ROBERT WHITE

Professional Training Amid Pressures

What pressures, whether from the profession, from institutions, associations or other sources, affect today's professional preparation? This is a comprehensive analysis of such influences.

THERE ARE always strong pressures, often very direct and specific, on colleges which give professional training. No professional college is completely free to determine a professional training program.

This fact comes from the framework in which professional training is given, a framework which makes professional training in most instances both exposed and responsive to external pressures—and, perhaps, fortunately so.

Sources of Pressure

There are three major clusters of pressures on professional training in the United States. Before sketching these, it should be noted that deeper study than this article affords will show considerable interlocking and merging among these group pressures. The channels through which they operate are discrete but common influences and points of view often affect the persons representing the sources of pressure.

The profession. The profession itself is a major influence upon its professional schools. Most would agree that this is as it should be. At the same time, however, since a profession sometimes perpetuates a specious or provincial point of view, it is well that counter-pressures be kept alive.

To considerable degree, the professional college faculty itself consists of members of the profession and this becomes a channel of influence. For example, nearly all teacher education colleges hope to staff their professional courses with persons who, among other qualifications, hold teacher certification and have had substantial teaching experience. The fact that the college faculty members are professionals has, of course, an effect upon the faculty's view of curriculum and instruction. The practicing professionals in all professions often claim that this policy results in some unrealism and impracticability.

The alumni of the professional training colleges are another channel of professional influence. They should be highly valuable in testing the college's effectiveness but have been modestly used for evaluation and constructive criticism.

However, and more importantly, professions affect professional training programs through organized national bodies. In general, these committees or councils on professional education carry great influence. In some professions, a national practitioners' educational council is the accrediting body and its frown can obliterate an individual school; in other professions such a national council is a

part in varying degree of the accreditation organization. In some professions the national voice restricts itself to matters of general standards and effectiveness; in others it will reach into such relative minutiae as manner of organization of the college, time allocations within the curriculum, and others.

It should be restated that nearly all professions have national educational councils with great influence on the training programs but that the degree and methods of organization vary among the professions. Apparently the only two major fields of professional training in which the colleges do not have to deal with national professional councils are business and theology. The American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business and the American Association of Theological Schools work with standards and accreditation without cooperation or control from a national professional body. The reason for these two exceptions is clear.

On the other hand, the educational council of the American Medical Association is undisputed in standards and accreditation of medical schools and a similar situation exists in such other professional training fields as law, forestry, osteopathy, and others. Another significant pattern sets up a national control in which the profession, the organized colleges and legal agencies share. The Council on Dental Education, for example, has three representatives each from the American Association of Dental Schools, American Association of Dental Examiners and the American Dental Association. This pattern is noted also in pharmacy, architecture, and teacher education (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). In other professions where there is no legal interest in qualifications this control is shared by the professional body and the colleges, as in journalism.

In teacher education, there are numerous ways in which the profession can have influence on the training program. Some of these are quite informal since most colleges for teacher education are active in in-service programs, are represented at professional meetings and carry on other activities which make possible back-and-forth communication. In addition most states have a Teacher Education and Professional Standards commission as an auxiliary of the state education association and have some form of comprehensive teacher education council. The difficulty is that few of these organizations get above consideration of matters of the moment or few have staffing adequate to guarantee effective continuity of effort.

The sum of the practitioner's impact upon professional training programs is valuable but could be made much more so. There are some drawbacks, too, such as on occasion when the professionals have, as a selfish move, attempted to establish numerical quotas for admission to the colleges, have been specious or arbitrary in ruling on training standards or procedures or fail to recognize educational objectives other than the professional training. However, these influences do in the main seek to strengthen training standards and the profession mutually and do indubitably serve to challenge some colleges with somnolent aspirations.

Legal agencies. Legal certification is required for the practice of most professions. In consequence, legal agencies have developed a considerable interest in and influence on professional schools. At first, this influence was expressed

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through the licensure of individuals seeking to practice the profession. The next step was establishment of procedures for giving approval to the various professional schools in the state. In the most recent development, national councils or associations of the various state certifying officers are collaborating extensively with representatives of national professional groups and professional college associations in studying and acting on professional training programs. This development can be seen in architecture, dentistry, engineering, pharmacy, and teacher education, and in others it is indirectly but potently found as in the legal requirement of 42 states that medical schools must be approved by the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association or in the general participation of judges and courts in licensure of new attorneys.

The moving of this interest to a national level is probably fortunate. It has been noted in the past that state standards were generally inferior to those of the regional accrediting associations.

The legal interest in professional training expresses, of course, the general public interest and to some extent a practitioner's influence also. In a number of states, the various boards for licensing or institutional approval are manned by members of that profession. The fact of their responsibility to either the governor or legislature serves to place them as a liaison between professional and public interests.

As one might anticipate, the practices among the 48 states and among the various professions show wide variations in the manner and degree in which the legal interest is expressed. As a matter of record, some states for some professions do little more than establish a licensing board which is rarely reviewed. In other fields, including teacher education, there is continuing interest often specific and detailed. A recent Ohio teacher certification pattern, for example, set a ceiling on the credit hours in professional courses which could be earned in approved teacher education institutions by future elementary school teachers. In a number of states, legal agencies prescribe the minimum number of credit hours in general education to be earned by future teachers. Many of these actions considerably reduce the discretion of the professional college faculties.

On the other hand, most students of higher education are greatly encouraged by the manner in which legal interest in professional education is developing. The trend toward national-level discussion and a growing emphasis on qualitative as against quantitative measures are hopeful. Opportunities for broad-based discussions between legal officers and professional representatives are now increasing.

Higher education. By far the major portion of American professional training is given within the framework of higher education generally. With only a few exceptions such as in osteopathy or in the case of a handful of the 82 medical schools, the professional college in America has lodgment in a complex institution such as a university or, by itself, provides education in addition to the purely professional work. Certainly less than ten per cent of all American professional education is provided by colleges which give only the professional training and are not units within institutions of higher education.

In fact, many liberal arts colleges give professional training. It is a rare liberal arts college which is completely nonprofessional or nonvocational. Separate professional schools will be formed when

there is a large enough student body with specialized objectives or when certain legal or accrediting influences come to bear. Within higher education, the professional colleges have autonomy in varying degree, usually rather considerable in curriculum and instruction and sometimes almost completely so in staff problems. For example, a medical school professor in a complex university usually receives a far larger salary than the professor of English in the same institution. Apparently, the larger the university, the greater the curricular autonomy of the professional school. In a very large complex state university it is not unusual to find the graduate-credit programs in law, medicine, engineering, etc., removed from the control of the graduate council. In several instances, two-thirds of all the institution's graduate credit work is not supervised by the graduate council.

However, there are always presidents, vice-presidents, budget committees, boards of trustees and general faculty organizations so that regardless of the degree of autonomy the professional school finds itself in an arena of institutional discussion and supply of resource. This has its inevitable effect upon determination of the objectives of the program, methods of instruction, credit reporting, etc. The net result is a brake upon runaway or separatist tendencies. General education receives more attention than it otherwise would. The professional school becomes a little more conscious of judgments on the type of student it attracts and more sensitive to impressions of its instructional effectiveness. In these and many other ways, including the growing impact of higher education as a whole upon accrediting procedures, the location of professional training within higher education generally creates significant pressures.

Areas of Influence

At this point, we can briefly review some of the current problems of professional training as these are affected by the pressures or influences described above.

The place of general education. There is agreement that general education must be provided for in any program of professional education. How large a segment of the total program should be given to general education is not yet answered uniformly by the professional schools. Nor has there been a uniform answer to the question of how the general education shall be provided, whether prior to professional training in a preprofessional program or concurrently, either through separate courses or infiltrated in professional courses.

Philosophically, the question is still moot as to whether or not general education can be afforded within the professional program. Actually and historically, there is a well-developed trend to segregating it from professional training and requiring its completion prior to the specialized program. At present, architecture, teacher education, forestry, engineering, journalism, nursing and pharmacy merge the two into a single post-high school program. Medicine, dentistry, law, osteopathy, veterinary medicine, library science, theology and others require completion of a general education program of from two to four years prior to admission to the professional program.

Recent movements, even in teacher education, have featured increase in the general education requirements and in stipulating these as preprofessional requirements. In actual practice, this movement exceeds minimum stated requirements. As an illustration, one might note

that the minimum requirement for admission to medical school is customarily three years of general education but at present approximately two-thirds of new medical school students have had four years. Influences stemming from the profession and from higher education generally have been significant in this trend.

Course content and instruction. In this area, professional education has made some remarkable contributions which could well be emulated in other areas of higher education. Originality and fixation on objective have produced a number of intriguing instructional devices such as the student teaching or administrative internship in teacher education, the case method and moot court in law, the field project in engineering, the internship and residency in medicine, clinical observation in a number of fields or the case work in social work. The dynamic quality of these cannot be denied. Their values lie not alone in the practicality and pertinence of the course but also in the self-growth opportunity afforded the student. In that, they are an interesting example for the rest of higher education and in this instance professional education should be on the sending instead of the receiving end.

On such problems as these the influences stemming from higher education generally have not been helpful. The necessity, for example, of assigning credit-hour values to all activity is stultifying. Professional education programs have also been, perforce, rather modest about intruding actual professional observation within the "basic" courses, thereby failing to take advantage of the strong motivation available. Happily, however, the influence of the profession itself and the necessities of the professional training program have produced an effective and stimulating originality in at least the climactic phases of American professional training programs.

Accreditation. Historically, the regional accrediting associations were first in the field with the North Central Association and the Southern Association, formed in 1895, although they did not begin to accredit colleges until shortly after 1910. The medical education report of Abraham Flexner in 1910 is the major single event from which to date professional accreditation. Within a few years there was medical education accrediting. During the next decade and a half professional accrediting grew rapidly, so much so that after years of concern expressed by university presidents and an ineffective blocking move in 1939, the National Commission on Accrediting was formed in 1950 by a number of powerful university and college associations. This commission desired to devise a statement of accrediting principles and to formulate methods producing agreement between those principles and the practices of the various accrediting agencies. At the time, it was popularly remarked that the accrediters were to be accredited.

The criticisms of the accrediting process which such efforts seek to correct may be briefly summarized as the danger of a vitiating uniformity, a closely held or oligarchic control of some professional accrediting agencies, inadequate standards, improper accrediting procedures, extreme proliferation of accrediting groups and the loss of institutional autonomy. The latter point was particularly irritating to the central administrations of the larger schools. Each professional school could arm its budget and staff requests with the power of its accrediting association and thereby contribute to a predetermination of such vital matters outside of local jurisdiction.

Most observers agree that many of

these criticisms were valid. Few of the professional accrediting agencies had reached the levels of qualitative standards or of the sensitive and imaginative procedures displayed by the regional associations such as the North Central Association. Procedures of some agencies were undoubtedly specious and arbitrary. For example, one of the more powerful professional councils presumed to pass judgment on the form of administrative control of its pertinent units within their institutions, a feature well beyond such considerations as curriculum, quality of staff, effectiveness of program or others.

Apparently, recent activities have inspired all concerned to improve their procedures and there are growing prospects for helpful cooperative operation between the regional associations and the professional accrediting bodies.

On the other hand, there is no indication of abated vigor in professional accrediting. In fact, at about the time the National Commission on Accrediting was being organized, events were bringing into existence the first national accrediting body for professional teacher education, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). It has been thought that the imminent onset of NCATE was the trigger or culminating factor inspiring creation of the National Commission on Accrediting.

Much of the commission's time has been given to negotiations concerning authorization of NCATE. The original composition of NCATE provided for six representatives from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, six from the Teacher Education and Professional Standards Commission of the N.E.A. and three each from the national bodies of the school boards association, state school superintendents and state directors of teacher certification for a total of 21. Considerable objection to NCATE arose early around these criticisms: (a) there is no need for a national accrediting agency in teacher education since state and regional operations are adequate; (b) the institutions have only a minority share of NCATE's membership; (c) legal officers should not be represented; and (d) there is no provision for representation of liberal arts colleges as such.

The first objection has not been sustained, since clearly prevalent opinion endorses the need for national level teacher education accrediting. The National Commission on Accrediting has itself accepted this premise. So far as the other points are concerned, NCATE with the endorsement of its constituent associations has made substantial changes in the allocation of membership so that the institutions would have a majority representation with reduction in the allocations to the professional and legal groups. At various stages the National Commission on Accrediting has indicated endorsement of NCATE on the basis of certain suggested changes, but it has indeed been difficult to overcome a fluid situation in the attitudes of its own constituency and to conduct parallel negotiations with the six regional accrediting associations. One of NCATE's most powerful endorsements came in the 1956 annual meeting of the North Central Association indicating agreement with the NCATE reorganization and willingness to work with it on that basis.

As of this writing, there is no final resolution of these discussions and NCATE does not carry complete endorsement from the National Commission on Accrediting. Yet, NCATE has been proceeding with its accrediting function. Today there is national teacher education accrediting in fact. Probably

two thirds of all newly certified teachers in 1956 will have been produced by colleges and universities, some 300, accredited by NCATE.

This discussion of the accrediting situation in teacher education admirably illustrates the complex of influences on professional education. The simple fact of location within higher education's framework has in this case brought to bear the influence of those who are deeply concerned about general education; who give more prestige to theoretical, historical, or insightful studies than to what they fear to be curriculum gadgets and proliferated practicums; and who are concerned that higher education preserve some real unity and not shatter into fragments. At the same time we see highlighted the professional practitioner's interest in desiring improved professional standards and status, in wanting more careful selection of students and in wishing to make certain that prime attention is given to training in those professional activities which perforce receive his major concern. To some extent the legal and employing officers may share all the above but they also express further the public's concern and wish to see enough as well as able teachers.

Similar swirls can be cited in other problems of professional teacher education so that the professional school's faculty often has to consider factors beyond research, analysis or philosophy in reaching decisions.

Selection and admission of students. Professional schools generally are active in the selection and/or admission of students. Those schools which begin their programs with the immediate post-high school work, particularly those under public control, do not establish severe original admission requirements but do vigorously screen out during the program. Those which do not admit until after completion of a general education program emphasize selection at the time of original admission and do correspondingly less elimination. These actions are the result of common desire by the professional school, the practitioners and the legal officers representing the public interest. The practitioners desire to enhance professional status and generally support careful scrutiny of professional school students. In the Ohio School Survey of 1954, for example, a representative sampling of Ohio teachers showed overwhelming opinion that no high school graduate should be admitted to teacher education programs unless he had ranked in the upper half of his high school graduating class. Unfortunately,

Certain Professional Fields of Study with Number of Institutions Accredited Professionally and Number of Degrees Given

Field of Study	*Number of Institutions Professionally Accredited* [1]	*Number of Professional Degrees Given, 1954–1955* [2]	
		First Professional Degree	*Advanced Professional Degree*
Architecture	55	1,581	183
Dentistry	41	3,099	.....
Engineering	150	22,589	5,083
Forestry	26	1,158	204
Journalism	44	2,218	302
Law	129	8,226	395
Library Science	37	1,536	291
Medicine	82	7,056	.....
Optometry	12	524	1
Osteopathy	6	460	5
Pharmacy	74	3,396	198
Social Work	52	1,890	205
Teacher Education	285	53,254	29,090
Theology	108	4,524	842
Veterinary Medicine	17	855	35
	Total	112,366	36,834

[1] As reported in Irwin, *American Universities and Colleges*, Washington: American Council on Education, 1956, p. 107-185.

[2] As reported in *Earned Degrees Conferred, 1954–1955*, Washington, D. C.: Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, Circular No. 461.

at times and in certain professions the practitioners have supported such movements not on the basis of what *ought* to be defensible standards for admission to the profession, but on the basis of *how many* should be admitted since restriction of numbers, regardless of ability, would improve the practitioners' position in the supply and demand picture.

To illustrate the variety and size of professional training programs in the United States, the accompanying table shows some more important college-level professional programs together with number of professionally accredited institutions engaged and the numbers of professional degrees given.

The numerical significance of professional teacher education in the entire professional training field is readily apparent.

We have rather quickly sketched various influences or pressures upon professional education and have briefly glimpsed several problems in which these pressures can be noted. It is quite possible that an occasional professional college may wish for a less complicated life and for unhampered opportunity to construct and to control its own program in a purely meditative surrounding.

Because professional training so directly affects the public and because of the nature of its basic control, these pressures must exist; nor, after reflection, would one have it otherwise. These pressures produce challenge, they inspire experimentation to meet problems and they do bring better programs than would be true if the colleges were not frequently forced to defend or to rethink their positions.

Editor's Note: The National Commission on Accrediting on October 10 officially approved NCATE as official accrediting agency for teacher education.

J. ALAN ROSS

Trends in Liberal Education

Several factors are considered in appraising the task of liberal or general education in America today.

THE United States Office of Education in reporting statistics includes in the liberal arts college category "institutions in which the principal emphasis is placed on a program of general undergraduate education." In accordance with this classification the Office reported 732 liberal arts colleges in the United States in the fall of 1955.

While "liberal arts" provides a convenient term for the classification of a major segment of higher education in America, the higher institutions so classified are widely divergent in purpose and program.

The meaning of liberal arts as applied to the curricula of colleges is difficult to determine. This was not so when Cassiodorus composed his treatise, *De artibus et disciplinis liberalum,* through which the seven liberal arts, grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, arithmetic,

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