

## THE MAKING OF PROFESSIONS

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### SUMMARY

Some reminiscences on the growth of clinical psychology as a profession are examined with the hope of finding implications for the beginnings of educational research as a profession.

### INTRODUCTION

Quite a few of us who are midwifing educational research as a profession were more than interested spectators when the profession of clinical psychology was born. The parallels must be obvious to my older colleagues, but a recounting may help us sustain our convictions about how to build a profession.

Government subsidies administered by the Veterans Administration built a profession of clinical psychology where there was none. Once again the federal government through training subsidy and prospects for subsequent employment is in the profession-making business, this time in educational research. It should be profitable to look back on the problems that the V. A. had in building a profession and how it went about solving them. Closer examination should be made of the current objectives and procedures of the Office of Education where they diverge from the approaches used successfully by the V. A.

Before World War II the professional psychologists were kindly, middle-aged women with bachelor's degrees or at most master's degrees in education, who gave Binet tests in a few of the many institutions for mental defectives. Only a decade later the initial push given to the profession by the expanded armed services had been amplified by a consortium of the universities and V. A. hospitals. Clinical psychologists were being turned out by nearly every large university in the country and they were well trained too. The new graduates were given major professional job responsibilities to correspond to their high level of training.

The V. A. had clinical psychologists in the Central Office who made the decisions that applied to the field. These decision-makers were not impractical academicians nor were they career administrators. Rather, they employed professional bases for making decisions and were surprisingly free from Congressional interference. The priorities established seem to have been those calculated to lead to the best provision for the needs of veterans in the intermediate future. We were seldom pushed into trying to put out the forest fires with our little spoons of sand.

As the reader recognizes the parallels in the growth of educational research as a profession, he may feel jealous and resentful that educational research does not seem to be pursuing as certain a course to success. Good! Such loyalty is needed badly at this point in our development. But don't give up hope. We have been dealt only the first two cards, so what if they aren't even a low pair?

The V. A. had two things working for it. First, they faced the fact that adequately trained people were too few to be able to budget money for their services. So in the immediate post-war years their training expenditures nearly equaled those for the professional psychological services supplied at the hospitals. The V. A. avoided the pitfall of budgeting large amounts for positions for service personnel when few with appropriate qualifications existed. This perception of the need for a maximum initial investment in training, which was so clear to the V. A. planners, still eludes our educational decision-makers and the powers behind them.

The second advantage the V. A. possessed was having the service units which could supply practicum opportunities and subsequent employment for graduates. A profession is likely to develop only when the stimulus of good prospects for employment exists. The opportunity to work in a public school system is seldom exciting. Salary schedules often are tied to teaching levels and experience. Higher salary levels become available as the position becomes implanted into the administrative structure, often with associated duties not primarily of a research nature.

The duties of researchers employed in the public school systems seldom appeal sufficiently to the broadly well-trained educational research graduate. So unlike the clinical psychology student, who was eager for clinical experience in a highly professional setting, we find our students successfully avoiding that destiny, public school research, for which they supposedly are being trained under ESEA Title IV graduate training funds.

OE has a simple solution (to them) to the problem of getting students into public schools, provide just enough training so they can function adequately in the school system but be unemployable by a college or university. Such a short-sighted solution never will be acceptable to the real "pros", who go on striving to correct the basic defect--the conditions of employment in public school research.

The vision of a "network of national laboratories" could have placed practicum and the promise of employment in the hands of an august body of men, removed from the immediate pressures upon researchers in the district school systems. The existence of suitable facilities was the backbone of V. A. success, but this recent attempt to develop such facilities for educational research was destined to fail for three reasons:

- a) Lack of properly trained researchers to carry out laboratory activities,
- b) Control of the laboratories ended up in the hands of the local power figures who strangled their newborn infants in their eagerness to possess them,
- c) The failure of OE and Congress to provide funds enough to support basic research to make the laboratory operation appealing to the few well-trained professional researchers

For several years we have been seeking a suitable facility to provide our students at Florida with public school research experience. We have found no suitable facilities and none seem to be on the planning board in OE unless it comes as an outgrowth of the National Institute.

Existing ESEA Title III and Title IV money is insufficient for building practicum facilities in large school districts. Very heavy federal investment is needed to remove salaries from the school district payrolls thereby reducing the pressures of immediate problems usually encountered by school research personnel. When salaries are moved to a federal budget, appropriate levels can be provided to assure employment of well-trained supervisory personnel.

We have seen that research training bureaus within a school district cannot make it on their own. We have just seen the collapse of one such bureau with exceptional promise and are discouraged. Every such failure convinces us of the insurmountable difficulties in building a district unit. Soon, we and all our students will shun such challenging undertakings as organizing these bureaus. Constructive steps should be taken now because the attitudes toward public school research are becoming set and are not easily reversed.

OE and Congress have done a disservice in promoting educational research interests, getting everyone excited and then shrinking the funds available. Why have they done this to us? Is it part of a communist plot?

OE and Congress have failed to recognize the major role the federal government must play in developing the profession of educational research. Instead, money has been dispersed widely for projects unworthy of the name research. True, a small amount of money has been syphoned off to subsidize research training. But what is needed is not to just "promote" research but to develop the profession and this requires federal money and public school research facilities guided and supervised, at least in part, by university personnel.

So far OE and Congress have forced upon us their priorities by making acceptance of them a condition for securing grant money. These OE administrative decisions with the glistening brilliance of working on immediate problems incorporate the sobering long-term consequences of watering down the academic excellence of our training programs and our own research. As a matter of integrity, we must protest against these undesirable OE influences and encourage them to take a more far-sighted and constructive role.

The budget of the OE Research Training Branch should be immediately doubled to make it possible for universities and school districts to set up practicum facilities in a consortium arrangement. And this is just the first step in increased expenditures. If these few millions of dollars expenditure per year are too much to assure the development of the profession of educational research then we really are in trouble. If a couple of missiles are more important, then our priorities for federal expenditures are worse than we thought.