# Cross-Purposes in Education

**And Sadly Teach.** Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture. JURGEN HERBST. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1989. xiv, 231 pp. $25.

As Jurgen Herbst reminds us, the American educational vision has long outstripped our willingness and ability to pay for it. Horace Mann insisted that in a republic such as ours public schools should be open and good enough for all, but that imperative has rarely triumphed. The size and complexity of the undertaking have often overwhelmed good intentions, and the novel ideal of achieving both excellence and equity in public education has evoked plenty of doubters and nay-sayers. Always there have been the related problems of finding adequate funding and personnel. Herbst has concentrated on part of this story, the history of institutions and programs that offered teacher education. His book tells of cross-purposes, penny-pinching, and shortsighted policies that treated teachers like hired hands.

In Herbst's version several curious wrinkles emerge that other accounts have tended to smooth over. He hopes they will be instructive for educational reformers in our own time. Typically downplayed have been the urgency 19th-century reformers attached to the development of rural schools and the ways in which uneven geographical distribution of wealth has shaped educational goals and expectations. Notably unexamined have been effects on pedagogy, curriculum, and school policy that could be traced to the cash-poor economies of rural America. Also overlooked has been the evolving culture of educational professionalism in the United States, which over the years made teaching what Herbst calls "a necessary occupation" (p. 196) for women while trashing many of their opportunities for entering its ranks.

*And Sadly Teach* thus begins to fill the gaps. Reconstructing the history of teacher education through an examination of events in a sample of New England and midwestern states, Herbst offers an account that by extension tells a more general story. It has two essential elements. First and fundamentally, this history helps us see teacher education as a reflection of conditions in schools and of their policy environment. Reforms that failed to move on all three fronts brought at best accidental successes and at worst bitter frustration. We are advised, for example, that efforts to make teacher education more academically respectable have nearly always foundered on meager teacher salaries, on school policies that placed a higher priority on management techniques than on effective teaching, and on university policies that denigrated teacher-preparation programs, whatever their content. Policies in turn reflected popular attitudes. Low regard for teachers reinforced a downward spiral of effects on the pool of people who made themselves available for teaching, on their willingness to invest in professional preparation, and on the roles teachers were permitted to play in school organizations.

The absence of concerted reform strategies suggests a lack of serious intention. Periodically school improvement campaigns have captured widespread attention. In such times great emphasis has been placed on the singular importance of public education to the nation's economic and political well-being, domestically and internationally. Yet little was done to augment the resources that rural districts and states could muster to support their schools. Teachers' salaries and working conditions in these regions remained abysmal. Short of meaningful improvements, only those qualified applicants whose employment opportunities were limited could accept teaching positions. It can come as no surprise that women entered the field in large numbers, that men left it, and that teachers generally held only tentative commitments to their jobs. For women, salt in the wound came in the form of their status as second-class citizens. As teachers, they were proclaimed as the vanguard in efforts to provide civic education for the nation's young, but until the third decade of the 20th century they could not vote in federal elections. We can see in these examples that our reform proposals have often worked at cross-purposes with the social and educational conditions we found tolerable. On the basis of Herbst's book, one could argue that over the years we have acquired the quality of schools, teachers, and teacher education that in practical terms we wanted.

A second major element in Herbst's narrative has to do with the institutions that provided teacher education. Though they are the focus of his book, they have been in many respects irrelevant to the history he unfolds. In the 19th century most teachers avoided them altogether, although some resorted to them for what is called today in-service training. Not until the 20th century did the majority of elementary school teachers receive pre-service training. As Herbst reports, the training institutions themselves set out upon a path toward upward mobility, seeking through diverse strategies to raise themselves above the lowly business of teacher education. Normal schools expanded their missions beyond the preparation of elementary teachers to include programs for secondary-level teachers and school administrators and eventually achieved the status of general-purpose colleges and universities. Responding to institutional mores and their own professional demands, faculty seemed to prize research more highly than involvement with teacher education, particularly at major universities. As college-level preparation of teachers became more common, the programs themselves tended to become less committed to the professionalization of teachers.

In short, teachers have not been expected to function professionally or allowed to do so, and pre-service programs have failed to prepare them to perform at the levels of expertise and confidence usually associated with professionalism. Herbst sees the current reform proposals of the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as ways to reverse this sad history. In environment and organization, he argues, schools must become places where effective teaching is given priority, where teachers take the lead in developing curricula and determining academic policy. Teacher preparation in turn must be characterized by intellectual rigor and professional relevance. These changes may at last bring to teaching the public esteem it has lacked.

Pieces of the story, however, remain untold. By focusing on developments in the Midwest and New England, Herbst leaves readers uninformed about possible regional variations in the history of teacher education. One wonders whether Texas, Hawaii, and Alaska, for example, might have provided valuable case studies, given their distinctive political and cultural histories. Not including the South in the analysis has the effect of omitting a broad spectrum of traditionally black institutions. Beyond brief references to minorities, there is no discussion of the preparation of teachers for black schools, the structure of the job market that heavily influenced black men and women to enter teaching, or the opportunities for educational advancement that teacher-preparation programs presented to black people. Treatments of regional and racial themes in the history of teacher education might not have required Herbst to rearrange the essential features of his narrative, but in giving it a

much richer texture they might have suggested more differentiated approaches to teacher professionalism than those now being proposed.

Curiously, the voices of teachers themselves are also missing from this history. We hear from reformers, teacher educators, administrators at various levels, legislators, and other political leaders on their goals, plans, and analyses of problems related to teacher preparation, but little from those who completed it. The practical result of this omission is that *And Sadly Teach* speaks essentially in a masculine voice. The views of women have once again been muted. Including them would have helped us understand why women entered teaching, despite the disincentives for doing so. Given their limited options for meaningful employment, perhaps they taught gladly. And while men bemoaned an absence of professionalism and pursued policies that hampered its achievement, women may have thought about teaching in entirely different terms.

Everyone seems to agree that teacher education is in need of repair, but in prescribing improvements we probably ought to be as clear as possible about what is broken and how it got that way.

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## Prices of Books

Average per-volume prices of books reviewed in *Science* 1984–1989. The average prices per page for the technical books in the natural sciences for the years covered were 12.0¢, 12.7¢, 12.5¢, 16.1¢, and 16.9¢. (Data are for hard-cover books except where books were available only in paperback.) For earlier data from *Science* and other relevant information see *Science* **211**, 933 (1981); **235**, 95 (1986); **239**, 81 (1987); and **243**, 99 (1989).

| Category | Price (dollars) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 |
| All books | 45.38 | 47.02 | 47.02 | 47.37 | 54.05 | 54.58 |
| Technical books in natural sciences | 55.29 | 49.66 | 53.57 | 59.06 | 71.70 | 73.73 |

## Ingrained Hierarchies

**Doing Comparable Worth.** Gender, Class, and Pay Equity. JOAN ACKER. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1989. x, 254 pp. $34.95. Women in the Political Economy.

Joan Acker provides a rich historical account of attempts in Oregon to formulate and implement a pay equity plan for state employees. Her analysis of the critical roles of unions, feminists, and management reveals how gender and class, at times operating in concert and at other times in conflict, influenced the political process and eventual outcome.

In 1981, an amendment to Oregon's Civil Rights Act was proposed that would have mandated pay equity for all employees in the state and required comparable pay for comparable work in most cases. This bill failed to pass either house of the legislature. In 1983 a bill was passed mandating comparable worth for state employees only and requiring a bias-free, sex-neutral job evaluation and compensation system, that is, one with equitable wages—what Acker calls "true" comparable worth. A Task Force was appointed to construct the new system. Much of the book is devoted to the struggles of the Task Force between 1983 and 1985 because that was the context in which conflicts among the several groups—labor, management, and feminists—were played out. Owing to the failure to construct a plan that could garner wide support, Task Force recommendations were never enacted. Finally, in 1987 a new bill was passed that implemented a much more limited form of comparable worth, that is, providing poverty relief for the lowest paid workers in the state system. The bill also contained the provision that state agencies review and report on their progress toward comparable worth every two years, thus creating a climate within which further progress toward pay equity might be made.

Acker provides fascinating and convincing evidence of how deeply ingrained in existing pay systems are gender-specific images of work. For example, although women on the Task Force typically accepted the men's evaluations of the skills needed for male-dominated jobs, the converse was not true. The blue-collar men consistently resisted women's attempts to define as skill the ability to perform human relations tasks needed to deal with people effectively or the organizational knowledge and capacity for task complexity essential to operating within bureaucracies. The men referred frequently to "journeyman-level" jobs that were male-dominated, but resisted the notion that jobs with titles such as "administrative assistant" could be comparably skilled. Acker argues that the skills necessary for many female-dominated jobs were "invisible" to the men, who appeared to believe that the abilities women use on jobs were natural or inborn to women or were abilities that anyone with a basic education would have; in contrast, true skill was what men acquire via training. Feminists on the Task Force displayed other biases. Despite their interest in a "bias-free, sex-neutral" job evaluation system, they initially opposed pay increases for underpaid male-dominated job classes. They finally agreed that such groups should receive increases, in the interest of constructing an equitable system.

Acker also argues that, in practice, comparable worth is not as radical as many business groups have assumed. This is because the process of enacting comparable worth inevitably reproduces the hierarchy of jobs, albeit slightly altered, with which it began. She documents how use of the Hay Associates consultants served to reduce the potential for major challenges to the existing job hierarchy. For example, the consultants believed that there was no discrimination in the points assigned to jobs in their systems, only discrimination in that employers chose to reward blue-collar jobs at higher rates than clerical jobs. They also insisted on conservative decisions regarding the ranges for job characteristics; if more liberal decisions had been made, female-dominated jobs would have gained more points. For example, human relations skills were scored on a limited scale that feminists did not feel allowed sufficient credit for the skills needed to perform many women's jobs. Stress was counted as a compensable factor only if extreme, and thus the stress feminists saw as inherent in clerical jobs was not counted as a compensable factor. The Hay Associates consultants maintained that the final product had to reflect a "reasonable" organizational hierarchy, and they resisted changes in the point system that would reduce differences between managerial and non-managerial jobs. Since feminists needed the legitimacy that Hay Associates conferred, they could not oppose such outcomes and thus were forced to yield ground to management.

Acker also clearly shows how the differing interests of management, feminists, and labor influenced the process of enacting comparable worth in Oregon. Management was interested in using the new classification system to gain further control of the personnel system and was much less committed to the version of comparable worth favored by the feminists. Unions (particularly the