Professing Education

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Editors

We are proud to welcome you to the first edition of Professing Education, a semi-annual publication of the Society of Professors of Education. It is our intention to publish short, provocative essays on topics of interest to members and those concerned with the application and extension of educational thought. This first edition includes a selection from the 2002 Degarmo Lecture delivered by Faustine Jones-Wilson and five essays that focus on the theme "Professing Education." It is our hope that these essays will elicit responses.

In the first essay, Faustine Jones-Wilson argues for the importance of small schools for reducing the power of poverty. It is her contention, from an analysis of the research and professional experience, that cooperation and community can be better cultivated in smaller schools. She calls on those who profess education to fight the factory model of schooling and to prepare their students for the commitments necessary to develop the ethos of the caring smaller school.

Next, Robert Morris looks at what is essential to all education. According to him, professors of education should emphasize general culture, special scholarship, professional knowledge, and technical skills. He points out that "philosophy bakes no bread" and that those in education are bread-earners who need to be competent, coherent, and confident that they can do the job.

The third essay, by Dirk Windhorst, looks at three phases of teacher development. Using his professional and personal experience, he examines what is necessary to move from combat warrior to craftsperson to artist. Not getting trapped in an ivory tower, he shows the necessity of each phase. Carmen Schifellite also builds on his experiences to ask that we profess modest claims in this post positivist and post-post-modernist world. Humble and forthright recognition of complexity and limitations will serve our educational purposes better than irresponsible claims.

The last two essays take us to the Humanities and on-line worlds. Kenneth McClelland presents the case for the generating generalist, the educator who loves exploring ideas and finding ways to put them into practice. This is the space he advocates for professors of education. Rahul Kumar argues that professors of education should dwell in the space between techno-utopianism and neo-Luddism. This can be done by becoming technology critics who perform similarly to art, theatre, and food critics.

It is our hope that you take these essays to heart and add to the conversation. As we see it, professing education is a growing conversation about how we might savor, understand, and improve human experiences. We look forward to continuing the conversation. Our next issue in June will look at what gets in the way of the educational life. See the announcement inside for details.

Thank you to all six of the contributors. A special thanks goes to Robert Morris for his persistence with this project and Rahul Kumar for his technical expertise. The first got us going and the second got this into print. We look forward to future issues.

Characteristics of Schools/Programs that Successfully Educate Low-Income Students

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The issues of poverty along with the educational woes suffered by so many children from visible minorities should be of great concern for any society that espouses democracy and equality as central virtues within its political and educational mission. In terms of schooling, the underachievement of low-income children and children from visible minorities still persists to a disturbing degree. To be sure, there is no shortage of research outlining the characteristics of successful corrective programs. Yet, there continues to be ongoing difficulty in implementing and maintaining the elements that could cause more schools to be effective. Why do not more schools replicate those that are successful? Heading into the year 2003, what will it take to effectively educate America's low income children and children from visible minorities?

A wealth of information on this last question is available in the pages of the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR). JESPAR* began publication in 1996 under the auspices of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR), a joint venture of Johns Hopkins and Howard Universities. *JESPAR,* a quarterly publication*,* provides excellent research-based information related to improving the education of students placed at risk, many of whom are African American, as well as case studies of effective programs and schools. (See, for example, Robert Slavin, et al., 1996; and Amanda Datnow & Sam Stringfield, 2000).

I will focus on just one important factor that reduces the power of poverty as it relates to schooling, as identified by current researchers. That factor is **small schools.** Craig B. Howley, Marty Strange, and Robert Bickel's (2000) research examined about 13,600 public schools in Georgia, Montana, Ohio, and Texas. They found that "small schools help reduce the academic risks of poverty by breaking the usual negative bond between poverty and achievement." Indeed, Howley said, "the strength of the relationship was **about half** of what it is in larger schools" (Keller, 2000). Small schools were found to cut price of poverty in half. If small schools are not to be had, then the *school-within-a-school* concept could apply. If we are interested in improving public education in our school districts, we need to become advocates and lobbyists for smaller schools. Our scholarly research should be focused on investigations of these settings. In such places students are well known by their teachers and their peers; teaching/learning is personalized; and students talk with their teachers as people. The setting becomes more like a *community* than a typical factory-like school. Teachers want to be in these schools, so that they may foster a deeper commitment to the school and to the development of its students.

The entire school experience is altered, not just one or two aspects of it. Deborah Meier (1995) gave a detailed account of this transformation in her book, "The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America From a Small School in Harlem". Mary Ann Raywid (1996) also, has contributed greatly to knowledge about small schools, schools-within-schools, and schools-of-choice. What is a small school? Optimally, a small elementary school enrolls 300-400 students, and a small high school enrolls between 600 and 900 students (Irmsher, 1997).

The best-known small effective high school, Central Park East Secondary in Spanish Harlem, began in 1985 and still exists in 2002. Here, collectively **the staff make school policy and design the curriculum and program**. The staff has autonomy over teaching and learning. Instruction is planned around themes that cut across traditional subjects. **Teachers meet for lengthy weekly sessions** to plan, collaborate, analyze, evaluate, and solve any problems that arise. These procedures go well beyond the usual staff development programs/activities and teachers' meetings.

The **school climate** stresses cooperation and community participation where mutual respect is emphasized. Students participate actively in their classes and in the total life of the school, thereby increasing their commitment to it. They are made more responsible for their own education than in a traditional school. Students feel as though they really belong.

Teachers communicate regularly with the parents of their students, and parents are involved in their children's education. They help to assure that their children perform well and stay out of trouble.

Scheduling is changed so that two-hour time blocks replace the old-fashioned 45 or 50-minute periods. This permits more "time on task," that is, time spent with the material to be learned. **An advisory system** permits groups of 15 students or less to meet daily for study and discussion. This stimulates student involvement, and reduces voluntary absenteeism. **Subject matter mastery** is emphasized, such that mastery is to be demonstrated through portfolios, rather than just standardized tests. Students are taught to think more critically, which prepares them to engage in socially useful and personally satisfying life endeavors.

Given my present concern and the brief description of a familiar small school that has worked successfully for 17 years, during quite trying times, what can professors of education do to ensure that *no child is left behind* from the current reform movement? The following guidelines/suggestions emerge:

1. Focus some of your scholarly research on small schools and/or schools that successfully educate low income children and children from visible minorities today. Contribute to the knowledge base through your publications about this matter.

2. In your classes, as you prepare school personnel – teachers, administrators, counselors, etc. – include information about successful schools and how to establish and maintain them. Work with your colleagues to ensure that the students whom you prepare are well qualified in terms of knowledge, methods, attitude, and spirit – including open-mindedness, willingness to change, and working cooperatively as a team member instead of "lording it" over one's isolated classroom as a specialist.

3. Support NEA/AFT and state-level efforts to obtain the federal funding necessary to make real the new law signed by President Bush that by 2006 every public school teacher will be "highly qualified." This means full state certification or passing the state teacher licensing examination. It includes having an earned degree in the teaching field or passing a state test in the subject area being taught. Inner city schools are quite unable to attract and retain qualified teachers. In 2002 some 34% of teachers in high-poverty school districts lack full certification (Chase, 2002). Many teachers who accept jobs in

the inner city remain there only for five years or less.

4. Advocate and lobby for powerful incentives that will make school people willing to change what they have been doing in their schools and classes. School people are reluctant to change the habits they have formed. Two of such incentives might be: (a) give teachers the right to design and operate their programs; (b) build in release time for teachers' collaborative planning and analysis.

5. As an advocate of high-quality education, and of "educating all the children of all the people," lobby individually and through your professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Lobbying efforts should call for smaller schools, and for long-term improvements such as improving teachers' salaries and working conditions, excellent pre-school arrangements, all-day kindergarten, and mandatory summer school for those students who need it.

There is so much that needs to be done to substantiate the need for small schools staffed by devoted, qualified teachers who can and will successfully educate the children who come from low income families today. Even more needs to be done to educate all school personnel who will work with these children effectively over time, and make of them the productive, caring, contributing citizens that they will need to be in their adult lives. We must do this both for the sake of our children as well as that of the larger society. I urge you to do your part, as a professor of education, to contribute to the greater educational good of these children and of our society.

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Education, Teaching, and Presence in Today's Schools

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We have been living through a revolution in education that may be as profound as the original invention of the school. It is a revolution compounded of several elements, the rapid expansion of higher education to a point where one out of every two high school graduates has been going on to college; the massive

shifts in population, from east to west, from south to north, from country to city, and from city to suburb, which have created new and extraordinary clientele to educate; the movement of women into paid employment outside the home in unprecedented numbers, with prodigious consequences for the family; the changing character of work associated with the emergence of a postindustrial society, and in particular the growth of the so-called knowledge industries; the various civil rights and liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which have so radically changed the management and politics of education.

And beneath all of these, and inexorably affecting them, has been the educational transformation wrought by mass television. In 1950, fewer than 10% of American homes had television sets. Today, that figure has leveled off at around 97%. Moreover, so far as can be determined, at least one member of the average American household is watching television more than six hours out of every twenty-four, with the greatest amount of viewing being done by the very young, the very old, and the very poor. Once one recognizes that television teaches, not only via channels specifically labeled educational but across the entire spectrum of public and commercial programming, the fact of television in 97% of American homes being viewed six hours a day itself constitutes revolution. That revolution has drastically altered familial education. It has radically altered the education of the public at large. And it has fundamentally modified the context in which all schooling proceeds.

Most important for our purposes, this complex of revolution has transformed the traditional profession of education at the same time that it has created a variety of new educating professions, one thinks, for example, of day-care workers, script writers in children's television production units, learning consultants in

libraries and museums, training officers in business and industry, and gerontologists in senior citizen's centers. All these people carry an educational work of profound significance that can surely be enhanced via sound professional preparation.

Moreover, to be most effective, each must pursue his or her special activities with full knowledge of what the others are doing. Their work as educators is inextricably intertwined; in fact, they are in many ways members of a single profession.

What should the education of these educators look like during the years immediately ahead? In my opinion, we can do no better than to take James Earl Russell's four components of what is essential to all educators, not merely the leaders of the profession, and reformulate them in to present-day terms. Russell stated his beliefs in 1900, but they still ring true today.

First, he identified **general culture**. Obviously, educators working with clients of any age in any field and in any institution ought to be broadly cultivated individuals. And this means that they ought to receive their undergraduate education at institutions where faculty members and students think seriously together about the substance and meaning of a liberal education, and particularly, to repeat Russell's concern, about the relationships among the several fields of knowledge. This is not to suggest that every undergraduate institution ought to reach the same conclusions about these matters; it would be revolution enough in my opinion if the colleges simply began to reflect on them.

A second component is **special scholarship**. Educators working with clients of any age ought to have at least one teaching field in which they are an expert or have been expert in the past. No matter how general an

educator's responsibilities, no matter how far removed from the diurnal business of teaching, he or she should ideally have mastered some field of knowledge or art sufficiently well to have been able to reflect systematically on the various ways in which it might be taught to clients at different stages of development and in different teaching situations. I myself have taught history in schools. I have taught history to fifth-graders, using facsimiles of the *New-England Primer*; to 12th-graders, using their own programs of study as the point of departure; to school-board members, using their most pressing problems as grist for my will; to other professors, using recent articles in the field as the basis for my discussion. The approach, the sequence, the level, and the materials for immediate consideration differed from one instance to another; in all of them, however, I was teaching the same American history.

A third, component is that of **professional knowledge**. Here Russell, reflecting the period in which he wrote, tended to concentrate on the history, philosophy, and psychology of schooling, though he was patently aware of the need for trained educators in "trade schools, industrial schools, Sunday schools, reform schools, houses of refuge, and other philanthropic institutions." Given the breadth of today's educational enterprise and the explosion of scholarly knowledge in the relevant humanistic, social, scientific, and behavioral disciplines, I would propose a reformulation that would include three elements: policy studies, developmental studies, and pedagogical studies. By policy studies, I refer to those studies of the humanities and social sciences that contribute to an understanding of the aims of education, of the situations and institutions in which education proceeds in different societies, and of the inextricable ties between educational institutions and the societies that sustain them and that are

in turn affected by them. By developmental studies I refer to those studies of the humanities and behavioral sciences (including biology) that contribute to an understanding of human development over the entire life cycle and of the various ways in which different forms of education affect that development. Of critical importance here would be studies of socialization, enculturation, and learning that clarify the nature and outcome of the educational process. By pedagogical studies I refer to those systematic studies of the practice of teaching and learning in a variety of situations that unite policy and developmental studies with studies of the substantive characteristics of various fields of the curriculum and with studies of the structural characteristics of various learning environments. These environments must be pursued in the world of practice – in schools, colleges, day-care centers, libraries, museums, work places, and community agencies – all regarded as centers for creative inquiry as well as for the demonstration of excellent performance. I believe every faculty of education worthy of the name ought to have networks of such institutions associated with it in a research and teaching capacity.

Russell's fourth component, **technical skill** is the realm in which the professional preparation of educators has been weakest over the years, despite the attention that has recently been paid to so-call laboratory experience in the pre-service phase and to so-called competency-based instruction throughout the program. At their best, **pedagogical studies** join **professional knowledge** and **technical skill** in a way that bridges the gap that has historically existed between the two. Pedagogy is not merely a science of design; it is also, in Joseph Schwab's terms, one of the eclectic arts, marked by a quest for practice

based on continually changing calculus of knowledge drawn from many relevant sciences. The hallmark of the technically skilled educator in our time ought to be his or her profound awareness of the relationship between what goes on in any particular educational situation and what goes on in all the other educational situations in which the client participates. It is this as much as anything else that dictates both a diversified internship, involving not only schools, but libraries, museums, community centers, and the like, and a common professional preparation for the educating professions. I close with a short excerpt from Deborah Meier's 1991 Degarmo Lecture in Chicago, Illinois. She stated:

> If we want schools for the twenty-first century to resemble schools of the twentieth century, we can afford to tinker a little and leave the structure pretty much intact. Then teacher-training institutions need only follow suit, tinkering too. But if we want the least of our citizens to know and be able to do the kinds of things that only those lucky few at the top of the ladder have ever achieved before, then we need to begin a slow and steady revolution in how and what teachers must know and know how to do. But to do this means we have to learn how to drive while changing not only the tire but the whole mechanism! Impossible? No, but very, very hard. The place it will happen is in the schools themselves – not the schools as we now know them, but reinvented schools created by school people and their communities. And it doesn't come with any guarantees.

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Professing Education in Preparing Prospective Teachers

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To profess education is to declare publicly one's faith in, or allegiance to, what Eisner (2002, p.35) calls a normative enterprise. That education is inherently normative can be seen in the Latin root, *educere*, "to lead out." *Leading out* presupposes a leader and a direction. The leader chooses a direction (a normative action) that she[1] professes to be worthwhile, so much so in fact, that she desires others to follow. But there is a double sense to this "leading out." As the student is led in a certain direction chosen by a teacher, latent abilities are drawn out as well: the student becomes conscious of these abilities and accepts or declines the teacher's invitation to develop these gifts further.

In a pre-service program for elementary school teaching, a professor of education calls forth the undeveloped teaching abilities of his students. Through lectures, demonstrations, discussions and observations of practice teaching, she challenges them to become good planners, efficient classroom managers, assertive leaders, inspiring speakers, motivating coaches, gentle but firm admonishers, attentive observers, active listeners, and fair evaluators: in short, he invites them to the profession and art of teaching. In addition, a professor will

[1] Where the antecedent is not gender-specific, singular personal pronouns will alternate between masculine and feminine forms.

invite student teachers to consider the theoretical and historical context in which the teaching profession is evolving and to remind them of their professional responsibility to pay attention to current issues in educational research. To lead prospective teachers in this task, many professors have a base of elementary teaching experience on top of which they continue to develop their vocations as scholars.

In the remainder of this article, I will briefly consider how the effect of the elementary teaching experience may shape a professor's view of his task. Basing this summary on my twenty-two years teaching at the upper elementary level and using what Beattie (1995, p. 10) calls "images of practice," I see that a teacher may develop through three distinct phases: the combat warrior, the craftsperson, and the artist.

Like a Piagetan schema, each image depicts how I understood myself as a teacher at a particular stage in my career. At the same time as it unified my professional self-concept, each image was a guide for my practice. Just as schemata change to accommodate new knowledge, so my images were transformed to reflect my professional growth with each new image containing the older one within it. In other words, the image of myself as an artist developed overtop of the craftsperson, so that when the artist lacked the energy or inspiration to make a lesson soar, the craftsperson could be called on to competently manage the class. Similarly, even though the combat warrior had receded from view, he could be called into active duty on a moment's notice if the need arose.

Every beginning teacher has to deal with the following issue: who is in charge of this class? I often would say to myself in the early years whenever I felt challenged by classroom misbehavior: "It's time to put on my combat gear." This aided me in adopting an assertive posture so that the students knew that I said what I meant, I meant what I said, and I would do what I said I was going to do (Coloroso, 1995).

Once basic power issues had been addressed, I felt confident to develop the craft of teaching. I learned that projecting confidence without a lesson plan was more effective than teaching from a well-prepared lesson without confidence. This is why experienced teachers are able to "wing it" for a day or two without the students realizing that anything is different. Like a carpenter, I often visualized myself putting on the tool belt of my trade at the beginning of a school day. These tacit tools were inside of me, not on my desk or in my plan book I began to develop the skill of knowing when it was necessary to "stray" from the lesson plan, to pay attention to the mood of the class or the struggles of an individual, to adjust my teaching style on the go, and to develop an openness for the teachable moment. I was now a competent journeyman in the teaching trade.

If a craftsperson is a very competent professional, then I would define an artist as a competent professional who has managed to infuse an essential part of his personal nature into his work. Ten years ago I noticed a qualitative change in my teaching – I was growing beyond the competence of craft to something better. Somehow this was related to my enrollment in a master's program. Participation in thoughtful reading, discussion and writing of educational issues had the effect of invigorating my teaching. One direct result was my willingness to experiment with co-operative learning, non-directive teaching (Rogers, 1983), and invitational education (Purkey & Novak, 1984). My Grade 8 students responded enthusiastically.

Quite apart from this practical experimentation, I was grappling with deeper theoretical questions such as: What was the relationship between technology and education? What is the place of philosophy in educational administration? How could my teaching practice flow more authentically out of my Christian faith? Even though some of these questions did not have a direct bearing on my day-to-day classroom interactions, they did lend a thoughtfulness to my teaching style that somehow freed me to be more fully present for my elementary students.

It is somewhat immodest of me to write of my own experience in this manner. The foregoing is a distillation of what I have learned; space forbids me to enumerate all the mistakes I made along the way. Nevertheless, this distillation guides me as I profess education with my students.

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Professing Modest Claims in Education

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In 1969, I remember, as an undergraduate, reading a passage from Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughter House Five (1969, pg.114-5). In the passage, the Trafalmadorians, those prophetic standpoint theorists, describe the limitations of human perception. From their standpoint, we are described as beings who for all intents and purposes have our heads encased in steel spheres, while tied to moving railway cars, unable to move our heads and able only to see by looking through one eye down the barrel of "six feet of pipe". Vonnegut sums up our sorry state thusly: Whatever poor Billy saw through the pipe, he had no choice but to say to himself, "That's life." As I read this book, I was also in the midst of completing an undergraduate degree in Biology and Psychology and being trained in the ways of the scientific method and empiricism. But this passage felt like the right kind of challenge to the ears of the closet epistemologist I was and the 21st century epistemologist I was becoming.[1]

In my thirty plus years in the academy, I have come through modernism, Marxism, feminism, structuralism, postmodernism, social constructionism and constructivism to name a few intellectual cycles. Through all, I have never lost the passion both for trying to understand how we know what we know and for wanting to judge the quality of that knowledge. I am now, by credential, a sociologist of education who likes to ponder the changes that have occurred in the social assumptions we have about the quality of knowledge we encounter and, in turn, how we judge the reliability of these knowledges. As these ideas concern science and science education, I am especially interested in the ways in which the

1. In a parallel, serendipitous and surely Vonnegutian moment, I was reading this, when I was also living down the hall from the real-life son of Bernard V. O'Hare, Vonnegut's war buddy who figures prominently in the text and in Vonnegut's own war experiences. You might say that this added a dose of "reality" to my reading of the text.

social constructionist movements in the social sciences and constructivism in education have begun affecting our perceptions of science knowledge.[2]

The trick, I think, in navigating these epistemological rapids is not to get hung up on positivist shorelines or plunge recklessly down some relativist Niagara Falls. Most teachers, science and non-science alike, know little of these controversies and discussions. This is understandable. Most teachers do not have the luxury to spend years pondering these issues and have not likely spent much time on them in their teacher training. Yet, I would argue that they and their students deal with the fallout from these debates and social trends just the same. At this point most of us have become suspicious of the tera-wads of information flying at us daily. Information, sometimes cynically manipulated, masquerades as knowledge changing rapidly and often in contradictory fashion. Study after study appear, with the latter appearing to contradict their predecessors positions until finally people throw up their hands, give up on trying to evaluate the 'facts' at hand, and retreat to comfortable emotional or political positions. As I write this I am listening to a radio commentator who reports that 70% of people surveyed believe X, 65% believe Y and 75% don't believe in surveys. The final numbers reported, it seems, deliver the relativist coup de grace to any listener trying to work with this information.

It is one thing to understand that self-interest can play a part in the creation of research and in the 'facts" that emerge from this research and another to try to make in-

2. In the social sciences this discussion has been heated and has taken the form of "science wars" with both sides facing off in traditional positivism vs. social relativism debates. Within science education these issues have taken the form of debates and discussions about what is the 'nature of science.'

formed evaluations - let alone to try and teach others to do the same. There are sinister sides to these issues as well. Gelbspan (1998) has chronicled the way in which oil and gas companies mounted huge public relations campaigns designed to promote the positions of a discredited minority of scientists who challenged the accuracy of the majority of scientists whose research has emphasized the causes, dangers and consequences of global warming. They did this because they knew that the media, as players in what Tannen (1999) calls "The Argument Culture," always looks to present oppositional sides to issues. In this case, the companies' tactic has succeeded because Gelbspan observes that now whenever global warming is presented in the media one or more of these dissenting opinions is usually presented as well. The net effect has been to generate confusion and skepticism about science and diffuse action against the oil and gas companies.

Skepticism as an agent that immobilizes our ability to evaluate knowledge claims has replaced skepticism to be used as an evaluative tool. Many of us are wondering how to help teachers deal with this new epistemological terrain. John Novak (2002) recommends focusing on the development of leadership that invites dealing with philosophical differences in ways that promote integrity and ever-deepening democracy in all facets of life. Richard Bond (2002) has suggested that in a postmodern context we should be teaching teachers to expand their "problem-solving capabilities" and "increase tolerance for ambiguity." I would agree that these are important dimensions. I would add that we must, in professing education, not only invite teachers to grapple with the slippery terrain on which all knowledge now seems to perch, but also invite teachers, and in turn students, to

pursue a modest wisdom in these matters.

To me, professing education needs always to involve first, challenging students "realities"? i.e., those formulations we make as we ride the rail cars and peer through our individual and collective pipes. Second, it involves introducing an element of epistemological chaos into the ways we can think about knowing and knowledge. Finally, and this is certainly the hardest part, it involves presenting ways of thinking about our post positivist and post postmodernist worlds that allow for a materially-based and what Helen Longino (1990; 2000) calls a "modest" (but definitely not relativist) epistemology from which active teaching and learning makes sense. This last part requires the development of a wisdom that can coexist with a world that includes, among other things: the existence of socially, not personally determined, standpoints; material reality – for example, bombs that explode no matter what we think of the science behind them; and the possibility of contradictory fact and theory that can be incommensurable and apparently accurate.

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Professing Education As Generating Generalist

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The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest for life, by uniting the young and the old in an imaginative consideration of learning….A university which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact; it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energizing as the poet of our dreams and as the architect of our purposes.
— Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*

To get closer to the spirit of what Whitehead is talking about and fill out what I think is integral to professing education, I would like to introduce the notion of what I call the generating generalist. What does it mean to be a generating generalist within today's academy?

To put it simply, a generating generalist is someone who loves learning, who is imaginatively enlivened to ideas, both great ideas from the past as well as those being generated in the present, and who wishes to impart this love to his or her students. Such a love draws the student out, patiently and with care, into a world of imaginative possibility where future horizons are projected in hope and in deepening thoughtfulness. It is fair to say that taking our young undergraduates and setting them on a fast track to narrow specialization does a great disservice to their generative potential. It closes the world in on them too quickly and suffocates the very kind of love and zest for

life and learning that is requisite to any kind of healthy specialization. Our young are not yet full-fledged adults, they are fledglings, and if for us adults, as the poet Wordsworth said, "the world is too much with us; late and soon" it should not be too much with our young. For the generating generalist, as for the unformed student, the world is both half real and half imagined—we are in a constant process of becoming.

As is also implied, I do not wish to vilify the notion of specialization. This is unreasonable and too much critical energy has already been wasted going down this path. A generating generalist will engage a broad spectrum of ideas from a broad range of disciplines. To love learning is to constantly grow and broaden one's horizons. A generating generalist will be a dedicated amateur in many areas of learning, but he or she is generating, after all, and an integral part of generating is seeking clarification and deeper knowledge about that area which really piques one's interest and sparks one's imagination. Specialization is not precluded by an initial and ongoing generalist thrust, but is, rather, a quite natural outcome. It means simply that specialization is rooted in a more broadly meaningful temporal context

It is my contention that each discipline in the academy now suffers from a sort of professionalized paralysis. Being within the field of Education, I hold out great hope that this discipline might offer the best potential for reinvigorating the better spirit of what I mean by the generating generalist. To be sure, the discipline of education is caught in the same rut of specialization, but it is also different as a discipline.

For the discipline of Education to pull away from the isolationist and rarefied discourses that have become the mainstay of most other disciplines, it needs to recover a generalist spirit that once was the cornerstone of education in the Humanities. It seems to me that the discipline of Education is in an even better position than the Humanities to begin this revival. This is because of the very inter-disciplinarity of the field of Education itself. Scholars within the Education field have fussed for a very long time (most of the last century in fact) over how and in what ways they might stake out their own disciplinary identity. Identity formation was a matter, like that in the sciences, of focusing, with less emphasis put on expanding one's educational horizons. The spirit of liberal learning (comprised early on of generalist scholars, but not necessarily generating ones) slowly receded as professors of Education attempted to carve out a disciplinary niche, something that could readily be identified as *the* discipline of Education. This was, of course, given the inherent inter-disciplinarity of the field, along with its connections to broader notions of public schooling, a rather schizophrenic activity. More importantly it was taking Education as a discipline into the same trap of specialization that had ensnarled other disciplines.

In not recognizing their unique position and potential as generating generalists, based on the field's natural inter-disciplinarity, professors of Education instead began to ape the already rarefied and highly specialized discourses of the Social Sciences (especially Psychology) which themselves had for some time been aping the long entrenched specialized discourses of the "hard" Sciences.

Unfortunately, now, only professionalism and narrow specialization is left as the sustaining motivation within the academy, and it is virtually a Herculean task to intervene upon it. But the Herculean task needs to be embarked upon and it starts by highlighting the

virtues of the generating generalist, which in simple terms means starting with the rather modest recognition that the human condition preceded the curriculum and all the disciplinary divisions. This is a modest recognition that entails a complex reorganizing and reprioritizing within the university as a whole. Indeed, it is our moral imperative, as professionals, to reconnect to our undergraduates, to engender the vitality and energizing potential necessary to becoming an educated person. The love of learning should be, for our students, the 'zest for life.' The discipline of Education, as I have been arguing, is well positioned to take the lead. It is so well positioned primarily because its indigenous inter-disciplinarity and diversity retains broad custodial and progressive impulses that no other discipline can attest to in quite the same way. Each of these impulses is necessary to sustaining the idea of a generating generalist, where past, present, and future are vitally interfused with educative import.

Yet, inter-disciplinarity is itself merely an access point to something far more deep and profound. To be a generating generalist does not preclude specialization. It only puts the horse back in front of the cart. More importantly, it reopens a mode of contact with the young and unformed that all those who profess to profess education need to reconnect to if they wish to avoid becoming pickled in their own professional juices. For our young undergrads *are* the vital points of contact with the larger world. The Latin for profess is *profiteri* and it means to declare publicly, and that is what we professors of education do (is it not?). This public declaring is an aspect of an intimate relationship with those who we have the responsibility of educating or drawing out (*educere*) into responsible, imaginative, and enlivened citizenship.

Finally, then, to be a generating generalist is to generate communication lines more broadly and make the idea of community a reality. It can begin within Faculties of Education because diversity is the sine qua non of that discipline. The generating generalist will seek collaboration with one's colleagues rather than (friendly) isolation from them. This can set a tone and example for our undergraduate students, to let them see that specialization is an outcome inextricably tied to a process of general forming. That is, the product of a good education is intimately bound up in the process of good education. Let us hope that the generating generalist might start to evolve.

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Professing Education Online

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The developments that unfold in the field of information technology (IT) and permeate into other disciplines can be exciting and disorienting simultaneously. Sometimes we welcome the new tools at our disposal, at other times we resist and deplore them, or we can remain seemingly unaffected or indifferent. The differing reactions can be attributed to individual temperament, but also in our *assessment of* and *relationship to* the technologies in question. The subtle, and often overlooked aspects of human-computer interactions give rise to woefully simple concepts and equally lop-sided tales of gloom or doom. Such polarised thinking leads to the exclusion of subtle points that might reveal more accurately the nature of the issues. This short essay draws the attention of educators to the previously

neglected aspects of human-computer interaction (HCI) that comes into play because of the nature of the medium itself. Surprisingly this has had a marked absence of this literature in education.

A combination of corporate zeal and administrative enthusiasm have brought the newly repackaged ITs to institutions of higher education and have guided most of the practices and uses of this technology (Feenberg, 1999). This external imposition, according to Feenberg, has had a two-fold effect. First, a segment of both teachers and students doubt the educational value of the tools in question, and second, some faculty members get upset by the commercial goals behind the initiative – the connection of higher education and its modes of delivery to the market which has traditionally existed outside the context of a university community. What was once a daring faculty innovation has come to be perceived as a big business takeover of the campuses.

This is not to say that technology has not benefited many to a great extent. The growth of information technologies have made certain things more convenient and enjoyable (to those that have access to them). IT's role as a research tool has been valuable in advancing our knowledge base in the disciplines. And indeed, IT has been the source of a lot of wealth for some. Education that was inaccessible to some students – living in remote areas outside the geographical reach of colleges and universities, or those unable to attend conventional universities, *inter alia* – would attest to the merits of making education available using IT.

But to ignore and disavow the changed nature of work, and inter-relationships to self, family, friends, and communities, would be irresponsible. The price, as Postman (1989) argues, has been the decay of conventional social structures that defined communities. The change has brought about distinctly new communal structures. Instead of being mediated by oral languages and other conventional means, information technologies have become the sole instruments that serve this purpose. This inter-corrugated infrastructure of human interaction finds its strength not in embodied individuals, but in the digital (virtual) connection between people – in the medium itself. The properties of the medium thus play an important role in the redefinition of or the nature of the relationship.

Immediately, those outside the circumference of the reach of technology find themselves excluded and this artificial divide starts to separate the "*haves*" from the "*have-nots*". It is ironic (and unnatural) that this distinction is created by technology itself. *Haves* in this sense, are defined as those that are equipped with the technological infrastructure to receive technology that binds them to their "community" and *have-nots* are those that cannot. The monetary issue remains just one criterion, however central, of separation. In this sense, the medium (IT) is not neutral. Additionally, current limitations in technology affect the educational arena, by constricting and restricting the nature of communication. While all available mediums do so, this particular case is different in that the medium is controlled and monitored by technical oriented people who hold little or no regard for teaching and learning objectives. The undue influence of technicians, corporations, and administrative bodies that are often involved in addressing (or redressing) pedagogical problems, risks obstructing important educational objectives. The combination of technology's own constraints in tandem with powerful (and often insistent) direction from educationally uninformed technicians and profiteers is most definitely insidious and possibly dangerous.

This diversion of educational goals by the

technological imperative results in a precarious foundation for professing education online. Zygmund Bauman (1993) in the context of business ethics explains this manner of control as a managerial tactic that includes three distinct practices: a) denial of proximity; b) effacement of face; and c) reduction of individual embodied humand to categorical traits. In a detailed discussion, he traces the ill effects of these tactics as they influence conduct between various actors. In this context, then, the very strengths of IT that make it a viable tool, also make it suspect in the educational realm, especially when its reign of control highlights technical (and not necessarily educational) savvy. The technologically mediated virtual community conceals embodied selves from one another. On the one hand, in the text-based systems, for example, the agent is empowered with the security (perhaps misguided) that his/her contributions alone formulate his/her identity. On the other hand, this medium separates people, across unparalleled digital distances. This redefinition of space and time alters individual temporality and does little to arrest the anxiety of having to deal with the technology.

These temporal distortions that a growing number of people experience once they engage in the serious use of IT, need to be addressed and understood if we are to continue our march toward integrating technology within education. The challenge of attending to the inexact (non-algorithmic) aspects of teaching and learning with a seriousness equal to the effort that has been exerted in the acquisition of IT, stands to alleviate much of what makes the current marriage of the two disciplines an awkward and an unnatural union.

Only with a collective will that draws from the various disciplines along with a tempered approach to technology, might we stand to benefit from what the technology has to offer.

As educators, we need to seek ways to expand the fertile middle ground between techno-utopianism and neo-Luddism. We need to serve as technology "critics" in the same way, and for the same reasons, that others are food critics, art critics, or literary critics. If we fail to understand and apply technologies in a manner more consistent with basic human values, we fail our calling as educators. If this empowers us to be passionately optimistic about some technologies, skeptical and disdainful of others, so be it!

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Call for Essays

The next issue of *Professing Education* will examine the theme "Fighting the Miseducation of the Democratic Public." In what ways are we being miseducated? How is this happening? Why is this happening? What could be done to change what is miseducative in our media, politics, and school systems? Are there some encouraging signs? What should be the roles of the Society of Professors of Education in fighting this miseducation?

These and related issues will be addressed in the Summer 2003 issue of *Professing Education*. Essays of approximately 500-1000 words that deal with this theme are requested and should be submitted, using *The Chicago Manual of Style*, by May 1, 2003 to the following address:

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