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THE CONFUSING AND CONTROVERSIAL B. ED.

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The Confusing and Controversial B.Ed.

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"It would be a degree gained in a distinctive way,
and characteristically based on the study of education."

Robbins Report, 1963.

This quotation indicates the line recommended for the development of the new degree called B.Ed.; it maps out the area where emphasis ought to be placed in planning the curriculum for the B.Ed., and it also provides a criterion by which the direction of development of the B.Ed. can be checked.

Antecedents and Aspirations

The history of teacher education in England and Wales since the first quarter of this century has been succinctly surveyed by Berry (1967), and some recent development in various aspects of teacher education there was ably reported by Cope (1969). Nonetheless, a brief description of the historical aspect of the emergence of the B.Ed. will put the related problems in their proper perspective.

The year 1944 is an important year in the history of education in England and Wales. It saw the passing of the 1944 Education Act and the setting up of the McNair Committee. They brought to the fore the urgency of training more teachers to meet the need for more trained teachers, as a result of raising the school leaving age as well as the rising birth rates after the War. They also brought closer the relationship between training colleges and universities.

However, the aspiration for a graduate profession in education did not crystallize until 1963 in the form of the recommendation of the Robbins Committee. Of course, before this, pressure groups such as the staffs of University Schools of Education, Institutes and Departments of Education, Training Colleges and other teacher organisations including the ATCDE have all expressed their views. But, strangely enough, as pointed out by Price (1967), "... the teachers in schools have exerted hardly any pressure at all and what little they have applied has not been effectively noticed."

In the year 1965, 5% of students admitted to colleges of education for a three-year course were permitted to take an additional year for the B.Ed.; and, in 1969, the B.Ed. degree was awarded to 1383 students from 125 colleges of education by 21 universities (Howett 1969).

But this is only the beginning. The Robbins Committee recommends 10% intake for a start, and a 25% intake by the year 1980. On the other hand, the Department of Education and Science anticipated a 25% intake by the year 1973. Yet, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) hopes that by the year 1975 half of the students will study for a B.Ed., and that by the year 1980 a large majority of the students will do likewise. Apparently, while the call for a graduate profession is unanimous, there is considerable disagreement among various parties concerned as to the proportion of students that will prepare or ought to be given the chance to prepare themselves for the B.Ed.

The Chaos

The setting up of the B.Ed. degree is, as summed up by Taylor (1969), a "flagrant example of the current fashion among educationists (and intellectualists) to decide now and think later." The consequence of this lack of overall planning is the chaotic variation among universities in the B.Ed.'s status and regulations. This statement is very

disturbing, but the criticism is true and fair: universities involved in the B.Ed. programme differ among themselves in entrance requirements, in course structure, in curriculum, and in the degrees awarded.

Entrance Requirements. The general pattern of selection is an initial selection plus subsequent college selection followed by university selection, and sometimes with interview as well. While most colleges identify their potential B.Ed. students at the end of the second year, some do so as early as by the end of the first year (Howett 1969).

The criteria used for selection vary. While some universities accept good performance in Education and Main Subjects as qualifications for admission to the B.Ed., others insist upon matriculation. Of the 22 universities involved in B.Ed. programme, 15 require matriculation while 7 do not (Banfield 1969). But, of those not requiring matriculation, 4 set their special entrance examination papers (NUT 1970).

It is of note that practical teaching has been taken rather lightly in such selection. For instance, in one college, 5 to 10% students with a grade of B in Education and Main Subjects but with a grade of C in practical teaching were allowed to do an additional year for the B.Ed. (Eagle 1969).

Course Structure. This is even more bewildering, as there are no less than five different arrangements for the same degree called B.Ed. According to Banfield (1969), 11 universities have a 3+1 pattern, 6 universities have 1+3, 2 universities have 2+2, another 2 universities have a full four-year course, and 1 university experiments with a system of units.

Moreover, the relationship between Teacher Certificate Course and B.Ed. Course also varies among universities. While 10 universities run the end-on course, taking the Certificate as Part I of the B.Ed., another 10 conduct the bifurcated course, considering the Certificate and the B.Ed. as two unrelated courses (Price 1967).

The pros and cons of different structure have been evaluated in terms of the possible outcomes (Owens 1970). Running the Certificate and the B.Ed. Courses concurrently may lead to streaming (a system that is being tried to get rid of at the lower educational levels), and can have ill-effects on both students and staff. The 1+3 structure, differentiating students as early as the first year, involves devaluation of the Certificate Course and implies that it is of inferior quality. The 2+2 is not logical, since the three-year Certificate is considered as Part I of the B.Ed.

The 3+1 structure seems most desirable with its advantages such as allowing longer period for student development and evaluation before decision to enter the B.Ed. programme is made, preventing the distortion of the Certificate work by B.Ed. requirement, minimizing the drop-out rate in B.Ed., and simplifying college administration. Besides, as pointed out by Price (1967), the end-on course allows teachers in the schools to return and study for a degree. This provides an incentive for practising teachers to further their education, and, as the present writer believes, will prove itself very important for maintaining the morale and up-grading the quality of the existing teaching force.

Curriculum. There are at least five different ways in which Education and Main Subjects are combined to form the B.Ed. courses. Six universities require one Main Subject in addition to Education, another six universities require two Main Subjects, three require one Main Subject plus one additional non-academic subject, and so on (Banfield 1969). How are Education and other academic subjects to be

related? What sort of a balance is to be kept between these two main areas of study? And, where do non-academic subjects such as Art & Craft, Physical Education, and AVA come in? Nobody seems to know as yet the proper solutions to these problems, and even when there are some suggestions, these are more often voiced than acted upon. The complicated nature of the problem is reflected in student discontent.

For instance, Eagle (1969) wrote, "In one Northern college there is a three-degrees-in-one-course -- Education plus two academic subjects all studied to degree level or higher simultaneously ... In one Southern college students follow the Certificate course for three years and then do what amounts to a year's cramming for the B.Ed. ... neither does a student want to spend four years slaving away on academic subjects completely unrelated to the teaching profession." To add another instance, Moorhouse (1970) wrote, "The pressure to preserve the nebulous 'academic standards' leaves little or no scope for studies combined with practical activity."

Criticisms also come from other than students. For instance, Price (1967) wrote, "In some cases the degree is not biased towards Education but is, rather, a general type of degree in which Education happens to be included ... One university does not require students in the final year to take the subject of Education for that critical part of B.Ed. work."

A large variety of courses is offered by the colleges. Courses conducted by more than half of the 120 odd colleges include English, Geography, History, Divinity, Mathematics, Music, Art, Biology and French. Courses run by less than half of the 120 colleges are Drama, Physics, Chemistry, Sociology, Biological Sciences, Physical Science, General/Nature Science. Such a large number of courses implies that some of the classes can be too small to be economic, and the preponderance of arts subjects does not help solve the problem of shortage in science teachers. Small wonder that the establishment of the B.Ed. has been criticised as a 'national waste of scarce resources' (Taylor 1969). A similar criticism, though in somewhat different vein, has been made by Owens (1970) when he wrote, "For too many courses reveal a misguided concern with maintaining 'academic standards' at the expense of professional relevance."

Degrees Awarded. There are no less than five different policies for degree-awarding among the 22 universities. The types of degree include class honours, honours for some, divided general degree, general degree with distinction, and only pass degree (Banfield 1969).

This diversity foreseeably will affect the B.Ed. graduates' prospects as well as their immediate financial gains. If there is reasonable uniformity among different universities in their degree examinations, then there is no reason why there should not be different types of degrees. But, the 'injustice' has been revealed by Hewett (1969) who cited from a survey by the ATCDE that in one institute, colleges presented 6 to 20% finalists for honours while in another institute, colleges presented only 1 to 7% for general degree, yet there was no evidence showing that honours finalists had undergone more rigorous examinations. Again, in one university 'good honours' is 88% of B.Ed. students while in another university only 39% B.Ed. students were awarded the same degree. (Incidentally, a pass degree B.Ed. brings a bonus of £105 p.a. while a 'good honours' B.Ed. is entitled to £230 p.a.). It is not difficult to predict the long-term effect of this diversity.

Underlying Causes:

The combination of no philosophy and wrong model seems to be the cause of this appallingly confusing and controversial state of affairs.

It is hard to believe that in a nation where philosophy of education is highly developed there is a lack of philosophy of teacher education. Perhaps, more appropriately, there is no lack of such philosophy but too many versions of it, and the diversity is at the same time reinforced by the concept of 'academic freedom' — each university is entitled to practise its pet theory, if any. The response of the university to the B.Ed. has been described as "alacrity, caution and indifference with a licence to formulate freely their own brands of B.Ed. (Price 1967)."

It has to be admitted that, although empirical research plays a prominent part in educational innovation in England and Wales, the introduction of the B.Ed. degree is based on opinions rather than research evidence. The change is, as says Cope (1969), a change under pressure, is based on hunches, is an act of faith and a response to immediate crises. Under such circumstances and with no research findings as guidelines, the colleges and departments of education must "behave as if they know which patterns of training will produce effective teachers (Cope 1969)."

Thus, with no nationwide agreed philosophy of teacher education and with the zeal in preserving university individuality, such diversity is inevitable. It is here that the choice of an adequate model for the new degree comes in.

For some unknown reasons, the B.Ed. is largely based on the model of a degree with strong academic bias. Working with this model, colleges of education are pushed to a defensive position. On the one hand, they have to satisfy their own conscience that the study of Education is not slighted by the study of Main Subjects, yet on the other hand and at the same time they have to prove to the university that they are capable of running courses in Main Subjects up to the degree level so that the 'academic standards' of this new degree is no lower than any other degrees. In short, colleges of education are desperately trying to cope with a double job — while upholding Education as a discipline worthy of its name, attempt at proving their capability in degree level work in fields other than Education. The ambivalence of a dual role can impose considerable strain and stress. Moreover, as pointed out by the NUT (1970), colleges have to conduct the B.Ed. courses without receiving additional staff, buildings and materials in proportion to the additional tasks.

The fact has to be faced that there is no free market as such for the B.Ed. degree. Education graduates have limited scope in terms of job opportunity compared with graduates from other departments. A great majority or almost all of Education graduates will work in institutions of an educational nature as teachers, researchers or administrators. It is rather unlikely that they will turn themselves into workers in, say, survey departments, museums, chemical plants and the like. Even if there were a few who may wish to do so, they cannot stand the competition of other candidates with a B.A. or B.Sc., which looks 'purer' as a degree. It then follows that there is no reason why they should be expected to measure up to the so called degree level in the Main Subjects simply for the sake of maintaining the elusive 'academic standard'.

Mediocrity is not advocated here. The idea is to call attention to the conviction that colleges of education are not established to assist the universities in training (or educating if this is the preferred word) potential chemists, biologists, journalists, musicologists, mathematicians and so on. What the B.Ed. graduates need is a sufficient body of knowledge in chosen areas in which they will work in the service of education in these particular areas. To spell it out, colleges of education need not hold themselves and should not be held responsible for producing third-rate chemists, but rather concentrate the efforts to produce educationists who are sensitive

to problems in chemical education and are capable of helping to solve the problems, it is in these tasks that Chemistry as a Main Subject will be of great value to **their** B.Ed. work.

Probable Development

An all-graduate profession is generally considered desirable with the belief that this will bring about a better educated teaching service, though it cannot be too sceptical to question the assumption of equating more education for teachers with better service on their part. The aspiration of having a teaching force with 'good academic background, professional expertise, a sense of social awareness and a balanced adult personality (NUP 1970)' can be more easily expressed than achieved. The introduction of B.Ed. is believed to be one, though not necessarily the only one way of attaining this goal. But then questions remain to be answered as to how this can be done without inducing undesirable side-effects that have been pointed out by various writers in the last two or three years.

It seems that the sooner the pressure to maintain 'academic standards' in Main Subjects be reduced, the earlier and better can the B.Ed. fulfil the aspiration of the Robbins Committee. The reduction or elimination of such pressure will allow colleges to cease acting or trying to act as mini-universities.

The relationship between academic studies and teacher education has been excellently discussed by Eason (1969) with his three models — Liberal and Contextual Background, Technological Know-how, and School Instructional Content. He warns us that each of these as ends by themselves are inadequate and can be dangerously misleading. Suffice it here to say that colleges need be relieved from the strenuous task of defending their position as institutes of higher learning so that they can channel all their resources in helping students to gain, within the time limit and human capacity, sufficient knowledge and skills in chosen fields of study and to integrate these with principles and techniques gained in Education courses. The ultimate aim is that teaching in the schools will be carried out with higher efficiency, where instructional procedure is concerned, and with better understanding, where subject matter is concerned. The main function of the teacher is to teach, and he studies in order to teach.

This implies re-modelling the B.Ed., taking a line similar to that of the technological college or the medical school. For instance, Chemistry is not studied by students in Chemical Engineering or Medicine for its own sake or that of 'academic standards' in Chemistry. Likewise, B.Ed. students majoring in Chemistry need not be made to study Chemistry merely to satisfy certain preconceived requirement which may not be of great relevance to their subsequent jobs in the education service. They study Chemistry so that they have a better understanding of the structure and methods of Chemistry, in order to teach Chemistry more efficiently, so that they may be able to relate the nature of Chemistry and the nature of the learners and the learning processes; this, in the long run, will provide the Chemistry Department in the university with better students. As pointed out by Fox (1969), there is no reason for Chemistry in the B.Ed. to be any more related to the Chemistry in a pure degree than is this subject in agricultural chemistry or pharmaceutical chemistry. In short, the study of Chemistry in B.Ed. ought to be the study of chemistry related to problems of science education.

With the re-orientation of the B.Ed. as an 'applied' rather than a 'pure' degree and the de-emphasis on 'academic standards', the next problem is to choose a logical, practical and flexible course structure that takes into account the existing teacher education system:

In this respect, opinions tend to favour the 3+1 end-on course which has been adopted by 10 of the 22 universities (Banfield 1969; Owens 1970; Price 1967). This structure, as pointed out earlier, allows both students and their tutors long enough time to assess the feasibility of taking an additional year for the B.Ed. And, by taking the Certificate as Part I of the B.Ed., this structure has the flexibility of allowing re-entry to the course should the students wish to do so at a latter date after some years in the service. It also can avoid creating elitism among students and staff.

Maybe, the diversity as reported came about partly as a result of practical consideration, especially the size and facility of the colleges. This leads to the suggestion (Berry 1967) that it might be a wise policy to designate a small number of colleges as colleges for the teaching of B.Ed., in the line as that of the Colleges of Advanced Technology. On the other hand, more ambitious suggestion (Podley 1969) is that of 'comprehensive university' which will ultimately put teacher education in the mainstream of higher education.

Conclusion

The confusions and controversies of the B.Ed. may be seen as the result of lack of an agreed philosophy of teacher education and lack of a choice of degree model as well as, in part, insufficient preparation in terms of staffing and facilities. At this early stage of development, these are inevitable and may even be desirable to throw light on the inherent problems and probable pitfalls so that solutions can be sought. However, they need not be allowed to continue.

As it is, at the moment, the B.Ed. is neither fish nor fowl; it lacks a character of its own. It is under a metamorphosis, and whatever the development in the near future may be, it is necessary to prevent the B.Ed. course from becoming a status symbol for the colleges, an additional hurdle for the students, and excuse for snobbishness of the haves and the jealous envy of the have-nots among the teaching force. Otherwise, the B.Ed. is redundant as a degree and self-defeating as a device of improving teacher quality.

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Appendix a

Policies adapted by various universities involved
in the B.Ed. programme (From J. Banfield, 1969)

<u>Aspect of the B.Ed. Course</u>	<u>No. of Universities</u>
1. Matriculation: Yes	15
No	7
2. Structure: 3+1	11
1+3	6
2+2	2
4	2
Units *	1
3. Degrees: Class Honours	7
Honours for some	3
Divided General	4
General with Distinction	4
Pass	4
4. Course Content: Edun + 1 (Edun plus one MS for four years)	6
Edun + 1+ (As above plus one non-Academic)	3
Edun + 1½ (Edun plus two Principal Subjects)	6
Edun + 2	6
Others *	1

Universities involved: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Exeter, Hull, Keele, Lancaster, Leeds, Loister, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton, Sussex, Wales, and Warwick.

* Loister: three sections of 5, 4, 3 terms; eight units required -- three units in Edun plus five units in not less than two but not more than four subjects.

Mr. Soh Kay Chong,

I am reading your paper on the B.Ed. I wonder if for your readers you can clarify

(1) whether entrance requirements include 'A' levels

(2) whether degree is an Hons degree in all cases.

2. I wonder also if you can comment on the B.Ed. degree as a general degree with

Education and
2 Main Subjects

for 3 years, with studies for M.Ed. to follow. Can you discuss?

Sd. T.R. Doraisamy
Principal, T.T.C.
1.2.71.

TRD/wml

Principal,

Reference your queries, dated 1.2.1971:

(1) Entrance requirements include A Levels?

The following quotation may give a better picture of the situation:

"The normal minimum requirement for admission to colleges of education is five subjects at 'O' level ... Several variations have been suggested but perhaps the two most important are, on the one hand, to require of candidates at least one subject at 'A' level in conjunction with at least five subjects at 'O' level, and, on the other hand, to require of candidates at least five subjects at 'O' level with English and Mathematics as compulsory subjects."
(NUT, 1970)

(2) The degree is an Hons degree?

The types of degree vary with universities:

Class Honours	7 univs
Honours for some	3 univs
Divided General	4 univs
General with Distinction	4 univs
Pass	4 univs

(3) Education and 2 MSs for 3 years leading to B.Ed. with M.Ed. to follow

May I present my view that in planning the degree course, various conditions call for consideration. These are some of them:

- (a) The 'philosophy' and aims of teacher education with reference to the need of the Republic. In behavioural terms, what do we expect graduates with various periods of teacher education to be able to do in the schools, the Institute, and the Ministry, and for those intending, in further study locally or abroad?
- (b) The past and present system of teacher education in respect of
 - i. Capitalization on available personnel for higher level work after adequate additional training/education; and
 - ii. Providing incentives to teaching profession as a whole -- this may help raise the morale of the teaching force.
- (c) The present degree structure of the University of Singapore -- for 'fairness' to graduates from the Institute as well as those from the SU, for sociological and remuneration reasons. Ideally, the nature of work ought to become the main concern for students when choosing their careers.
- (d) The kinds of duties graduates from the Institute may be required to perform in the schools, especially such assignments as teaching lessons in Physical

Education, Music, Art and Crafts, Home Economics,
and making and maintaining audio-visual aids.

- (c) The availability of facilities and staff.
- (f) The time and energy of the students.

One plausible alternative is Education and one academic
subject plus two non-academic subjects.

- (4) With the above in view, may I submit a scheme showing one
possible arrangement linking stages of education prior
and after to initial training. (Please see Appendix A).

K.C. Soh
2.2.71.

/wml

Appendix A

Higher School Cert. or Senior Middle Three	Cert. Education	B.Ed.	Dip. Ed.	M.Ed.
	B.A. or B.Sc. (General)		// Honours	// M.A. or M.Sc.
	1st and 2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year

- (1) Candidates seeking admission to Cert. Educn have at least 12 years of Primary and Secondary education. This may take one of those forms:
- (a) 6 Primary years + 4 Secondary years + 2 HSC years (English and Chinese, present system),
 - (b) 6 Primary years + 6 Secondary years (Chinese Stream, old system)
 - (c) 6 Primary years + 4 Secondary years + 3 normal or 2 Cert. in Ed. (Qualified teachers).
- (2) The new Cert. Educn. be considered as Part I of the B.Ed.
- (3) Candidates seeking admission to B.Ed. have been successful in the Cert. Educn. examination.
- (4) Qualified teachers with X years of teaching experience and teacher-training, inspectorial or administrative experience can be considered for admission to the B.Ed. without taking the new Cert. Educn. Some forms of qualifying tests may be necessary.
- (5) Serving teachers with the new Cert. Educn. may seek re-entry for the B.Ed. within X years after being awarded the Cert. Educn. Some form of qualifying tests may be necessary.
- (6) There may need three different types of Dip.Ed.:
- Dip.Ed. for B.Ed. holders who intend to teach at a higher level (say, the HSC); more time to be used in studying academic subjects and curriculum studies.
 - Dip. Ed. for B.A. or B.Sc. who intend to teach their specialised subjects at the HSC level; more time to be used in study of Education and curriculum studies.
 - Dip. Ed. for B.Ed., B.A. or B.Sc. who intend to become administrators, inspectors, lecturers, or researchers; also a preparatory year for the M.Ed.