



The Peculiar Problems of Preparing Educational Researchers

by David F. Labaree

In this article, some difficulties are examined involving turning educational practitioners into educational researchers at American education schools. Teachers bring many traits that are ideal for this new role. At the same time, students and professors in researcher training programs often encounter a cultural clash between the worldviews of the teacher and researcher. Students may feel they are being asked to transform their cultural orientation from normative to analytical, from personal to intellectual, from particular to universal, and from experiential to theoretical. They often resist. Differences in worldview between teachers and researchers cannot be eliminated easily because they arise from irreducible differences in the nature of the work that teachers and researchers do.

Preparing educational researchers in the United States is hard work, both for those providing the preparation and for those receiving it. In this article I examine some of the peculiar difficulties involved in the preparation process, particularly within doctoral programs in American education schools that aim to turn experienced educational practitioners into accomplished educational scholars.

This article is part of a larger project in which I analyze the defining characteristics of the American education school¹ as a social institution, exploring the common elements that underlie the variations in size, form, and quality in individual education schools. It builds on earlier parts of this analysis that have already appeared in print, including an overview of the lowly status and peculiar role of the American education school (Labaree, 1996) and separate pieces on the evolution of the market pressures that shaped its history in the United States (Labaree, 1997, chap. 9), the nature and social consequences of the knowledge produced by educational researchers (Labaree, 1998), and the special problems posed by the task of preparing teachers for the public schools (Labaree, 2000a).²

Framing Issues: Institutional Setting and Knowledge Space

In the larger project, I focus in particular on two related issues: the causes and consequences of the education school's lowly status and the peculiar nature of the pedagogical and intellectual work that the education school is called upon to do. Both issues are helpful in framing the problem of preparing educational researchers.

Training in a Low Status Institution

First, most researchers who focus on education are trained in education schools, and this institutional location exerts a profound effect on the training process. As the Rodney Dangerfield of higher education, the education school can't get no respect, and this leaves it in a weak position to instill in new recruits the norms and values of the educational researcher community.

The lowly status of this institution arises from several sources. One is the education school's link to a long history of producing large numbers of teachers at minimal cost and with minimal attention to academic and professional quality (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Herbst, 1989; Labaree, 1996). Most teacher education in the United States takes place at institutions that started as normal schools, gradually evolved into state teachers colleges, and finally, by the mid-20th century, became regional state universities; however, a large part of doctoral training and educational research is carried out at a small number of education schools that arose in the older and more prestigious universities. But even though the latter try hard to distance themselves from their parvenu cousins, by playing down teacher education and playing up research, they cannot get rid of their association with the education school archetype and its legacy of easy access and low standards. A second closely related status problem for the education school is its link to teaching, the largest and least esteemed of the professions. The work of public school teachers is highly visible and the subjects they teach appear elementary, in comparison to the obscured work settings and arcane expertise of the higher professions (Fenstermacher, 1990). Thus, the education school gets no credit for accomplishing the complex task of preparing teachers to work effectively in the challenging setting of the public school classroom because teaching is mistakenly seen as transparently easy. In addition, teaching, more than other professions, draws recruits from groups that are traditionally disadvantaged socially, women and the working class. This link to the disadvantaged further undermines the social standing of both teaching and the education school in comparison with the higher professions and professional schools, which historically drew on middle-class male recruits and continue to enjoy the lingering status benefit of their association with this privileged group (Labaree, 1996, 2000a).

What are the effects of preparing educational researchers within the tainted confines of the education school? First, in education schools, as in other schools for the lesser professions, the prestige of faculty members comes less from their standing as members of the profession—as teachers—than from their standing as university professors with specialized academic skills (Glazer, 1974). Frequently, the result is a sizeable cultural gap between the teaching

profession and the education school faculty, which means that teachers who enter doctoral programs in education often feel they are being asked to abandon teacher culture in favor of a new academic culture. This jarring discontinuity can undermine the education school's ability to effect a smooth induction of its students into the community of educational scholars. Second, the low status of the education school further weakens the position of the faculty to socialize doctoral students as future teacher educators and educational researchers. Professors in law and medical schools are generally seen as more learned and respected than those in education, which means that the latter may have more difficulty establishing their authority over students and spurring emulation.

Pursuing a Peculiar Form of Knowledge

In addition to its location in a low status institution, the preparation of educational researchers is strongly shaped by a second factor: the special nature of the knowledge that such researchers are asked to produce. If we think of knowledge as ranging from hard to soft and from pure to applied, educational knowledge is both very soft and very applied (Becher, 1989; Labaree, 1998). This knowledge is thoroughly soft because it is an effort to make sense of the collective consequences of the actions of large numbers of willful individuals who are making decisions about teaching and learning within a complex and overlapping array of social systems in response to multiple and conflicting purposes (National Research Council [NRC], 2002). Under such circumstances of great complexity, vast scale, uncertain purpose, and open choice, researchers are unlikely to establish valid and reliable causal claims that can be extended beyond the particulars of time, place, and person. As a result, research claims in education tend to be mushy, highly contingent, and heavily qualified, and the focus is frequently more on description and interpretation than on causation. Educational knowledge is also thoroughly applied because it arises in response to the needs defined by an institutional arena rather than emerging from a particular theoretical domain. Educational researchers are pressed to develop understandings of problems from the field that are most urgent at a particular time, even if this means studying aspects of education that are more difficult to analyze effectively with the available research tools (Labaree).

Of course, education is not alone in having to work a terrain that is soft or applied. The social sciences in general have to construct knowledge on a soft and shifting foundation because of the complex problems posed by trying to understand social interactions embedded in institutional structures. And fields like medicine and engineering are thoroughly applied in character, with researchers forced to explore problems thrown at them from the needs of practice rather than driven by the capacities of theory. But social scientists such as sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and economists can and do let theory drive their construction of knowledge in the soft arena of social life (doing work that is soft but pure), which enhances the intellectual clarity and public respectability of their work. And researchers in professional domains such as medicine and engineering can employ the quantitative precision and causal clarity of hard science in their work on the applied problems thrown their way (doing work that is applied but hard), which enhances the authority and prestige

of their research findings. In contrast, education—along with a few other people-changing professional fields such as social work and counseling—is unusually hampered by being both highly soft and highly applied, thus having strong control over neither its methods nor its subject and producing findings that are neither very clear nor very convincing.³

For researchers, the communal consequence of working such a soft and applied domain of knowledge is a social organization of research that Becher (1989) calls “rural” and “divergent.” Soft-applied knowledge does not accumulate easily because findings are more visibly open to challenge than is the case with hard-pure knowledge. As a result, educational researchers continually tend to rebuild the foundations of the field, instead of building scholarly skyscrapers on the apparently durable base of hard-pure research. And this works against the “urban” concentration of integrated scholarly effort, instead leading to a dispersion of resources into a variety of parallel projects that are scattered across the terrain, each working its own discrete portion of the educational context and building its own intellectual foundations for analyzing that context (Labaree, 1998).

The difficult circumstances under which educational researchers have to function help explain why qualitative research, after a long period of subordination to quantitative research, has grown to become such a widely used methodology for scholars in the field. After a quarter century of debate in the pages of *Educational Researcher*, the consensus seems to be that both methodologies are useful and valid approaches to educational research (Gage, 1989; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002), and that both operate within the same postpositivist paradigm and are subject to the same basic standards (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). As its proponents have shown (Erickson, 1986), qualitative research is well suited to the task of making sense of the socially complex, variable rich, and context-specific character of education. Quantitative work has a harder feel to it, which helps it produce results that come across as clearer, more definitive, and more conducive to causal inference. But in the effort to represent what's really going on in education, the quantitative researcher's press for clarity can come at the expense of accuracy. To exploit the analytical advantages enjoyed by quantitative methods, researchers often need to make simplifying assumptions about educational processes, assign educational actions and actors and artifacts to categories in which they can be counted, collapse and eliminate variables, discount multiple interaction effects, and generalize across differences of time and place and person. This can lead to an elegant model and to results that are supported by a clear statistical decision rule, but both model and results can appear so abstracted from the messy reality of schools as to call into question their validity and utility.

Thus, quantitative researchers in education are no more able to construct scholarly high-rises than their qualitative colleagues because both have to work the same marshy epistemological terrain. Regardless of whether researchers use quantitative or qualitative methods, carrying out credible research in education is particularly difficult. Citing such daunting characteristics of educational research as “the power of contexts,” “the ubiquity of interactions,” and “the short half-life of our findings,” Berliner (2002, pp. 18–20) calls it “the hardest science of all.”

What are the consequences for education schools of having to prepare researchers to function within education's soft-applied knowledge space? A key result is that, to be effective in studying this space, educational researchers need to develop a high degree of methodological sophistication and flexibility. It is not enough to be good at a particular mode of research and to be satisfied with a career of applying this approach in a series of studies. When the terrain that needs mapping is this complex, researchers need to bring an equally complex variety of research methods to the task if they want to be able to view the subject in its many forms. Education only starts to become understandable when it is approached from multiple perspectives.

A recent special issue of *Educational Researcher* reported on efforts at several universities to provide such training (Metz, 2001; Page, 2001; Pallas, 2001; Young, 2001), and a special issue of *Journal of Teacher Education*, devoted to a review of the literature in teacher education, turned into a similar discussion about the need for multiple research perspectives (Fenstermacher, 2002; Florio-Ruane, 2002; Popkewitz, 2002; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). This does not necessarily require that every researcher be equally expert in multiple research methods. They should, however, be aware of the limitations of their own approach and the value of alternative approaches, and they should be capable of working in conjunction with researchers doing work quite different from their own. In 2002, a committee of the NRC published a report on *Scientific Research in Education*, which argued that the "many legitimate research frameworks and methods" (NRC, 2002, p. 92) in education mean that "the breadth and depth of topical areas as well as multiple epistemological and methodological frameworks are nearly impossible to cover adequately in a single degree program" (p. 93).

In sum, education schools face a multidimensional dilemma in their effort to prepare researchers because of their lowly status within higher education, the soft and applied nature of the knowledge that educational researchers need to produce, and a need for researchers to develop a solid understanding of and appreciation for multiple methods for pursuing inquiry. As a result, we should not be surprised to find that doctoral programs in education often fail to produce all that we ask of them.

The Focus and Roots of the Argument

I explore some key implications of this sketch of the special institutional and epistemological situation that faces American education schools in their efforts to prepare teachers as educational researchers. Why focus on this particular combination of people and places? Education schools are not the only institutions where someone can be trained in educational research, and teachers are not the only source of prospective researchers; but former teachers trained in education schools dominate the world of educational research, so understanding the problems that arise from their training process is undeniably important. In particular, I focus on the cultural clash that frequently occurs when representatives of two distinct realms of professional practice—the K–12 teacher and the university researcher—collide in a research-oriented doctoral program in education. This clash plays out in part as a problem of how to accommodate potentially conflicting professional worldviews between teacher and researcher to

the satisfaction of both, and in part as a problem of how to agree on the kind of educational experience that is needed for teachers to become effective researchers without abandoning teacherly values and skills. For reasons of limited space, I focus here on the former problem.

The argument in this article emerges from two interrelated sources. One is an analysis of the structural situation within which doctoral programs function at education schools. That is, continuing my analysis, I examine the various conditions and constraints that affect the way that these doctoral programs operate, based on the institutional differences between schools and universities and the differences between the work roles of teachers and researchers.

The other primary source for the arguments in this article is my own experience with the preparation of researchers in one college of education. For the past 18 years, I have been intensively involved in the doctoral program in Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy within the College of Education at Michigan State University. During this period I have regularly taught doctoral seminars, served on guidance and dissertation committees, advised students, and directed dissertations. From 1996 to 2001 I was the program's coordinator, and from 1998 to 2002 I was the coordinator of the Research Training Grant Program, funded by the Spencer Foundation, which focused on enhancing research preparation for doctoral students across all programs in the college. The program serves all of the doctoral students in the Department of Teacher Education, which is the largest department (60 tenure-stream faculty) in a rather large college (of 140). It enrolls 25–35 new doctoral students a year, who explore a wide range of interests under its umbrella, including subject matter education, teacher education, curriculum, policy, and foundations. Nearly all of the students have experience as elementary or secondary teachers; most end up as professors in education schools. About 80% are enrolled full time in doctoral study, supporting themselves with teaching and research assistantships.

The Transition From Teacher to Researcher: What Makes It Easy

In many important ways, the transition from teacher to educational researcher is a natural and easy one. As prospective researchers, teachers bring many traits that are ideal for this new role, including maturity, professional experience, and dedication.

Maturity

One striking characteristic that distinguishes doctoral students in education from their peers in disciplinary departments is that they are grownups. In arts and sciences departments, students frequently enter doctoral study right after completing their bachelor's degree, but in education they typically arrive at this stage only after first serving at least a few years as an elementary or secondary teacher. Nationally, 49% of all graduate students in education (master's and doctoral level) are over 35, compared to 29% of those in other fields (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1997, calculated from table 213). This matches the experience in my own program, where the age range is from 25 to 55 and the median is about 35. The median age nationally for a person receiving a doctorate in education is 44—compared

to 36 in business, 35 in humanities, 34 in social sciences, and 32 in life sciences (table 299).

Doctoral students in education have already lived a life. They have spent at least some time, generally a lot of time, doing something other than being a good student. They have often pursued a career as a teacher, and along the way they have accumulated the experiences and obligations of adult life. Frequently the same age as their professors, they are not willing to be treated as kids just because they are students. One result is that they are likely to take charge of their doctoral program and make it serve their own needs instead of waiting for the program to shape them.

Professional Experience

As experienced classroom teachers, these students bring a wealth of professional expertise to their doctoral studies in education. Unlike their counterparts in disciplinary departments across campus, they have more than an abstract conception of the subject they will be studying in their doctoral program. Teachers have a feel for the breadth, depth, and complexity of education as an institution that cannot be picked up by reading about it or observing it (Neumann, Pallas, & Peterson, 1999). This means they bring a storehouse of data to doctoral study, which they can and do draw upon in evaluating the utility and validity of the theories they encounter there. Though neophytes in the business of theorizing about education, they are old hands at the practices that are the subject of this theorizing. Even Cronbach and Suppes (1969), who argued for recruiting nonteachers as educational researchers, recognized that such recruits will need to pick up some of the teacher's knowledge of schools through such means as school-based internships and extensive classroom observation (p. 215).

Teachers also bring to doctoral study a set of plausible and professionally tested understandings about what makes education work. They come in with a sense of what is happening in the institution they will be studying. This means they don't want the doctoral program to explain to them what they already know but instead want it to allow them, as scholars, to continue exploring issues they already started examining as practitioners (Neumann, Pallas, & Peterson, 1999).

Dedication to Education

The most visible characteristic of new doctoral students in education schools is their passionate commitment to education. These students express a calm certainty that the future of their country and its children depends on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. As a result, their goal in pursuing doctoral study is not to explore an abstract question or follow a whim. Instead, their mission as doctoral students—and later as teacher educators and scholars of education—is, overwhelmingly, to improve schools. This powerful sense of mission is a rich resource from which the faculty members in an education school can build a program of doctoral study, where they already have the rapt attention and fervent commitment of their students. As we will see later, it can also be a serious problem for a program seeking to make these dedicated practitioners into scholars of practice (Neumann, Pallas, & Peterson, 1999). Overall, if students in doctoral programs in education face significant problems, it is not because they lack commitment, experience, or maturity. Such problems arise instead from a potential clash between two distinct professional cultures.

The Transition From Teacher to Researcher: What Makes It Hard

Professors and students in doctoral programs in education may confront two kinds of cultural conflicts. One derives from potential differences in worldview arising from the nature of teaching as a practice and the nature of educational research as a practice. The other derives from possible struggles over the kind of education one needs in order to become an effective educational researcher. In this article I examine only the first of these conflicts.

The Problem of Conflicting Worldviews Between Teachers and Researchers

Teaching is a difficult and distinctive form of professional practice (Cohen, 1988), which poses serious problems for programs that seek to prepare students to carry out this practice effectively (Labaree, 2000a). At the same time, and for some of the same reasons, the nature of teaching can make things hard for programs that seek to turn teachers into effective researchers, and this problem of transition is exacerbated by institutional and epistemological problems that make educational research so difficult. Teachers and researchers not only find themselves in two very different institutional contexts—the public school and the university—but they also frequently carry with them sharply contrasting worldviews that arise from the distinctive problems of practice they encounter in their respective roles. Making the transition from teacher to researcher, therefore, calls for a potentially drastic change in the way students look at education and at their work as educationists.

Anna Neumann, Aaron Pallas, and Penelope Peterson (1999) have provided a rich analysis of this “epistemological confrontation” (p. 259) between teachers and the doctoral programs that are trying to make them into researchers. Drawing on their own experience as teachers in doctoral programs and on the cases of two teachers who made the transition and recorded their reactions, the authors identified three tensions that characterize this confrontation:

One is the tension of agenda, which bears on whose questions get asked: researchers' or practitioners'. Another is the tension of perspective, which considers the ways in which the understanding of educational phenomena flows from the academic disciplines and from educators. The third is the tension of response (and responsibility) to primary stakeholders in the education enterprise, which examines the interplay of researchers' public and intellectual stakes in the study of educational phenomena. (p. 251)

What follows is my effort to tease out the core elements that define the basis of these tensions in research training programs in education, elements that emerge from the conflicting cultures of practice in teaching and research. I argue that the shift from K–12 teaching to educational research often asks students to transform their cultural orientation from normative to analytical, from personal to intellectual, from the particular to the universal, and from the experiential to the theoretical. Embedded in these potential pressures to change is a struggle over the relationship between teaching and research in education and an emergent struggle over the moral responsibility of both kinds of practitioners for education's social outcomes. As a result of this culture clash, students often feel that the programs are challenging the legitimacy

of their own teacher-based perspective on education, and they often respond by challenging the legitimacy of the proffered research-based perspective and by resisting key elements of the research training process.

Presenting the issue in this way—as a conflict between two worldviews that are polar opposites of each other—is something of an exaggeration. These dichotomies start to break down when you look at them more closely. As actually practiced, educational research is also, in part and in its own way, normative, practical, experiential, and particularistic. Encouraging doctoral students in education to see this—and encouraging faculty members to make this aspect of their work explicit—is one step toward dealing with the cultural conflicts in education doctoral programs. In recent years major movements have emerged that work to narrow the gap between teacher and researcher. On one side is the movement to encourage teachers to carry out research into issues of practice in their own classrooms and to enhance the legitimacy of this work as parallel to the research generated by university professors. On the other side is the movement to focus university research on issues of teacher practice in the classroom (teacher thinking, teacher decision making, the social construction of teaching and learning within the classroom community) and on parallel issues of practice in school administration, especially through the growing reliance on qualitative research that seeks to capture the full richness and contextual specificity of these practices. The obvious response to the cultural conflict within doctoral programs in education, then, would be to develop programs that are more nearly bicultural, where the teacher perspective is respected and reinforced and where the research perspective is offered as an additional way to understand education rather than as a preferred substitute. This is what Neumann, Pallas, and Peterson (1999) proposed, and, in the end, what I propose as well.

However, the differences in the worldview between teachers and researchers are not the kinds of academic dualisms that simply disappear under close analysis nor can they be brought together just by trying to make teachers more research oriented and researchers more teacher oriented. Instead, I argue, these cultural differences arise from irreducible differences in the work roles occupied by teachers and researchers. The latter have to learn how to function effectively in occupational positions that pose for them sharply divergent sets of constraints and incentives. As a result, their jobs present them with different professional purposes, definitions of success, daily routines, time pressures, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, social status, social expectations, work relationships, administrative regimes, architectural settings, and so on. These different positions set certain limits and enable certain possibilities for the ranges of action and modes of practice that actors are likely to pursue. The durability of each set of positional differences over time leads to a durable occupational culture, which spells out norms of purpose and practice that are integrated into a distinctive worldview. In short, position matters, which is why teachers who enter programs for preparing researchers find themselves straddling two conflicting work cultures. The discussion below is a positional analysis (reinforced by my own experience as a doctoral educator) of this conflict's roots in the work situations of the two sets of participants.

From the Normative to the Analytical. Classroom teachers bring to doctoral study a perspective on education that is strongly nor-

mative. This perspective is deeply rooted in the practice of teaching, which necessarily puts a premium on doing what is best for the student. As a result, there is an element of teaching that is irreducibly moral, which compels us to think of teaching, in the words of Alan Tom (1984), as a “moral craft.” This is not to say that technique is unimportant. Teachers spend a lot of time examining their experience to find out what works and what doesn't, and many can deploy their tested instructional technique in a dazzling display of expertise. But the moral factor is still at the heart of the enterprise.

The main reason for this is that, unlike most professionals, teachers do not apply their expertise toward ends that are set by the client. A lawyer, doctor, or accountant is a hired mind who helps clients pursue goals that they themselves establish, such as to gain a divorce, halt an infection, or minimize taxes. But teachers are in the business of instilling behaviors and skills and knowledge in students who do not ask for this intervention in their lives and who are considered too young to make that kind of choice anyway. By setting out to change people rather than to serve their wishes, teachers take on an enormous moral responsibility to make sure that the changes they introduce are truly in the best interest of the student and not merely a matter of individual whim or personal convenience. And this responsibility is exacerbated by the fact that the student's presence in the teacher's classroom is compulsory. Not only are teachers imposing a particular curriculum on students, then, but they are also denying them the liberty to do something else. The moral implications are clear: If you are going to restrict student liberty, it has to be for very good reasons; you had better be able to show that the student ultimately benefits and that these benefits are large enough to justify the coercive means used to produce them (Cohen, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1990; Tom, 1984).

However, if teaching is a highly normative practice, which focuses on the effort to produce valued outcomes, then educational research is a distinctly more analytical practice, which focuses on the effort to produce valid explanations. The mission of the educational researcher is to make sense of the way schools work and the way they don't. The object of a particular foray into research, as a piece of scholarship, is not to fix a problem of educational practice but to understand more fully the nature of this problem. It is not that scholars are unconcerned about the moral issues that surround the problems they explore or that they ignore the implications for practice that arise from their work. Frequently a moral problem (e.g., high rates of educational failure among minority students) provides the initial impetus for a scholar to pursue a particular research project, and frequently the scholar seeks to encourage practitioners and policymakers to act on research findings in a way that might improve some aspect of education. Their primary responsibility as scholars, however, is to work through the intellectual component of educational problems: They seek to clarify and validate arguments about the functions and dysfunctions, causes and consequences of educational practices. Their distinctive contribution as scholars to the discourse on education is to make good arguments, and they pursue this goal on the moral grounds that you can't fix problems of practice unless you have a deep and sophisticated understanding of the nature of these problems and of the contexts within which they arise (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995, section 4.1.2).

But the scholar's analytical mission is not an easy one to appreciate for practitioners who have been deeply immersed in the arena of moral action. Teachers entering doctoral study in education find themselves being asked to adopt a mode of professional practice that appears to be not only sharply different from their own but also morally suspect. From the teacher's perspective, the scholarly approach to education may seem coldly distant and unconscionably unconcerned about student outcomes. The elementary and secondary classroom is a setting in which it is neither practically possible (given immediate demands to act) nor morally defensible (given the need to do the right thing by one's students) for a teacher to adopt the analytical distance required for scholarship. But scholars of education are freed from direct responsibility for the students in the K–12 classroom, so that, unlike teachers, they have the time and space to focus their attention on what is going on and why, instead of having to focus on what to do and how to do it. At the same time, they are constrained by the scholar's professional mandate to make valid explanations about teaching and learning in the classroom, in contrast to the teacher's professional mandate to make good things happen for students.

As a result, students who enter doctoral programs in education tend to bring a normative view of education that gives them encouragement to resist the pressure they get from their professors to start looking at education as an object of analysis. The faculty pushes them to think and act in ways that are essential for the emerging scholar but highly suspect from the perspective of the teacher: to read extensively and intensively in the literature on education, critique and synthesize the ideas in this literature, develop cogent arguments about educational issues, and use data and logic to validate these arguments. All of this may seem to these students like so much intellectual fiddling while the classroom burns. Posed with a situation in which two children are fighting in the back of the classroom, the scholar wants to ponder the social, psychological, economic, and pedagogical reasons for this conflict, while the teacher wants to separate the combatants. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that teachers are often reluctant to embrace the analytical practices of educational scholarship. They may well put a lower priority on getting things straight in their heads rather than on getting things right in the classroom.

In my experience, this reluctance often leads students in education doctoral programs to shift the discourse about educational issues from what is to what should be, looking for practical solutions before explaining the problem. The initial impulse is still to intervene and fix the problem, or critique the actions of the teacher who made the mistake. It also often leads students to frame their own research around educational success stories. The idea is to pick an intervention that promises to improve education—a new teaching technique, curriculum approach, instructional technology, reform effort, or administrative structure—and study it in practice. The desired outcome is that the intervention works rather well, and the function of the study is to document this and suggest how the approach could be improved in the future. This often leads to an approach to scholarship (and eventually to a kind of scholarly literature) that is relentlessly, unrealistically, sometimes comically optimistic—one that suggests that there is an implementable answer to every educational problem and that help is always on the way.

In arguing that teachers see things normatively and researchers see things analytically, however, I am not arguing that teachers don't think and researchers don't care. Teachers are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of their instructional practices and adjusting these practices appropriately. And there are moves afoot to formalize and extend this analytical component. Teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, 1999) and action research (Mills, 2002; Stringer & Guba, 1999) together constitute an emerging genre in the field of educational scholarship, which seeks to promote a more analytical approach to education among teachers and other practitioners by encouraging them to carry out systematic research projects within their own context of practice, while also seeking to inject a more normative approach (grounded in the purposes and problems of the practitioner) into a research literature dominated by the analytical perspective of university researchers. In a complementary fashion, researchers are motivated to pursue scholarship in large part by a moral commitment to improve schools. They frequently combine research with development efforts, in which they design forms of curriculum and pedagogy that they hope will enhance the prospects of schoolchildren and then analyze the effectiveness of these efforts. This, after all, is much of what it means to do scholarship in an applied field such as education.

However, differences in the nature of the work done by teachers and researchers set a limit on how far each can and should move toward adopting the perspective of the other, and how much doctoral programs in education can and should incorporate both perspectives in preparing researchers. In a recent exchange in *Educational Researcher*, Anderson (2002) argues for using teacher research as a central component in education doctoral studies in order to bridge the gap between teacher and researcher, whereas Metz and Page (2002) caution against embracing this approach by pointing to fundamental differences in the two work roles. The problem is that research is defined as a central part of the professor's job but not the teacher's. A university faculty position gives professors the time and space to do research, sets expectations for the frequency and quality of research output, and enforces these expectations with pay and promotion incentives. None of these conditions is present in the position of the classroom teacher. The job is to teach the required curriculum to the assigned students at an appropriate level of effectiveness, and this leaves no time for carrying out research. Under these circumstances, teachers can do research only if they add it on top of their existing work, which would place an unfair burden on them because of the heavy load they already bear, or if they do research at the expense of their teaching duties, which would unfairly deprive their students educationally. Realistically, then, moral and occupational constraints limit the time and intellectual effort that teachers can devote to research. As a result, Metz and Page argue,

It would be disrespectful both to the effort and professional qualities of teaching and administration in K-12 schools and to the effort and distinctive skills required for research to argue that these students [full time teachers who are doctoral students in education] can fully accomplish both tasks without loss of quality while most others find it challenging to do either well. (p. 26)

To move from being a teacher to being a researcher through the medium of a doctoral program in education, therefore, constitutes

a major change in occupational role and requires an accompanying change in professional priorities, which is reflected in part by the shift in emphasis from the normative to the analytical (and, as discussed below, from personal to intellectual, particular to universal, and experiential to theoretical).

This leaves faculty members in these programs with the responsibility to make a persuasive case for the value of analysis. They need to do so while continuing to honor the place of the normative, encouraging students to think of their transition from teacher to researcher as a process of adding a new perspective to their cultural repertoire rather than abandoning one in favor of the other. This means convincing their teacher-students that, instead of feeling guilty about playing researcher, they should enjoy the luxury (afforded by doctoral study) of being the observer for once rather than the person in charge and use it to develop a richer understanding of the problems of teaching practice. The key argument to support this position is that there is nothing moral about the long tradition of pursuing educational reform based on sentiment rather than any evidence that the reform might make things better. Too often the effort to do something about a problem that is not understood makes things worse, which is one of the things that over the years has turned educational reform into such “steady work” (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988). Under these conditions, to develop a firm understanding of how education works is a mandatory first step in any truly moral effort at educational improvement. Adding the analytical perspective, therefore, does not come as an alternative to the normative but as an enhancement to it.

From the Personal to the Intellectual. Not only is teaching a normative practice, it is also by nature highly personal. At its core, teaching and learning is about a teacher, a student, and a subject matter; and the key to getting students to pursue intellectual engagement with subject matter often lies in the quality of their personal relationship with the teacher. As a result, the ability to connect with students is an essential skill for teachers, and teaching takes on the characteristics of what Arlie Hochschild (1983) calls “emotional labor.” If teachers succeed in getting you to like them, maybe you will like the subject they are trying to teach you or at least be more prone to go along with the kind of learning they are working to foster out of a desire to please them, if not out of a simple love for learning (Labaree, 2000a).

The value of this expertise in fostering a relationship with students is a key component of the worldview that teachers bring to doctoral study, and it can create a degree of cognitive dissonance with the worldview of scholarship that they encounter there. Educational researchers necessarily focus to a considerable degree on relationships as a key object of study; in light of the importance that relationships have in the learning process, they could hardly do otherwise. But the primary currency of scholarship, the thing that distinguishes it from other practices in education and gives it value, is not relationships; it is ideas. The measure of quality in a scholarly work—a book, article, paper, or research report—is in the quality of the ideas it expresses. The criteria we use to evaluate scholarly texts arise from this fact. For example, here are the questions I ask my doctoral students to use in critically examining the texts they read, the same ones I use in evaluating the texts they produce: What’s the point? What’s new? Who says? Who cares?

Teachers encounter these kinds of analytical performance criteria when they enter doctoral study. The way they read, write, and talk about education is evaluated according to their ability to consume ideas and produce ideas in accord with these standards. This single-minded focus on managing ideas about education is often in striking contrast to their own intense experience as teachers, which placed heavy weight on managing personal relationships. All of those person-centered skills that are so essential to teaching seem to be discounted in doctoral study: establishing rapport with students, mediating conflicts between students, negotiating the tension between making students happy and encouraging them to learn, channeling the teacher’s own emotions into an effective and natural teacher persona. All of these professional capacities that enable a good teacher to establish a viable and comfortable learning community seem to matter little in the unnaturally idea-centered world of a doctoral program, or they seem to be confined within the stigmatized domain of nuts-and-bolts skills known as “classroom management.”

Under these circumstances of clashing worldviews, it is not surprising that many former teachers resist what they see as the oddly intellectualized perspective encountered in doctoral study. Finding the scholarly approach to education cold and impersonal, with little connection to the flesh-and-blood world of emotional interaction they recall in the K–12 classroom, they frequently (in my experience) hang back from embracing the intellectual skills that they need in order to become educational scholars. To adopt the intellectual perspective seems to do a disservice to the teacher’s view of teaching, to turn teachers and students into actors who are imprisoned in a world governed not by people but by abstract ideas.

Faculty members in programs that prepare educational researchers need to respond to this perception among their students by making a strong case for the value of intellectual skills in approaching educational issues. The big danger of the devotion to the personal is its corollary, the embrace of the anti-intellectual. As is true in the case of the normative-analytical tension, where doing something about education without sufficient analytical justification is immoral, so too is it immoral to act pedagogically based only on the fact that “I care about my kids.” We need people in education who have highly developed intellectual capacities for interpreting evidence, making arguments, and establishing valid grounds for action. Researchers are such people.

From the Particular to the Universal. Closely related to the normative and personal quality of teaching as a practice is its emphasis on the particular. As every good teacher knows, you can’t teach effectively unless you take into account the special learning needs of individual students. The general rule of teaching is that general rules don’t help very much. The exception is the norm because every case is different. Some of the differences come from the special traits that students bring to the learning task: their psychological makeup, social background, economic condition, ethnicity, gender, cultural capital, social capital, role in the family, and so on. Some come from the special traits that teachers bring to the task: general education, professional education, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, plus all of the just-mentioned personal traits, which affect teachers as much as students. And some come from the learning context: the community around the school, the

culture of the school, the principal, the grade level, the subject area, the curriculum, the community in the classroom, the time of day, the day of year, the weather, and plenty more.

For teachers, then, education always comes down to cases. But for educational scholars, the emphasis is on the development of generalities that hold across cases. They usually aim to theorize. This means developing ideas about the way education works that apply to more than one student or classroom or school. Of course not all educational research fits this depiction. A number of studies—especially those using qualitative methods—focus on describing and interpreting educational processes, relationships, and systems within a particular context. This work is not conducive to generalization, but, as Peshkin (1993, p. 24) notes, we nonetheless “appreciate the foundational character of good description for all research.” The reason is that descriptive research is able to capture precisely those particularities of time, place, and person that teachers know are so integral to understanding how education works. In fact, one of the main factors that has fueled the rapid expansion of qualitative research in education in the last 20 or 30 years is that teachers and researchers alike—growing disillusioned with studies that misrepresented education by ignoring the importance of context—found that qualitative methods are well adapted overall to representing the context-sensitivity of education.

Given the particularistic nature of teaching as a practice, the reach for theory and generalization is not necessarily what teachers in doctoral programs want, but it may be exactly the kind of additional perspective on the situation that education needs. The understandings that teachers develop about the particularities of education are critical to their success in helping students learn, but the uniqueness of their sites of practice also leaves them potentially trapped. Unless they work in an unusually collegial school culture, they can be confined to one classroom with one group of students without ready access to what is going on in other classrooms with other teachers and students, which means they are often not able to base their practice on a collective sense of what works in settings other than their own. They are also often trapped in another way, by their own experience-based sense of teaching as a radically particularistic practice, which means they may harbor a deep suspicion that there are no generalities about teaching—no ideas or theories or modes of practice—that will be of any use to them in dealing with their own unique pedagogical problems.

As Britzman (1986) and Lortie (1975) and others have noted, this sense of teacher as Lone Ranger is part of the distinctive self-image of the teaching profession. But this image is potentially debilitating, because it can force the teacher to work in professional isolation and to reinvent the pedagogical wheel, and wrong, because it ignores the ways that problems of practice in one classroom often resemble those in other classrooms, which may be different in some details (as any two social settings will always be) but similar in others. Where similarity exists, there is the possibility of finding practices that teachers can adopt or adapt to meet their own pedagogical needs.

This is the professional function that educational scholarship can serve: to develop research findings—concepts, generalizations, theories—that make sense of educational processes across contexts and offer them to teachers and other practitioners. The

idea is not to pretend to make claims about teaching and learning that are universal in a literal sense, but instead to provide a theoretical mirror, which teachers can hold up to their own problems of practice in order to see the ways that their problems are both similar to and different from those facing teachers in other settings. In this sense, then, theory allows teachers access to a community of practice that is otherwise often denied them by the tyranny of the self-contained classroom.

And this is the argument that faculty members in education doctoral programs need to make to their teacher-students. Selling this argument is not easy. But like the pitch for the analytical and the intellectual, it can be done without abandoning the contrasting teacher orientation. Adopting an analytical stance toward education does not exclude a normative stance but instead supplements it. The same is true of learning to approach education as an intellectual problem, which can and should coexist with a clear sense of the student as person and the student-teacher relationship as fundamental. Likewise, it is quite useful to look at the classroom from both a highly situated and broadly comparative perspective. The model to present to teachers preparing to become researchers is to embrace the worldview of research as a second culture, which adds to the teacher perspective instead of demanding to replace it. In an interesting way, this bicultural character of teachers-become-researchers enables them to approach education with just the kinds of multiple perspectives that everyone seems to think is so important for any effort to produce research that effectively captures the complex world of education.

From the Experiential to the Theoretical. One final characteristic of the teacher worldview, implied in the preceding analysis, is the privileged position it assigns to professional experience. This follows naturally from what else we know about teaching as a practice. If we think about teaching the way teachers do—as, in large part, a particularistic moral practice involving the management of intense personal relations toward curricular ends—then teachers’ own experience as practitioners naturally emerges as their primary bank of professional knowledge. Only their experience fits the particulars of their own practice, while also being grounded in their own conception of moral purpose and their own style of personal engagement with students.

This position encourages doctoral students in education to stay at arm’s length from the arguments they encounter in the theoretical and empirical literature. Why? Because at any point in the discussion of an academic paper, the student can (and, in my experience, frequently does) introduce an example from his or her practitioner experience that automatically trumps any claim made by the authors. No matter how much data authors bring to the table or how effectively they make their arguments, personal experience still can carry the day. Just as the teacher reigns supreme in his or her classroom, the teacher’s experience dominates other kinds of knowledge as the basis for interpreting what happens in that domain. From the teacher perspective, researchers can say what they like about the nature of teaching and learning in general, but only teachers have the expertise to speak with authority about the teaching and learning of their own students.

This perspective causes obvious problems for the effort to socialize teachers into the researcher role. For educational researchers, teacher experience is an important source of knowledge about education, but that does not make it canonical. As the view

of an insider and prime actor in the classroom, this form of knowledge has its strengths and weaknesses. It is uniquely insightful because of its rich knowledge about the particular context, the characteristics of the individual learners, and the intent of the teacher. But it is also narrow in scope by being confined to these same contexts, learners, and intentions. Although outsiders, such as researchers, are less knowledgeable than the teacher about the characteristics of the classroom, they are in a better position to put these characteristics in perspective, by comparing them with other actors and settings and by viewing them through the normalizing lens of theory.

The problem facing doctoral programs in education, therefore, is not to convince students that education is worth examining (which they already believe) but to convince them that there is something valuable they can learn about education by examining it as an outsider, as a researcher (about which they are skeptical). They need to be persuaded to retire teaching experience as a trump card and use it instead as one possible perspective, to explore the possibility that theory can be as useful as experience and that the practice of theory building can be as important as the practice of teaching.

Narrowing the Cultural Divide

As I have repeatedly noted, one way to deal with the cultural divide between teachers and researchers in education doctoral programs is to acknowledge it explicitly and to sell teacher-students vigorously on the value of adopting the researcher perspective—as an addition to rather than replacement for the teacher perspective. Another approach, as I have also suggested earlier, is to show that the gap is not as wide as it seems, that the differences are more a matter of emphasis in professional practice than of total opposition. In part this is done by demonstrating the ways in which educational researchers carry out their own work using many of the orientations characteristic of K–12 teachers.

Like teachers, researchers take moral responsibility for the consequences of education, and their work in trying to understand this institution is in large part motivated by their desire to rectify the harm done by dysfunctional education. Like teachers, researchers develop close personal relationships with their students and often their subjects as well. The advisor-student relationship in doctoral education is especially close, and managing the complexity of this connection is an important skill of the researcher as research mentor. Like teachers, researchers have to deal with education in all its context-bound particularism, which means that a central problem for them, in both designing research studies and explaining research findings, is to balance the urge to generalize against the need to validate those generalizations about a social phenomenon that is specific to time, place, and person. Finally, like teachers, researchers build on their own experience in important ways that gradually accumulate into individual professional biographies, and these biographies exert a powerful personal impact on the kinds of work they pursue.

To open up these issues to students in doctoral programs, faculty members need to be willing to talk more about how they carry out their own research—not the rationalized, normalized, and carefully reconstructed version that they present in journal articles but the real process they followed from beginning to end, in all its complexity and incoherence. They also need to work at unpacking these elements in the work they have students read. A

useful book for this purpose, which opens up many of these issues, is a collection of essays by women who do research in education called *Learning from Our Lives: Women, Research, and Autobiography in Education* (Neumann & Peterson, 1997).

Another way to narrow the cultural gap between teachers and researchers is to design research training programs that deliberately demonstrate respect for the skills and orientations that teachers bring with them and that self-consciously invite these apprentices to develop roles for themselves as researchers that incorporate their teacher identities. This calls for the construction of a hybrid program that marries theory and practice, as is only appropriate for research preparation in a professional school; instead of pushing teachers to drop practice for a new career in theory, it would seek to induct them into a practice of research that draws heavily upon knowledge from the practice of teaching while simultaneously informing that practice. This is the model for the preparation of educational researchers that is proposed by Neumann, Pallas, and Peterson (1999).

In both of these ways, it is important for research training programs in education to narrow the cultural gap between teachers and researchers, but that does not by any means imply that this gap should or can be made to disappear. Teaching and research overlap in values, skills, and orientations, but the difference in emphasis between them is real and substantial because it is grounded in the positional constraints, incentives, and practices of these two forms of work. It is not disrespectful of teachers to say that, in order to become effective educational researchers, they need to acquire skill in and respect for the analytical, intellectual, theoretical, and universalistic orientations of the researcher. Like teaching in the public schools, teaching in a research preparation program involves changing people in valued directions. As adults, the students in the latter program have chosen to pursue these studies of their own free will, unlike elementary and secondary students who are compelled to attend school. But, like any student, they are faced with the prospect of learning, and learning means changing into someone different. So faculty members in research training programs in education need to be sensitive to the traits that teachers bring with them, but they do not need to apologize for seeking to change these teachers into researchers. That, after all, is their job.

NOTES

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¹ In this article I am defining an education school as an institution that grants graduate degrees in education, which eliminates about 450 4-year colleges that offer only teacher education programs from the 1,200 institutions that offer some sort of education degree. This leaves the number of education schools at around 750, and about 100 of these devote substantial resources to education research and doctoral programs (NCES, 1992, table 243).

² The pieces of the project will come together in a book I am writing for Yale University Press, *The Trouble with Ed Schools*, due to be published in 2004.

³ See Labaree (1998) for an extended discussion of these issues.

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