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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a problem that educators have become painfully aware of: their occupation does not share all of the characteristics and benefits of established professions like law and medicine. Oregon is selected as a case study in the making of a profession because, along with California, it has moved farthest towards a true professionalization of teaching. The Bicentennial Commission of Education for the Profession of Teaching of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education has issued a report, "Educating a Profession," containing a criteria of twelve items listing the characteristics of professions. These twelve items are examined here and compared and contrasted with the Oregon experience. The criteria are divided into two groups: those in which there is no significant distinction between Oregon education and the rest of the country, and those criteria that Oregon has begun to meet in a more clear-cut way than most other states. It is concluded that teaching does not yet satisfy the criteria that other established professions clearly meet; in Oregon, at least, educators have taken essential steps through legislation that can lead to full professional status. (SK)

THE MAKING OF A PROFESSION: AN OREGON CASE STUDY

James M. Wallace

If words could create a profession, education would long since have achieved that august and elevated state. Educators have for decades loosely, naively, and optimistically labeled their occupation a profession. Even John Dewey - who managed to be clear-headed on a remarkable variety of subjects - stated in 1904 that training teachers was "one species of a more generic affair - that of training for the professions."[1] Willard Elsbree's standard history of the American teacher, published in 1939, was sub-titled "Evolution of a Profession in a Democracy."[2] Until fairly recently most educators, in spite of massive evidence to the contrary, probably assumed without question that they were members of a profession.

During the last two decades, however, educators have become painfully aware that their occupation does not share all of the characteristics - and certainly not all of the benefits - of established professions like law and medicine. This fact has been brought to the attention of educators by a diverse group of authors, ranging from Myron Lieberman to James Bryant Conant to Charles Silberman.[3] The continuous struggle between the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers has recently been accompanied by a highly political debate on whether or not teaching is or should be a profession.

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Professionalization has become something of a battle cry as organized teachers have worked for greater influence over teacher accreditation bodies at both the national and state levels.

Much of this discussion and movement has recently been brought to a focus through the efforts of a group with the unwieldy title of the Bicentennial Commission on Education for the Profession of Teaching (CEPT) of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. CEPT, composed of four leading teacher educators, has just issued a report titled Educating a Profession which is clearly destined to become one of the more influential contemporary statements on teacher education.[4] The authors apparently have some hope that their report may have an impact on teaching similar to that which the Flexner Report, issued in 1910, had upon the emergent profession of medicine.[5] The importance of the CEPT Report was underscored when the chairman of the Commission, Dean Robert Howsam of the University of Houston, was invited to discuss it in the prestigious Charles Hunt Lecture at the 1976 meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education.

It is evident that we are in the midst of a great debate over the professionalization of teaching. That debate will go on among teacher educators and between teacher educators and their liberal arts colleagues on the one hand and their public school colleagues on the other. It will take place also between

educators in general and the lay public as represented by state boards of education and members of state legislatures.

Obviously many theoretical issues will need to be discussed as this debate proceeds. A number of these issues are raised and analyzed thoughtfully in Educating a Profession. There is considerable danger, however, that this debate will be conducted in a realm of abstractions, far from the day-to-day world in which the effort to build a profession is taking place.

It is of critical importance that educators follow closely developments in states like Oregon and California which - as Howsam's report acknowledges - have moved farthest towards a truly professional governance structure for education.[6] It is possible that some of the theoretical problems which loom so large may be in fact more manageable than they appear. And there may be difficulties which are not made evident through some of the more abstract discussions of this topic.

Our contribution at this point will be a modest one: to see how far one state - Oregon - has progressed in meeting the criteria for a profession. The 1973 transfer of full legal authority over teacher certification, decertification, and teacher education to a predominantly educational agency called the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) has set the stage for a rather rapid movement toward some degree of professionalization.

An analysis of this development may help educators see where to concentrate their energies in profession-building. It may also help to reduce some of the fear and anxiety which educators are bound to experience during a period of transition and changing patterns of power. Fear of the unknown is a recognized source of anxiety and it may be of some comfort to educators to know that there is a body of real experience in educational profession-building upon which they can draw.

Sociologists and other scholars have developed a number of lists of characteristics of professions, and these lists have - not surprisingly - many elements in common.[7] Howsam and his colleagues have studied the literature on professions, have settled on their own statement of twelve criteria for professions, and have attempted to indicate the degree to which education meets their criteria.[8]

We will use CEPT's criteria rather than others in the following analysis partly because it is a fairly comprehensive statement, but more importantly because it is likely to be used extensively by educators as a reference point in the continuing discussion of professionalization.

In order to pursue this analysis systematically we will need to change the order of Howsam's criteria and to divide them into two major groups. The first group includes those criteria on which there is no significant distinction between Oregon education and that in the rest of the country. The second group

includes those criteria which Oregon has begun to meet in a more clear-cut way than have most other states.

What follows is a very preliminary assessment of this situation and one which will need to be undertaken in more depth in the future. But even a brief survey may help us to see how far we have come and what is left to do.

In the first group, CEPT's opening criterion statements are:

1. Professions are occupationally related social institutions established and maintained as a means of providing essential services to society.

2. Each profession is concerned with an identified area of need or function (e.g., maintenance of physical and emotional health, preservation of rights and freedom, enhancing the opportunity to learn).

Education meets these two minimal criteria, but it is worth noting that many occupational groups which do not even aspire to professional status also share these characteristics. Clearly, these descriptors are not unique to professions.

Education also meets at least the first part of CEPT's fifth criterion:

5. The profession is based on one or more undergirding disciplines from which it draws basic insights and upon which it builds its own applied knowledge and skills.

Education draws heavily from such disciplines as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and it does derive some applied

knowledge and skills from them. But criteria three and four force one to raise questions about the nature of that knowledge and those skills.

> 3. The profession collectively, and the professional individually, possesses a body of knowledge and a repertoire of behaviors and skills (professional culture) needed in the practice of the profession; such knowledge, behavior, and skills normally are not possessed by the nonprofessional.
>
> 4. The members of the profession are involved in decision making in the service of the client, the decisions being made in accordance with the most valid knowledge available, against a background of principles and theories, and within the context of possible impact on other related conditions or decisions.

It is clear that education, unlike medicine, does not have a scientifically-established and widely-accepted body of knowledge and skills which most practitioners employ. While there are some well-publicized disagreements among medical practitioners, there is doubtless a higher degree of consensus among doctors than among teachers regarding knowledge and technique. And while there may be some advantages in the relatively undefined status of knowledge and skill in teaching, the question here is one of professionalization, and on this issue education clearly falls short. As Howsam says in his Charles Hunt Lecture: "That the teaching profession lacks a precise and well-defined professional culture is no secret to teacher educators. Neither is it unknown to occupational sociologists who study the professions."[10] While doctors

have considerable knowledge about the effects of certain medicines and operations, educators suffer from "the absence of any large amount of evidence that particular instructional strategies are related to pupil performance.[11]

Oregon, like a number of other states, has participated actively in the competency-based teacher education movement, and its Teacher Standards and Practices Commission has supported this involvement. Some progress has been made in defining teacher competencies and in developing programs to help teachers acquire them.[12] But it is fair to say that Oregon educators, along with their colleagues elsewhere, have just begun to move toward meeting criteria three and four in any systematic way.

Criterion ten states:

> 10. Individual practitioners are characterized by a strong service motivation and lifetime commitment to competence.

Although this is clearly a difficult area in which to make valid assessments, the opinion of most observers is that educators have a somewhat stronger service orientation than do members of many occupations. The "lifetime commitment to competence" is perhaps more arguable. In spite of some recent stabilization, teachers are less likely than members of recognized professions to make their work a lifetime commitment. And there are still far too many who respond to the

pressures of teaching by becoming tired timeservers rather than competent practitioners.

On criterion nine, educators are doubtless in even worse trouble:

> 9. There is a high level of public trust and confidence in the profession and in individual practitioners, based upon the profession's demonstrated capacity to provide service markedly beyond that which would otherwise be available.

Surveys show a declining confidence in America's educators, and recent publicity concerning lowered achievement test scores has eroded that confidence still further.[13] The irony of this criterion lies in the fact that while education is slipping in public repute, the professions of law and medicine are undergoing even more damaging reassessment. The wave of disbarments following Watergate and the current malpractice crisis in medicine have doubtless undermined the status of those professions, and have forced a long overdue self-examination by doctors and lawyers.

The final criterion in the first group is:

> 8. Preparation for and induction to the profession is provided through a protracted preparation program, usually in a professional school on a college or university campus.

As CEPT points out, in comparison with true professions, education does not require a "protracted" period of preparation.[14]

Teachers typically manage to include their occupational preparation within a four-year college program, and their continuing education is not noted for its rigor or substance.

On eight of the twelve criteria, then, we may see that education is moving haltingly and irregularly toward some degree of professional status, but that it still falls far short of being a full-fledged profession. And on the above criteria, Oregon education does not differ significantly from education in the rest of the country.

On the remaining four criteria, however, primarily because of the new legal position of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, Oregon education has taken some forthright strides towards true professional status. Criterion number six provides the clearest example:

> 6. The profession is organized into one or more professional associations which, within broad limits of social accountability, are granted autonomy in control of the actual work of the profession and the conditions which surround it (admissions, educational standards, examination and licensing, career line, ethical and performance standards, professional discipline).

In Oregon, major professional organizations such as the Oregon Education Association, the Oregon Federation of Teachers, the Elementary and Secondary Principals, and the Confederation of School Administrators, have members on the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. Although members are not elected to

the Commission by their respective groups, most are nominated in part through the efforts of these organizations, and the viewpoints of the groups are seriously considered in the deliberations of the Commission.

The structure of the Commission insures that major segments of education are represented. As established by the legislature, the Commission includes four elementary and four secondary teachers, an elementary and a secondary principal, a city and a county superintendent, two teacher educators, a school board member, and two public members.

The social accountability of the Commission is maintained in several ways. The members are appointed by the State Board of Education and the agency is legally accountable to the legislature. Any continued and visible violation of its public responsibilities would doubtless result in legislative action. The State Board of Education may also ask the Commission to review any rules or decisions to which it takes exception. The Board has not utilized this prerogative during the Commission's three years of legal authority, but there is little doubt that the Commission would pay close attention to any such requests from the Board. The presence of a school board member and two lay citizens on the Commission also insures that the public interest is continuously presented and considered.

The Commission does not have, of course, "autonomy in control of the actual work of the profession." Oregon teachers, like

those in other states, are employed by school districts which control much of their actual work. The greatest steps toward true professionalization have taken place in "the conditions which surround" that work, which Howsam lists as "admissions, educational standards, examination and licensing, career line, ethical and performance standards, and professional discipline."

The Oregon Commission has full legal authority over teacher education, certification, and decertification. It adopts its own standards for the evaluation and approval of teacher education programs and conducts on-site examinations of these programs. On the basis of these evaluations it determines whether or not programs shall be approved and for what period of time.

The Commission also establishes rules for certification. It authorizes colleges to develop programs which prepare candidates to meet those rules, and then issues certificates to persons recommended by the programs. (Out-of-state candidates apply directly to the Commission for their certificates.) These certification rules constitute in effect the standards referred to in Howsam's criterion seven:

> 7. The profession has agreed-upon performance standards for admission to the profession and for continuance within it.

The certification rules adopted by the Commission are not startingly different in most respects from those of other states, although they do provide for certification on the basis of "demonstrated competence" as well as upon course completion.[15]

The chief difference is that educators themselves, speaking through the Commission, have developed the standards and are responsible for applying them.

The matter of professional discipline, referred to by Howsam in criterion six, is dealt with more explicitly in his last two criteria:

> 11. Authority to practice in any individual case derives from the client or the employing organization; accountability for the competence of professional practice within the particular case is to the profession itself.
>
> 12. There is relative freedom from direct on-the-job supervision and from direct public evaluation of the individual practitioner. The professional accepts responsibility in the name of his or her profession and is accountable through his or her profession to the society.

The authority of Oregon teachers to practice <u>in general</u> derives from the certificate which the Commission issues to them; <u>specific</u> authority in individual cases lies with employing school districts, as it does in all other States. Teachers do not have the freedom from on-the-job supervision which doctors, lawyers, and architects have. Their work in a public agency requires that supervision be closer than that in the private professions. And, of course, teachers are increasingly subject to evaluation, which seems to be the price they have paid for tenure and job security. But this evaluation is conducated primarily by school districts and is done by other educators, not by the public.

The Commission has clear authority in the area defined in the last parts of two criteria cited above: "accountability for the competence of professional practice within the particular case is to the profession itself," and "the professional accepts responsibility in the name of his or her profession and is accountable through his or her profession to the society."

School districts of course, make continuous evaluations of teaching performance, and - when they have the evidence and the courage - dismiss teachers who are not functioning effectively. But a teacher dismissed from one district may, if he is lucky, find another district willing to hire him. It is the Commission which, when it decertificates the grossly unfit, says, in effect: "this teacher has demonstrated that he is dangerous or damaging to the young, and - acting on behalf of our colleagues - we suspend or revoke his license to practice."

The Oregon Commission has had relatively little occasion to use this new power, but it has - in those cases brought to it by school districts - demonstrated that it can act firmly and forcefully. It has suspended certificates, placed teachers on probation, and reprimanded teachers for illegal and unprofessional behavior. As districts become more aware of the opportunity to decertificate the unfit, it is anticipated that this power will be more extensively used. Educators will then be doing what they have so long been admonished to do: to clean

their own house and to rid education of those who do not meet minimal standards.

The purpose of this paper has been to provide a case study in the making of a profession. Amidst all the theoretical and abstract discussions of educational professionalization it seemed that it would be helpful to study developments in that state - Oregon - which is acknowledged to have moved farthest towards a true professionalization of teaching.

We have looked at a set of criteria for professions and have tried to see to what degree education in general, and Oregon education in particular, meet those criteria. On the basis of this analysis we must affirm that teaching is not yet a profession. It falls too far short of satisfying those criteria which established professions so clearly meet.

But we may conclude that in Oregon, at least, educators have taken the essential steps which can lead to full professional status. They have - through legislation - established a firm basis for building a profession. They now have and are vigorously exercising full authority for adopting and implementing standards for teacher education programs and rules for certification and decertification.

With this fundamental legal authority, the other elements of professionalization can follow. The Commission is encouraging

and assisting teacher education programs to develop and transmit the "professional culture" which teachers must have. It is promoting the broad involvement of all segments of education which will be necessary to the development of realistic preparation and certification. It is pressing for standards of practice and continuing education which will promote a "lifelong commitment to competence."

Oregon's early success in these undertakings gives promise that education's move toward professionalization need not take the narrow, self-serving, self-aggrandizing course which has too often accompanied professionalization in other fields.[16] The Oregon TSPC has so far managed to avoid becoming embroiled in the struggles over salaries, fringe benefits, contracts, and strikes which loom so large in education today. The Commission has avoided economic issues and focused its attention on those tasks which can help in the building of a public, service-oriented, humane, and effective education profession.

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4 Howsam, Robert B., and Dean Corrigan, George Denemark, and Robert Nash, Educating a Profession. Washington: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1976.

This document is referred to below as the CEPT Report.

5 Ibid., p.33; Howsam, Robert B. Now You Shall be Real to Everyone (17th Annual Charles W. Hunt Lecture). Washington: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1976, pp. 10-12.

6 Howsam, Educating a Profession, p.56.

7 See, for example, Schein, Edgar, and Diane Kommers, Professional Education: Some New Directions. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972, ch. 1; Hughes, Everett C., "Professions," in The Professions, DAEDALUS, Fall, 1963.

8 Howsam, Educating a Profession, pp. 6-7; 10-16.

9 Educating a Profession, pp. 6-7.
Although these statements have been rearranged, CEPT's numbers have been maintained for ease of reference. The remaining criteria will not be footnoted below.

10 Howsam, Now You Shall Be Real to Everyone, p.15.

11 Ibid., p. 20.

12 Much of Oregon's progress in competency-based teacher education has taken place through the collaboration of two units of the State System of Higher Education: Oregon College of Education and Teaching Research. The Oregon College of Education in 1974 won the Distinguished Achievement Award of the A.A.C.T.E. for its competency-based elementary program. From Commitment to Practice, by H. D. Schalock, B.Y. Kersh, and J.H. Garrison. (Washington: AACTE, January, 1976).

13 HEW News, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. March 15, 1976; Seattle Times, April 11, 1976, p.A2.

14 Howsam, op.cit., p.16.

15 For background on this development, see "A Quiet Competency Revolution," by James M. Wallace and Richard S. Jones, in Performance-Based Teacher Education, v.2, no. 8, February, 1974, pp. 5-7.

16 The CEPT Report expresses on pages 40-41 its concern about the responsibility of other professions. Regarding ethical problems in the legal profession see Alan Dershowitz' review of Unequal Justice, by Jerold Auerbach, in the New York Times Book Review, January 25, 1976, pp. 1-2.