

## RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION THE WILLIAM DRAKE LECTURE, 1990

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### INTRODUCTION

I am honored to deliver the fourth annual lecture in honor of Professor William Drake. I asked my colleague, Clint Allison, if he had any materials related to Professor Drake. Clint gave me two letters written in 1933, one penned by William Drake and the other by an anonymous colleague.

Professor Drake's letter to University of Tennessee President H. A. Morgan is interesting because it reveals some of his educational beliefs. He discusses what we would now call life-long learning. He believed that educational problems would not be solved "until we bring our educational efforts and the economic and social life of the state closer together -- even woven hand-in-hand." To do this we would have to universalize our school system and call into full play the adult education movement." He adds the need to carry "the educational work of the College beyond the four (year) limit, even into the factories, farms, and homes, and to the individual voluntarily until death." Fifty years later we still have a distance to travel before life-long learning becomes a reality.

The fragment of the second letter regarding Professor Hoskins was written by a "YMD" to Dr. Hoskins, another official at Tennessee:

Now as to my good friend, Dr. Drake. He tells me that he recently had a conference with your Dr. Morgan, and was most favorably impressed with him. Drake is a live wire. Has the tempo, energy, and nerve of a "Yankee" but the choice rich sentiments of a true Southerner.

I often tell him that he is so different from the half baked, [illegible] instructors in education with a very thin veneer of scholarship. He has a rich

background of literature and history having majored in these subjects -- and an abundant supply of good rare common sense. He is a good mixer, a fine organizer, and has the ability of adjusting himself to any situation.

Mrs. Drake is a charming Charlotte, N.C., lady, very cultured and a skilled pianist and pipe organist.

Incidentally they are Baptists.

The latter line reveals much about the place and times of the young William Drake -- and about the contemporary scene.

### THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

At the same time that I read these letters, I received a brochure describing the 1938 meeting of the Progressive Education Association of New York City. The program came from one of my professors who had attended the meeting. These are some of the persons who discussed the first 20 years of the Progressive Education movement: Ralph Tyler, Fritz Redl, Louis Rath, Harold Rugg, Carlton Washburn, Lloyd Allen Cook, H. Gordon Hullfish, George Counts, William Kilpatrick, John Childs, Harold Benjamin, Edgar Dale, and Henry Holmes. These names are familiar to us. They are among the major figures that defined educational philosophy and practice through the '20s, '30s and beyond. It is interesting to note others at the conference: Curt Lewin, the psychologist; Karen Horney, whose work had a profound influence on the training of counselors; the architect, Walter Gropius; the composer, Aaron Copeland; Robert and Helen Lynd, authors of Middletown; Roger Baldwin, the founding father of the American Civil Liberties Union; and Orson Wells, just beginning his career with the Mercury Theater troupe.

The conference program reminded me of how much of my training came from professors influenced by these and other outstanding figures from the era when Teachers College-Columbia dominated American educational thought. My educational views reflect ideas that were at the heart of the Progressive Education Association, or at least as I understood them when they were taught to me by my professors. This realization helps me to understand why I think of myself as being a reformer, granting a tendency toward self-delusion as well. The ideas to which I now turn have deep roots. They are derived from a rich heritage, an era when educational idealism was in full bloom.

I can only touch on each theme in this lecture: the pressures on schools of education; advice to foundations professors regarding how they might prosper in schools of education; and the swelling rhetoric about restructuring public schools. My main point is the need to restructure schools of education as well. Strategic planning is a vehicle to this end. I stress why this is the perfect time to undertake such planning. I offer these comments to this audience because of a unique opportunity for professors of education to take the lead in restructuring their colleges.

### **PRESSURES ON SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION**

It would be redundant to describe the pressures on schools of education in recent decades. Going beyond the familiar criticisms of our calling, some trends are clear. Teacher preparation has become ever more technocratic, partially as a response to criticisms of easy courses and soft content. The power of assessment driven schooling has never been more pervasive; the gap between highly structured and humanistic views of teaching never more apparent. The degree to which courses in the foundations of education represent more humanistic, holistic and probing analyses of education, to that degree positions and courses in the foundations of education have declined. Those who question the ethical, moral, and humanistic purposes of education have been driven into enclaves, surrounded by colleagues who insist that teaching is a series of

skills, competencies, and other assessable behaviors.

A rash of state mandates demand accountability with a concomitant insistence that every aspect of education must be assessed. Testing programs drive the K-12 curriculum and are being proposed for higher education. The capping of education credits in Texas, given this meeting's location, must be cited as one of the most virulent attacks on the professional preparation of teachers. Beyond these issues, it is no longer debatable that, in Calvin Coolidge's phrase, "The business of America is business." Concerns about America's economic and competitive status have focussed heavily on schools and on how teachers are prepared. Many earnestly believe that America will again become economically dominant when it straightens out its schools. This naive myth coalesces into forces and voices sometimes alien to foundations professors. I need not go further with this litany. It is known to all in this room.

### **ADVICE TO FOUNDATIONS PROFESSORS**

We have received good counsel regarding how we can engage these issues -- at least in our colleges. We have been told repeatedly that, given the technocratic and behavioristic tides in education, we should become deeply involved in the training programs in our colleges. Our voices and our perspectives ought to be far more a part of the mainstream of preparation. This is good advice. I remain convinced that we can make a much stronger contribution to teacher preparation by working much more closely with colleagues in curriculum and methods.

There are many ways to do this. In my view, we best address the historical and philosophical issues of education when we relate our teaching to what is so eminently observable in any school. I am pleased, for example, that several colleagues at the University of Tennessee have contributed to our alternative certification program, as well as to a capstone seminar taught in a school setting. Both efforts are largely off-campus. We have not worked out all the problems, but these are realistic approaches to helping students to

analyze what they are experiencing within a historical-philosophical framework. An even better example is seen in the work of Ron Podeschi at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. For some years Ron has taught the introductory foundations course in a school setting. Instead of talking about what is happening in schools in a college classroom, he has transported that classroom to a reality setting. All events in the school are open to analysis. Ron skillfully develops historical, sociological, and philosophical contexts for the experiences he and his students have in the school. His approach best exemplifies how foundations professors can apply their knowledge and perspectives to the world in which their students are learning to teach. But larger questions must be addressed: are schools as they are now structured sufficient to our educational needs? Can we continue to prepare our students for "what is"?

#### **RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

There is a growing recognition that public schools must be restructured. The neighboring city of Dallas, for example, has an extensive system of magnet schools and each of these schools is innovative. On the whole, they are not dramatically different from other schools; they essentially focus on particular subjects and clientele. In contrast, the restructuring concept challenges the assumptions undergirding the entire educational system. How schools are organized, modes of instruction, how students and teachers interact, relationships to the community, and all other practices and myths of education are open to fresh approaches. At one extreme in this debate are persons like Chris Whittle, a Knoxvillean probably known to this audience as the creator of Channel One. This is the controversial TV news program that includes commercials and that is being shown in hundreds of schools in the nation. Whittle's position is that there is little hope of reforming schools. He argues that the best hope for the future is to create new schools state-by-state, in ever growing numbers, thus demonstrating what education in the next century can be like.

An attempt in this direction is seen in the RJR-Nabisco Foundation's funding of 15 "Next Century Schools." The Foundation will identify

additional schools over the next two years. Funding over a period of years encourages each school to restructure some aspect of its programs or organization. The innovations vary considerably in scope, and not all are dramatic or innovative. The point here is only to underscore that this and other foundations are helping some schools to demonstrate new approaches. The Michigan Partnership for Public Schools, in which Michigan State University and a number of private firms are working on new visions of schooling, is another example. Most of us are also familiar with the attempt to restructure salaries, responsibilities, and teaching conditions in Rochester, New York.

Many in higher education quickly assume that colleges of education can contribute to the restructuring process. Certainly, there are some things we can do. In the main, however, this is not a valid assumption. The record of higher education in general and schools of education in particular insofar as innovation is concerned is not strong. We have had a host of pilot and innovative programs in schools of education. These have not fundamentally altered the mainstream, however. A handful of experimental colleges have even flourished on campuses, with Evergreen State College in Washington being among the survivors. On the whole, faculty are essentially conservative and highly resistant to any change in the basic patterns of college organization, curricula and instruction. We have only to remind ourselves how difficult it is to establish anything beyond token interdisciplinary programs to illustrate this fact. It is remarkable how little is changed at universities given our penchant for planning. We have documents describing goals, five year plans, and so on. After the plans are approved and the smoke clears, our teaching, research, and public service activities change very little. Indeed, we continue to demonstrate some of the worst facets of teaching in higher education.

#### **RESTRUCTURING OF SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION**

Because our practices are entrenched, the question of restructuring schools of education is not rhetorical. It is a vital need. No serious changes can be expected in public education

without parallel changes on our campuses. Indeed, I believe that schools of education need to be restructured if they are to survive. Some of you may have noted the remark made by Governor Carruthers of New Mexico at a national meeting this past summer. He allowed that the best way to improve the quality of teaching in American schools is to close schools of education! He is not the only governor who has made this irresponsible statement. It is an ignorant view. It ignores efforts in schools of education across the country to improve their programs. Nonetheless, this view derives from and reinforces the negative reputation of schools of education among many. Our responses to even legitimate criticisms, unfortunately, have always been highly defensive.

Despite extremist calls for our termination, we know that colleges do not disappear overnight. It is likely that most colleges of education will enter the next century, improved or not, criticized or not. It is also safe to assume that most will enter the future much as they are currently structured. Despite this fact, I posit the hope that some colleges will enter the next century on a much more positive note. I believe we can respond to criticism and come out the better for it. This cannot be accomplished without a long and arduous process.

## FUTURE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

I can only outline here the case for restructuring schools of education. While I believe I can provide evidence for my assertions, this paper is merely a sketch of what can best be described as my hopes. It is difficult to describe serious reform other than in broad strokes and much must be ignored. What follows is merely a glimpse of ideas with which I am grappling.

The rationale for restructuring is absolutely clear: reforms in the nation's schools cannot be accomplished without concomitant changes in the preparation of teachers and administrators. Unless we prepare professionals who can orchestrate fresh organizational and learning environments, our present structures will continue far into the future. Our practices are

deeply rooted, many of them have a hundred year or longer history. Some practices are to be treasured; many are contrary to everything we know about learning. We continue to operate schools based on age-grade-subject organizational assumptions that have been questioned for decades. The effectiveness of our practices with today's school populations, let alone their adequacy in the coming decades, is an issue we largely ignore. The advocates of restructuring are challenging our assumptions. Whatever the new visions for K-12 schools, colleges of education obviously need to prepare teachers who share those new visions. Accepting all the assumptions, programs, structures, and practices now in place -- which is what most of us do most of the time -- stagnates what ought to be a dynamic process.

Granted, redesigning schools of education is but one issue on the educational scene. It is the piece of the puzzle for which we are accountable, however. It is remarkable that, despite decades of debate about needed changes, reforms in colleges of education are limited to relatively minor modifications of curricula and degree requirements. Even the most modest changes have not been applied at all schools of education, nor are they necessarily uniformly implemented within a given college. I have never understood why those who know the most about facilitating learning are among the slowest to adopt changes or to evaluate their work.

Advocates of restructuring recognize that merely tinkering with programs is not sufficient. Teacher educators cannot meet increased expectation for research, excellence in teaching, and professional service to the educational community without seriously addressing all their programs, modes of organization, working relationships with the field, expectations of themselves and of their students, and on and on. As formidable as the list may sound, there can be no educational Renaissance unless it is paralleled by changes in institutions that prepare educators. An educational Renaissance can be accelerated by those colleges of education willing to demonstrate new practices in preparing professional. New practices, of course, need to be predicated on new visions of schooling. All of this strikes me as exceptionally exciting. The scope of ideas and possibil-

ities to be examined is enormous. We would have grist for our mills for decades to come.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Campuses normally prepare for the future by a process of strategic planning. The nuts and bolts of strategic planning need not concern us here. We recognize that the process must involve all the key stakeholders in the future of colleges of education, including faculty, administrators, students, school system representatives, state department officials, and so on. It is not a rapid process. The number of issues to be addressed is large, the turf issues and other factors to be considered formidable. I will only note a few factors critical to the success of the process.

A faculty engaged in planning must be assured that their job security is not in question. Faculty need guarantees that they will all have a place in the new structures. There can be no guarantees, however, that the programs currently offered, the departmental or administrative structures, the size of the institution, or any other characteristics will go unexamined. Whatever the transformations being considered, those planning for the future need to see a role for themselves. The future, whatever its nature, will not be a mere reflection of the past if strategic planning is taken seriously. Faculty development opportunities and expectations must be part of the transition to new programs. Some faculty will need to retool their skills if the process is at all creative.

Planning must also be predicated on the assumption that campus changes can be a bellwether of related changes occurring in the nation's schools. Close collaboration with the field must be a major characteristic of all such planning. A professional school cannot succeed unless its commitments and practices are to some degree reflected in the places its graduates will work. For those who fear strategic planning, this latter caveat should be comforting. The realities of school practices will have a moderating and often dampening effect on what might be done on campuses. This point alone will explain why few schools of education are likely to respond to this call for strategic planning.

The support of central administration and trustees is vital to strategic planning if changes are to be more than superficial. The politics of garnering such support will vary campus to campus and will, often, preclude a serious process.

Despite these and other factors, the early 1990s provide a great opportunity for planning. The unprecedented number of faculty retirements projected over the next decade opens a unique window of opportunity. If "21st century colleges of education" are designed over the next several years, decisions regarding retirements can be made on the basis of that planning. Otherwise, we will struggle to fill vacancies with "replacements" within the usual constraints and procedures of higher education. With a vision, indeed, a blueprint for a new institution, we could fill new roles and staff new programs to better serve changing educational needs. Indeed, this rationale for strategic planning applies to all of higher education. Unless universities as a whole address these same issues, efforts in schools of education will only be further hampered.

If the process works as it should, there could well be an "old" and a "new" college of education on a given campus over a period of years. Once the strategic planning has been approved by faculty, central administration, and beyond, all resource and staffing decisions would be made in terms of implementing the "new" college rather than the "old." The "old" college, in this sense, would have a sunset date. Again, I must stress that careful planning and, in effect, a contract between the "old" and "new" colleges and the university's administration is needed. Such agreements will ensure that there will be a number of points during the transition period when faculty are moved into the "new" college. As idealistic as this may sound, I see it is a realistic approach. It strikes me as a positive scenario, compared to simply "seeing what will happen" as the years pass.

## **A PROGNOSIS**

What is the likelihood that any of this scenario has the proverbial snowball's chance? The odds for success are low. Much of what I am suggesting is akin to a house of cards. But

when have conditions been any different in our field? When has any reform been easy? When would have been or will be a "better" time for innovations? I would argue that opportunities have never been better to alter our future. There is no paucity of ideas on which to build. We only have to think of the Holmes Group and its agenda, the ideas being disseminated by John Goodlad, the escalation of standards by our accrediting body, the new emphasis on the knowledge base, the growing linkages with liberal arts, opportunities to join the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers as they address teacher preparation, and so on. I am not optimistic, however, that we will achieve any fresh visions if we continue to talk only among ourselves, that is, to other educators.

Let me return to the Progressive Education conference mentioned earlier; it offers a guide to working with individuals outside of education. If we are truly serious about what schools of education could be like, as well as what public education might be like, we need ideas from union leaders, artists, anthropologists, community leaders, business persons, civil rights leaders, and the list goes on and on. We tend to look to one another for ideas, constantly forgetting that we are all strongly conditioned to what is and has been in education. In recent years, we have not even

listened much to one another. We have mainly responded to ideas that politicians press on us. Few of us, it appears, are able to take the long view.

It seems to me that those in the history, philosophy, and sociology of education ought to be in the forefront of the long view. This is our bent, but we usually deal with "what was" rather than "what could be." I would suggest that we look through the windshield toward where we are heading, and less into Marshall McLuhan's rearview mirror.

Of one thing we can be certain: the retirement of many professors in schools of education over the next decade is a demographic fact. We are all aware of how vacant positions are usually handled. If we have any hopes for schools of education that are far more in tune with what "could be," then perhaps these remarks are sufficient to stimulate debate. If we do not plan for our future, I fear a process of attrition. We will be judged on what we have been rather than on what we can be. I hope that foundations professors are more open to future possibilities than those committed to preparing people to fit into schools as they now exist. Perhaps forthcoming meetings of this society will demonstrate whether what I am proposing has any future.