchandise

† The case of medicine in the last century is interesting Rejected initially as a university sponsored profession by Cambridge, it was inaugurated by Edinburgh University and then subsequently accepted by Oxbridge – not apparently, because of any intrinsically theoretical developments within medicine itself but because of the rising status in society of the medical practitioner (cf 1)

this is not a reflection on the few people who have laboured over the years in the education departments of the universities, it is a reflection, rather, on the overall policy and priorities of the university which have consigned education to such a cinderella corner From the nature of the institutional recognition it has received up to now one can only infer that in the minds of those in authority in the university, education does not rank as an area for serious study * There have, of course, been fine phrases over the years at graduation ceremonies about the benefits of university education, but little effort, meanwhile, to establish education on a firm basis as a field of enquiry within the university

There has been much recent criticism of universities as self perpetuating institutions, relatively impervious to new 'outside' developments which – if one were to take it seriously – would offer little hope of a change in the position of educational studies † But, of course, there have been innovations by Irish universities in the recent past, for example, in the provision for Business Studies What one would like to know is the type of consideration that is cogent with university administrators in persuading them to intro duce such new provisions One would like to see explicated the criteria which operate in such decisions The relationship between these criteria and the proclaimed goals of a university about the pursuit of truth might then be examined

I should like, in any case, to go on to raise a few questions that must be of basic concern to the colleges of education in their dealings with the university The first one refers to this matter of the structures which presently enshrine the position of education within the university Its position is of a department within the Faculty of Arts, indeed, as I have indicated, a department that cannot claim equality with other departments which offer comprehensive undergraduate and post-graduate facilities But

* It is worth noting that the report of The Commission of Higher Education 1967 has this to say 'In our opinion the study of education should not be regarded as the "poor relation" of university studies It should be given equal importance with other studies It would be wrong to conceive of the function of university departments of education simply as departments for the training of teachers in pedagogics (2, p 220) ' It is surely alarming that eight years later even this modest recommendation of an official report has apparently evoked such little response

† Indeed if one reflects on Max Planck's testimony that a new scientific theory gains acceptance not by making its opponents change their minds but by holding its own until old age has retired them from their professorial chairs (cf 4 p 526), one might wryly wonder about what force natural or supernatural would be required to gain acceptance not just for a theory, but for an entire set of disciplines

the fundamental anomaly is not that it should have a low standing within the Arts Faculty, but rather that it should be in the Arts Faculty at all

Indeed it seems to me that the basic misconception about education is that it is a 'subject' analogous to other subjects in an Arts Faculty, and so long as it is thus misconceived, correct decisions about it are highly improbable (I am aware that the very notion of an Arts Faculty which includes such disciplines as empirical psychology and political science, is itself, perhaps, the root anomaly, but I am not rash enough to embark here on the tortuous analysis that this issue seems to warrant) To do justice to the needs of educational studies, a Faculty of Education would need to be established And, indeed, the logic which led to the recommendation that graduates of the colleges of education should be Bachelors of Education might equally have led to a conclusion about the desirability of a Faculty of Education For the reason for the BEd designation was that this was in line with other professional degrees as in medicine, law or engineering and the corollary of this might have been that just as the latter are institutionalized in faculties, so ought education to be And, certainly it seems that, say, medicine or social science – each of which has its own faculty – offer much closer parallels to education, than do any of the traditional Arts subjects

A Faculty of Education would comprise strong departments of the constituent disciplines mentioned above, it would sponsor wide ranging research and offer specialized post graduate facilities It would provide the various courses to service educational roles including non-teaching ones, and it would organize the practical or 'clinical' dimension of these courses Without the foundation of a faculty, it seems unlikely that education with its many constituent areas will ever be given the serious attention it requires

Whatever the merits of my proposal for independent faculty status, it is in any case clear that education has not thrived within the Faculty of Arts And this seems to me to be the point which must give most pause to the colleges of education For there is little evidence to indicate that in dealing with the issue of granting degrees to graduates of the colleges of education, the university has in any serious way revised its own presuppositions about the nature of education

It is worth noticing, with respect to this last point, that the granting of recognized status to the colleges of education is the device which is calculated to cause least dislocation Full integration, on the other hand,

would have provided the university with an opportunity to build up and extend its own provision for education, to establish a school or faculty with a number of campuses where different specializations might have been undertaken, and all this could have been governed by a comprehensive overall policy * It is not my purpose here to spell out this proposal, which would have entailed a much more radical facing of basic issues as well as very formidable practical difficulties which I should not care to minimize But I mention it in order to indicate that the present system of recognized colleges is not the only way in which degrees could have been ensured to primary teachers, it is the way, however, that does least to disturb the tranquillity of the existing institutions

Assuming that the colleges of education are to remain separate and have recognized status, then the fact that the natural orientation and structure of their courses do not coincide with university precedents, and that these precedents themselves are not subjected to critical re-evaluation, especially in the question of educational studies, is an unhappy one for the colleges With respect to elective subjects, there ought to be scope for studying sections of a course that would in some way illuminate aspects of teaching in a primary school, without, thereby, undermining the academic standard of the course The variability required is one of content and emphasis rather than of standard We must only hope that university heads of department will be sensitive to the possibilities in this area, and active in exploring them – rather than insistent on traditional emphases In this connection, too, one may deplore the absence in Irish universities of any well established departments of visual arts A consequence of this absence is that art cannot be taken as an elective subject and its position in the colleges is thereby considerably weakened The quality of primary education in Ireland can only suffer as a result of this But surely the quality and diversity of education in the university itself also suffers so that the university might now profitably make the recognition of the colleges an occasion for reconsidering its own priorities in this matter

* Perhaps the most immediate practical problem which shows up the need for some co-ordination is the difficulty which secondary teachers claim to have in dealing with pupils who are 'graduates' of the so-called new curriculum in primary schools And related to this of course is the problem set to primary teachers of the higher classes by the entrance examinations to secondary schools which are widespread and have a stifling effect on the implementation of the new curriculum Quite apart from this recent development, however the division between primary and secondary school is largely an arbitrary one And the system of preparing teachers for each in institutions hermetically sealed from one another is not to the advantage of the pupil whose development from childhood to youth is an organic one

A further question of serious concern is the provision for post-graduate study that will be afforded its students I have mentioned this earlier as a crucial touchstone, from the college's viewpoint, of the value of the university link and I should like here to explicate it further The college must know if its graduates are to be 'recognized' as eligible for further study in the parent university or any other university If they are not – or if elaborate extra requirements are exacted of them which students of the university itself do not have to meet – then the 'recognition' that is being granted can only be judged as a spurious one There is at issue here not just the question of institutional provision for disciplines, which I have already dealt with, but also the question of justice to students One of the major expectations that the colleges must have following their recognition by the university is that in the new arrangement they will no longer be an academic cul-de sac for those of their students who may wish to pursue further studies If the university link is to be worthwhile, it must really open the system to further study, both by the colleges themselves providing postgraduate facilities and also by ensuring to their graduates the mobility and full access to other institutions of higher learning that university students have

The final matter that I should like to raise concerns the question of authority and how it is to be exercised It is quite obvious that there must be some change in the authority structure of the colleges that will take account of the new situation viz a viz the university, but to define what this change ought to be is not easy Up to now the colleges have enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy In other words, a good deal of the decisions that have affected their policy and running have been internally generated At the same time, this autonomy has operated only within certain boundary conditions established and maintained by agencies external to the college And so, many of the really important determinations were not subject to its control The duration of the course, the type of certification it received, student intake, both with respect to numbers and entry qualifications, the provision of finance – these major factors were largely determined by the Department of Education which, therefore, in fact wielded considerable power even while it did not directly intervene in the affairs of colleges It is certainly possible for the colleges, then, to have an inflated image of their past autonomy and to see this as threatened by the prospect of university supervision

Quite apart from cherished myths about autonomy, however, very considerable real difficulties remain The university has the statutory power

of conferring degrees and, because of this, claims a supervisory power over course content and other academic matters If this power is to be transformed into an effective exercise of authority, there must be a shared understanding between the university and the colleges of the latter's task It is, of course, important that whatever structures are set up to mediate this authority will reflect in their composition the fact that teachers and students in the college will be the ones who must implement and work whatever decisions are made But more basic than the actual mechanisms of decision making, and conditioning their possible effectiveness, is this matter of agreement or divergence of view about the nature of a college's task as a college of education The problem must not be conceived simply as one of the college's ability to meet the standard of the university (this after all may not be so difficult), but also of the university coming to understand the nature and identity of the college it has recognized, and coming, moreover, to meet the challenges to itself implicit in this recognition

The real challenge, of course, is the new ground that must be broken in education in Ireland One may hope that a university setting might provide the colleges with a new impetus for development and that out of the coming together of both institutions, more adequate resources might be generated for facing future needs To allay one's fears and nourish one's hopes in this context, however, calls firstly for a clarification of the nature and status of educational studies and their relation to teacher education The present article has been intended primarily as a contribution to this task I am only too aware that in such a very general survey as I have undertaken there have been many points which have cried out for modification or further analysis My purpose, however, has been neither exhaustive analysis nor the presentation of any very definite and workable set of proposals, but rather the raising of some important issues that should engage our attention in the near future

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