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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this presentation is to investigate both the liberal arts tradition and the preparation of teachers in colleges and universities committed to following that tradition. Historically, liberal education has addressed itself to the task of determining and clarifying human needs and values. The major goal of education, as defined in this paper, is that of forming a rational, moral, and active participant in society. Liberal arts curricula emphasizes the development of the complete individual who has social conscience and a willingness to improve all of society rather than to think of education only in terms of production and consumption. Given this definition and description of liberal education, the question is asked, "Is teacher preparation consistent with liberal education?" The author concludes that a carefully designed program of teacher education can be consistent with the goals and assumptions of the liberal arts college or university. An investigation of the ties between this type of teacher education with other groups and institutions involved in the teacher preparation process is presented. It is pointed out that competency based teacher education and the liberal arts education are not necessarily incompatible, but rather might reinforce the strong points implicit in both philosophies. (JD)

Teacher Education in the Small Liberal Arts College: Compatibility? Credibility?

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In light of the continuing consideration of the efficacy of liberal arts education and the changing nature of the professional preparation of preservice teachers, the discussion of the alliance between liberal education and teacher education seems to warrant further investigation. While the debate is not a new one, it nonetheless remains an important one - particularly for those of us involved in both liberal education and teacher education. It is therefore the purpose of this presentation to investigate both the liberal arts tradition and the preparation of teachers in colleges and universities committed to following that tradition. The treatment will neither be impartial nor dispassionate, but will instead be directed toward addressing the concern from the perspective of one committed to the value of both - again, particularly when combined.

One set of answers to the following questions will be offered.

1. What is a liberal arts education?
2. What is the relevance and significance of liberal education for contemporary society?
3. Is liberal arts education dead? Should it be?
4. Is teacher preparation consistent with liberal education?
5. Can an effective program of teacher education be conceived and conducted in a manner compatible with the goals and assumptions of the small liberal arts college?
6. Must a new breed of superpersons be developed to meet the philosophical, professional, and practical requirements of such an alliance of the technical and more broad ranging aspects of instruction?
7. Is teaching the ultimate liberal art?
8. Can liberal arts colleges afford to get out of the teacher education business?

The task of addressing these questions is unquestionably a big one. Fortunately, many have made important contributions to the discussion in the past. Some of these inputs will be widely used as personal responses are offered, using the questions as a guide to both scope and sequence. It is to the examination of these issues that we should turn.

In any academic year, thousands of students enter colleges which pronounce themselves liberal arts institutions. There is good reason to believe that few of these students really go to such schools for a liberal education. In many cases, they would probably be disappointed even if they did.

The current condition of liberal education is not one of strength. It has been attacked from many sides for a variety of reasons. Among these criticisms are: it is impractical and not clearly defined; it is elitist; it is not related to our technocratic society; it is too preprofessional in orientation; it does not have a sufficient vocational orientation. Commentators complain that the humanities do not humanize and that the liberal arts do not liberate. Liberal education, in the opinion of many, has become culturally dysfunctional.

What then is a liberal arts education? What is its significance and relevance in contemporary society? To answer these questions we must look at the origins and traditional function of the liberal arts. Bernard Murchland has done this in a very thoughtful way in a recent issue of Change magazine. The following thoughts are based on his analysis.

Murchland suggests that historically liberal education has addressed itself to the task of determining and clarifying human needs and values. It was a process of shaping human sensibility toward desirable and rationally justified patterns of action. The word action might well be emphasized here. For while the process had strong ethical overtones and focused on the transformation of the individual through rational and critical processes, it was only through outward expression, that is, justified patterns of action, that the effectiveness of this introspection could be observed.

Murchland describes the humanism of Socrates as stressing that:

1. the human character is neither acquired by nature nor imposed by authority; it had to be attained through critical inquiry.
2. everyone is in principle capable of undertaking such inquiry and of arriving at defensible convictions about how life should be lived.
3. the best of all societies is one in which citizens are equipped for life through education.

There was a practical emphasis to this, however, for the Greeks. The endless quest for definitions and intellectual clarity was not empty verbalizing and intellectual gamesmanship. It was based instead on the belief that practice and theory were interdependent. Thinking and acting formed an inseparable meld.

Plato and Aristotle built upon this tradition. The role of education to them was to train citizens to a sense of their own selfhood and to train them to consider reflectively the ideas most likely to give meaning and direction to their communal experience. The emphasis in this, whether social or individual, was in all cases radically pragmatic in the sense that it always envisioned the most enlightened ways of acting.

It would seem well to stress this notion of radical pragmatism as liberal education is frequently associated with a kind of "learning for learning's sake". The connotations of this are that knowledge is thought of as being detached and unrealistic. Murchland suggests that this is inaccurate when compared to Greek and medieval philosophies of education and that even later day humanists tended to reflect the more pragmatic emphasis described above. For Robert Hutchins, for example, the purpose of a liberal arts education was to train each member of the community in the experience of full citizenship. John Henry Newman, for all of his talk about knowledge for its own sake, was no less pragmatic. A brief quotation from Newman's The Idea of a University indicates this.

> If then the intellect is so excellent a portion of us, and its cultivation so excellent, it is not only beautiful, perfect, and admirable, and noble in itself, but in a true and high sense it must be useful to the possessor and to all around him; not useful in any low, mechanical, mercantile sense, but as a diffusing good, or as a blessing, a gift or power, or a treasure, first to the owner, then through him to the world.

In his treatment of this issue, from which I've drawn so liberally, Murchland goes on to cite reasons for what he refers to as the literal death of the liberal arts. He cites four specific consequences of this demise and goes on to discuss them at length. While these do not seem an appropriate concern for this forum, some suggestions for reaffirming the promise of liberal education can be drawn based on his discussion. These are issues which liberal arts colleges will have to confront in the very near future.

The first suggestion to be offered for reaffirming liberal education calls for resisting an overemphasis on "cognitive rationality" in our programs. While the liberal arts tradition rests on a humanistic rationality that makes value considerations foremost, our contemporary society seems to be more interested in quantifying experience and in determining workable equations between knowledge and power. This emphasis seems to be on surface meanings and immediate returns. Rationality has therefore come to mean what is now widely referred to as "cognitive rationality". This differs most from the liberal tradition in its emphasis on value neutrality. In this style of thinking facts are one thing, values another. There are even those such as A. Y. Ayer who would go so far in supporting cognitive rationality as to suggest that "ethical judgments have no objective validity whatsoever. They are insulting to rational minds and unscientific".

Murchland points out that cognitive rationality has become codified in all the representative techniques of modern society: in science and technology, most obviously, but also in business and government bureaucracies, and increasingly in pervasive forms of social engineering. The same might be said of education itself - where it has been deflected from its major goal of forming a rational, but moral and active participant in all of society. We seem to need to return to this emphasis on the development of the complete individual who has social conscience and a willingness to improve all of society rather than to think of education only in terms of production and consumption. The liberal education tradition seems well suited to this effort.

A second suggestion would be that we need to maintain or restore the diversity of the liberal arts curriculum. We should resist the movement toward specialization by encouraging students to follow a variety of curricular interests. The completing of a variety of introductory courses can have a design; it need not be arbitrary and without coherent purpose. Such courses initiate students into the various academic methodologies and can begin the process of development of the broad background that is vital for mature humanity.

A related need is to restore the concept of pleasure to liberal education. This concept suggests that learning is enjoyable because it is natural; it (learning) satisfies the intrinsic need of the organism to take pleasure in ideas and knowledge. It would seem that modern education has moved away from this idea. Students, and many of us who teach them, seem to lack spontaneity and imagination. Rote reactions and calculated commitments seem to dominate their and our actions. The pleasure of baccalaureate education seems to be disappearing from our schools. We should attempt to do whatever is necessary to restore the baccalaureate years to what they ought to be - a source of many forms of pleasure - for all.

Finally, we should address the need to restore our collective political sense and our commitment to cultural and social idealism. Liberal education seems an excellent route to this goal. Historically it has filled this role; with the thoughtful direction we as educators can provide, it can perhaps be restored to this role.

Is liberal education dead? Should it be allowed to die? Many of us would certainly hope not. We would rather think of it as undergoing a period of redefinition leading to rebirth. We are hopeful that the tone of narrow, unquestioning pragmatism typical of the 1970s will be replaced by what Leon Botstein describes as the true spirit of liberal education - to inspire the young to ask the ultimate and basic questions about personal, intellectual, and political life in an effort to move toward genuine social progress. This is hopefully a goal that is within reach for those of us who choose to follow this tradition.

Given this definition, description, and evaluation of liberal education, it would seem appropriate to move to concerns more directly related to the interest of the general group assembled here. Is teacher preparation consistent with liberal education? Can an effective program of teacher education be conceived and conducted in a manner compatible with the goals and assumptions of the small liberal arts college? Must a new breed of superpersons be developed to meet the philosophical, professional, and practical requirements of such an alliance of the technical and more broad ranging aspects of instruction? Is teaching the ultimate liberal art? It is to an examination of these issues that we should turn.

Almost half a century ago, Alfred North Whitehead offered the following thoughts on the nature of technical and liberal education:

> The antithesis between a technical and liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and no liberal education which is not technical, that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision. In simpler language education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well. This intimate union of theory and practice aids both.

Even if teacher preparation were to be considered purely technical education, it would seem that Whitehead's definition would still allow the process to hold an important position in the student's total education. A 1963 report of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools even more directly defined the relationship between technical/vocational and liberal education with teacher preparation in mind. It read in part:

> Teacher education also raises certain issues of unity and diversity in a liberal arts college. While it need not be a more divisive factor than any other vocationally oriented subject, it has a tendency in this direction which, although it must be controlled, has its own legitimate reason for being. Teacher candidates need to develop a particular combination of academic, personal, and professional characteristics. A degree of group identity during their training helps them gain them. Yet teaching, more than any other profession, is liberal education at work, simply given direction and insight by professional training.

A final contribution to be considered at this point comes from Charles E. Silberman's influential book, Crisis in the Classroom. Silberman reinforced the view above when he offered:

> 'Though we cannot promise to produce educated men and women, we do endeavor to bring each student... to a point beyond which he can educate himself.' And this, after all, is what liberal education is all about - what liberal education has always been about... And the most direct and immediate way of finding what it is one really knows and how it can be applied - of finding the purpose and testing the human relevance of what one has learned - is to teach it to someone else. In this sense teaching is the ultimate liberal art...
>
> (Silberman, 1970)

While such carefully selected sources do not necessarily prove the hypothesis that teacher preparation is by definition and in all cases wholly consistent with liberal education, they do give one much reason to conclude that a carefully designed program of teacher education can be consistent with the goals and assumptions of the liberal arts college or university. Let us further explore the value of this type of teacher education by investigating the ties it has with other groups and institutions involved in the teacher preparation process.

In a recent "Point of View" in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Joseph A. Pichler explored the long and venerable relationship between the liberal arts and professional studies. While his discussion focused on business schools, his model seems to be worthy of application to teacher education.

Pichler suggests that if we could accept the Principle of Comparative Advantage in higher education, then the relationship between professional study and the liberal arts would be seen to be complementary rather than competitive. This principle, drawn from international economics, states according to Pichler, that communities

should concentrate their efforts on these activities that they perform better, in a relative sense, than their trading partners. Teacher education programs in the liberal arts tradition obviously have a number of such partners. How does the Principle of Comparative Advantage influence these relationships?

A first partner of the liberal arts colleges is the inservice school community - the teachers, administrators, and staff who daily deal with elementary and secondary learners in the actual school setting. With respect to them, liberal arts teacher education programs should concentrate on those subjects and approaches that are taught best in a traditional learning environment rather than on the job. We have the advantage in teaching generalized principles and techniques that are germane to a broad range of settings and circumstances. We can afford the luxury of treating these in a fairly detached and even idealistic way. Specific applications are made when useful for illustrative purposes, but this is not our major task. Specific applications should come in the school setting through early field work, through observation and practice teaching under the guidance of our supervisors, but largely through the effort of the specialists in the field of application of such principles - the teachers and administrators in the work setting. They have the most complete knowledge of their individual systems, as well as the incentive and skill to further train employees for their use.

Liberal arts teacher education instead is the forum for awakening students to the tentative nature of pedagogical principles and for developing students' disposition to search for improvement throughout their professional careers. Such programs can allow preservice or novice teachers the opportunity to consider the broadest range of options, evaluate the benefits and risks of such options, and generate new approaches. Such a concentration is upon the process of problem solving rather than on the generation of an immediate solution. This enlarges the student's repertoire of potential responses to future problems that are likely to involve substantial resources and severe constraints of time. Liberal arts colleges further give the student the opportunity to examine the interrelationship of philosophical, historical, social, cultural, political and economic foundations of education in such a way that generally is not possible or practical in the work setting on such a broad level.

We are partners as well with graduate schools both in education and in other fields of study. As ours is typically a generalized preparation, students in our programs both need and desire instruction in the specialized areas which will lead them to become more fully competent professionally. We do not nor cannot begin to do this. We need the cooperation of these schools to serve the needs of our graduates as we only start them on their professional paths.

We also are partners with other colleges and universities. They help us meet the needs of students by offering courses not available to our students on their home campus. We share resources, programs, and activities with such schools and appreciate the balance they offer to our program and the enrichment they provide to our students.

We further have partners on our own campus. Each department and division offers our students its unique style, outlook, and methodology. They assist in the effort to equip the student to complete the difficult job of synthesizing and integrating their knowledge. This obviously is not something that can be done for an individual.

It is rather a continuous process that must be performed by an individual who has developed logical and critical abilities, analytic skills, historical perspective, aesthetic sensitivity, and an ethical system. All of us must share in the nurturing of these faculties.

Our final partner is the state certification agency. In the case of Pennsylvania it is the Commonwealth's Department of Education which gives our teachers viability by certifying their competence to begin the process of becoming a permanent teaching professional. So long as certification agencies continue to recognize the unique nature of teacher education in the liberal arts setting, we can continue to offer a variety of flexible programs which nonetheless meet the requirements of the current competency based models of teacher education. In fact, a brief digression might be in order to offer that competency-based teacher education (CBTE) and liberal education are not such strange bedfellows after all.

Some quick definitions will be necessary in order to do this. Competency based education (CBE) can be defined as instruction aimed specifically at making changes in what the student is able to do. CBTE, as an extension of this, focuses on what a teacher should be able to do at the conclusion of a particular program. Thomas Ewens has suggested that we might add CBLE to this list. That is, competency based liberal education integrates CBE and liberal education and describes what a liberally educated person should be able to do. I would go one step beyond this to suggest that competency based liberal teacher education (CBLTE) might be added as well. CBLTE would be instruction aimed specifically at making changes in what the liberally educated teacher is able to do. I further would support Ewens suggestion that CBE will have its most important impact if it is successful in the liberal arts setting as it seems at first glance that liberal education is so poorly suited to the concept. Can CBE be successful in the liberal arts college?

CBE and CBTE programs have been described by some as narrow, efficiency-oriented, and too highly specialized. Further, some suggest that such techniques only have their place in large institutions where they serve as convenient accounting instruments. Critics from liberal arts settings additionally have suggested that CBE and CBTE seem rather clearly to be oriented toward preparing students for the job market and that such approaches are more concerned with credentialing than with educating. It would seem useful, if not crucial, therefore to investigage the relation of liberal education to jobs in an attempt to clarify this final and important point.

Thomas Green offers a useful distinction in his book Work, Leisure, and The American Schools. According to Green, a job is merely an instrument for providing a sufficiency of material means for one's work; one's work, on the other hand, is the task of doing one's life well as a human being. While one's job is relatively unimportant, one's work is supremely important. Thomas Ewens uses this distinction and proposes that since the individual's liberal education is a life long task, it is in fact his work. A job then is a necessary means to liberal education. It is, however, only a means; it is not the end of liberal education. "Jobs are for liberal education", says Ewens. "Liberal education is not for jobs". Ewens goes on to point out that there is and will continue to be some need in the liberal arts college, for job related training. The training, however, should be subordinate to the central purpose of education suitable for the creative work of one's life. Even where liberal education

aids and abets job performance, it is for work. I would offer that the two can effectively coexist and serve one another. I would hold up teacher education in the liberal education tradition as an example of this.

What then is CBLTE? Following Ewen's lead, I would suggest that competency based liberal teacher education is the conception of the best education for the teacher as human being. It would establish the generic competencies in addition to the more discrete competencies which enable a person to judge and decide about important and less important matters. It would focus on broad competencies - communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing social interactions, understanding the environment, responding to the arts, and understanding the humanities - while seeking to examine both the theory and practice, what Whitehead termed "the intellectual vision and technique", of education. The process should be geared toward the evaluation, both in a cognitive and affective sense, of all that the student encounters in the classroom as student, in the classroom as novice teacher, and in the world as the larger classroom.

Essential to this program is the assumption that teaching cannot be understood only as science - a set of rituals or procedures guaranteed to produce particular results under certain conditions. One who has ever tried to "teach" following such prescriptions quickly discovers that much, if not most, of the teaching process can better be described as art - a combination of a variety of information, skills, attitudes, and understandings which somehow contributes to the development of another human being. In such a program students are encouraged to utilize the knowledge and comprehension they have gained in all of their experience to critically and rationally apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate scientific principles in the laboratory of professional education, the school, on the subjects of such controlled experimentation, their students. In this aspect of the program the teacher educator can but hope to focus the continuous and continuing development of the individual on issues, ideas, trends, techniques, etc. which have been found to be of interest and value to others in similar situations and with similar needs. It is this type of development which is the process, not the product of teacher preparation.

Further elements of that process must also be considered, however. Students should be continuously developing self-awareness and concern for the development of others. The experience of working with others is a practical demonstration of the human relations and personal skills which have broad implications in later life and which frequently receive little attention in more traditional instruction. It is only after the integration of all that one knows and understands about his content field, about his professional and personal skills and abilities, about his world, and about his sense of self that one can begin to structure programs leading to the effective development of others and can continue the process of growth and self renewal so necessary to any viable human being. It is in this perspective that "teaching is in fact the ultimate liberal art". It is the "work", in the sense Green defines it, of the competent, liberally educated person in his/her role as teacher and in his/her ever-continuing role as learner.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools concluded their 1963 discussion by stating, "The task of giving teacher education philosophical and educational integrity

is a congenial and rewarding one for liberal arts colleges, if they are willing to undertake it seriously and make it a central, rather than a peripheral, interest." The final sentence of the report suggested that colleges not interested in making this investment should stay out of the teacher education field. This advice is reasonable for most elements of the liberal arts curriculum. It probably is best to either do something well or to avoid doing it at all, particularly for a field that is peripheral to central purpose of the institution.

It is suggested, however, that teacher education should not be included in such a classification. If liberal arts teacher education programs offer students the opportunity to integrate and evaluate all aspects of their learning and experience, if teaching provides the impetus for continued self-awareness and self-growth, and if teaching is "the ultimate liberal art", as defined above, the requirement to seriously undertake such programs should not be one that is optional for the liberal arts institution. Other schools may feel free to discontinue programs of extremely specialized nature; they may shift their areas of emphasis with the changing student and job market. Liberal arts colleges and universities cannot be allowed that luxury. The benefits of participation in a teacher education program are too central to the aims of such institutions to ever be eliminated. A simple choice instead remains. We must strive to make such programs even better. We should settle for nothing less. We are hopeful that all of our "partners" will join us in this important effort.

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