

TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

THE JOHN L. AND SUE ANN WEINBERG PROFESSOR IN THE
HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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From: Robbie McClintock, Chairman, Area B Ph.D. Committee
Subject: GSAS Reviews of the Ph.D. Programs in the social, historical, philosophical, and
comparative foundations of education (Area B)
Date: December 1, 2003

As the individual Ph.D. programs at Teachers College begin to submit their self-assessments for review by the Columbia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, it turns out that the first ones are all part of the Area B, programs pertaining to "the social, historical, philosophical, and comparative foundations of education." To date, five Area B programs have prepared self-assessments, three of which (Economics and Education, Politics and Education, and Sociology and Education) are scheduled for submission to GSAS very shortly, and two of which (Anthropology and Comparative and International Education) will be submitted next semester. The two additional programs in Area B (Philosophy and Education and History and Education), will do their self-assessments during the next academic year. As long-time chair of the Area B Committee, I write to provide some common context for the separate self-assessments.

In these comments, I will not speak about the individual programs – their self-assessments do that well. Instead, I will explain the institutional context at both the University, GSAS, and the College, as I have come to understand it through prolonged involvement. In my judgment, the strength of each program will be most evident within the context of long-term institutional expectations that have conditioned their development. Further, it is my strong conviction that the burden of self-assessment of the Ph.D. at Teachers College cannot be born solely by the individual programs comprising it, each a world unto itself. We must be alert to the possibility that problems impinging on the programs arise, not from their separate strengths and weaknesses, but as consequences of changes in their context in Columbia University, in GSAS, and in Teachers College.

Teachers College has been a Faculty of Columbia since it affiliated with the University in 1898. Since 1915, by agreement of the Trustees of the University and of the College, highly qualified Teachers College students have been able to earn a Columbia Ph.D., working with a portion of the College faculty functioning as components of the Columbia faculties responsible for Ph.D. instruction.¹ During the period following 1915, the proportion of all the Ph.D. degrees conferred by Columbia University awarded to Teachers College students became significant, raising questions whether the research-oriented Ph.D. was in fact the appropriate degree for all its uses at the College. In 1934, Teachers College began offering the Ed.D. as a doctoral degree signifying the highest attainments of professional preparation for

¹ Paragraph 7 in the 1965 version of the affiliation agreement sets the currently authorized scope for Ph.D. work at Teachers College and grounds the procedures whereby the College nominates and the University appoints those faculty members authorized to sponsor students earning University Ph.D. degrees. For simplicity, throughout these observations, I will use GSAS, the standard shortening of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, to identify the Columbia faculties responsible for Ph.D. instruction, although these faculties were, through much of the period, identified as the Graduate Faculties.

practitioners in the field of education. The number of Ed.D. degrees awarded to Teachers College students rapidly rose and the number of Ph.D. degrees concomitantly declined, making the proportion of Columbia Ph.D. degrees earned through Teachers College far more seemly. By 1950, Teachers College had established the Ed.D. as the highest degree in programs preparing students for advanced professional leadership and the Ph.D. could become the degree of choice for those seeking careers based on superior academic scholarship and research in education and psychology.

With the Ed.D. established as the highest professional degree, the University and the College began at mid-century to attend closely to the programmatic organization of work towards the Ph.D. at Teachers College in order to imbue it fully with the academic concerns of research scholarship. A series of reforms and reorganizations through the 1950s and early 60s resulted, which still largely ground current practice. Key specifics, along with their rationale, governing actual work towards the Ph.D. at Teachers College derive from two mid-twentieth-century reports by University committees. The first, chaired by Professor Austin P. Evans, reported in early 1952; the second, chaired by Professor Uriel Weinreich, in late 1963. The Evans Report of 1952 recommended that Teachers College administer its Ph.D. programs through four area groupings –

- A. The experimental and critical study of human behavior, of human growth and learning, and of problems of adjustment and guidance.
- B. The social and philosophical foundations of education.
- C. The organization, the support, the administration, and the public relations of organized education.
- D. The subject matter, the methods, and the organization of the curriculum at various age levels.²

With minor changes of nomenclature, this organization into four Areas remains in force and identifies the fields of intellectual concern within which the College, as the agent of GSAS, prepares advanced students for academic careers.³

In the late 1950's, Teachers College restructured its academic organization and organized its programs into departments, set within a divisional structure, which broadly correlated to the Area groupings for the Ph.D. recommended in the Evans Report. Division I (Philosophy, the Social Sciences, and Education) corresponded to Area B, Division II (Psychology and Education) to Area A, Division III (Educational Institutions and Programs) to Area C, and Division IV (Instruction) to Area D, with Division V (Health Services, Sciences, and Education) having no relevance then to the Ph.D. areas. Although this divisional structure reflected the Ph.D. groupings, only in Divisions I and II was Ph.D. work dominant and many departments in Divisions III and IV, as well as all of Division V, had no connection to the Ph.D. In this structure, the role of the Ph.D. was most intensive in Division I, which housed only one department, Philosophy and the Social Sciences, which comprised all the current set of Area B programs. Through

² "Report of Committee on the Ph.D. Degree," submitted by Austin P. Evans, Chairman, to the Dean of the Graduate Faculties, January 29, 1952, Recommendation C.1., p. 8.

³ These Areas indicate the substantive fields of research scholarship for Ph.D. work at Teachers College and they are an important subset of the four domains for potential Ph.D. work at Teachers College authorized in the affiliation agreement, as restated in 1965 – "Education, Speech, Theatre or Psychology (Teachers College)." The authorized domain of Education spreads across Areas B, C, and D; the domain of Speech is in Area D (I think); and the domain of Psychology (Teachers College) is Area A. The authorized domain of Theater has been null, like a Congressional authorization with no appropriation.

them, it gave a strong disciplinary basis for work in the social and philosophical foundations of education.

In these overall arrangements, the Area committees served as routine administrative committees, overseeing the formalities that students had to meet as they moved through the Ph.D. process, while the divisions and departments provided the substantive academic context for supporting Ph.D. scholarship and education. Scholarship and instruction that accorded with the University's expectations for the Ph.D. distinguished the academic ethos of Division I and its Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, as well as the dominant ethos in Division II. The scholarly ethos, the shared academic concerns for the social and philosophical foundations of education, the intellectual tenor of the Ph.D. programs in Area B, gained its substance, its intellectual vision and support, from the collegial life of the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, not from the Area Committee, which merely facilitated procedures.

In 1963, the Weinreich Report reaffirmed the basic structure that the Evans Report had recommended for grouping the Ph.D. programs in Teachers College, which the College had already implemented in its divisional structure. The 1963 committee unequivocally asserted the interest of the University in the success and quality of the Ph.D. at Teachers College; it addressed how to situate the Teachers College programs in relation to GSAS; and it provided a clear rationale for on-going implementation of program practices and the resolution of problems. As the Evans Report had, so the Weinreich Report recognized that education and related concerns were not only activities requiring advanced professional preparation suitable to a professional school; additionally, these were important subjects for disinterested scholarship and research "which culminates in the Ph.D. degree."⁴

Compared to the Evans Report, both the findings and recommendations of the Weinreich Report were more detailed, considering the relation of the Ph.D. at Teachers College to GSAS at three levels – that of the program field, its course offerings, and most importantly the choice of dissertation topics by its students. Fields for Ph.D. work at Teachers College should "minimize duplication and maximize fruitful complementation" (p. 29) in relation to GSAS, permitting the University's overall effort to address education and related matters more fully than it would do without those opportunities. Students in Ph.D. programs at Teachers College should use course offerings in GSAS whenever appropriate, as well as vice versa, and GSAS departments and College programs should annually arrange the cross listing of courses and the exchange of faculty. As the most important means to avoid duplication, the Weinreich Report emphasized that Ph.D. candidates at Teachers College should write on topics distinctive from their peers in GSAS programs. And to insure the comparability of standards, the Report stipulated that procedures should provide for substantial representation by GSAS faculty members on dissertation advisement and defense committees.

Complementation, as the Weinreich Report found, works best when the Ph.D. programs at Teachers College are small, high-quality efforts to bring research disciplines to bear on both the macro and micro problems of education and related matters. The Weinreich Report strongly endorsed the disciplinary-oriented program model, approved by the Standing Subcommittee on the Ph.D. at Teachers College in 1962, for determining which departments had "the qualifications to offer a program of study leading to the Ph.D. degree" (p. 23). The Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences had initiated this model

⁴ "On the Relation between the Graduate Faculties and Teachers College, Columbia University: Report to the Joint Committee on Graduate Instruction by a Special Fact-Finding Committee," submitted by Uriel Weinreich, Chairman, November 15, 1963 (with revisions to September 11, 1964), p. 29.

and in 1962-63, in an action the Report "hailed as a major milestone," (p. 25) Teachers College withdrew a number of Ph.D. programs from its offerings, required others to plan improvements, and approved programs offered through nine departments. This model remains evident in the seven Area B programs. According to it, each program should have a small number of faculty members, each with strong academic preparation in a cognate discipline, able to interact with productive confidence with peers in GSAS. Each program would have a small number of Ph.D. candidates, who would gain a strong disciplinary preparation within the context of GSAS and bring it to bear, as their specializations within the discipline, on education through the programs at Teachers College. Program offerings were to span the range from initial pre-requisites to advanced seminars and students were to make use of not only these, but academic resources elsewhere in the College and throughout the University. Within this model, performance by Area B programs generally fulfills the Weinreich recommendations. Dissertation topics tend to be distinctive; course offerings are normally complementary, not duplicative; and participation in dissertation advisement and defenses by GSAS faculty members does not become unduly burdensome.

When taken each by itself, however, such small programs can become narrow and slow to change, as well as unstable at junctures occasioned by faculty leaves or departures. In addition, many small programs, each in isolation, generate repetitive administrative overhead for the one or two faculty members running each of them. Economies of scale are low. Hence, the model of complementation required effective arrangements to give the small programs at Teachers College sufficient scale. Hence, the way these programs attained critical mass has been very important over the years. Essentially, the programs in Area B achieved scale and critical mass in two ways – through the university by close, substantive collaboration with each cognate department in the GSAS, and through the College by their grouping in the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, a single, relatively cohesive department that was imbued with an ethos of disinterested scholarship and research. The Weinreich Report recognized the importance of scale and critical mass: the model, and its uses that it hailed, set and applied qualifications controlling when *departments*, not subgroups within them, had the wherewithal to offer programs of study leading to the Ph.D.

For most of the past 40 years, these arrangements have, by and large, worked singularly well. Six of the seven component programs in Area B are discipline-based, linking to University cognates – anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, political science, and sociology. The seventh, the Ph.D. program in Comparative and International Education, connects closely to the University's resources in international affairs and area studies and requires students to have a concentration in one of the six Area B disciplines, as well. Over the years since the Weinreich Report, Ph.D. candidates in these programs have written dissertations of generally high-quality on topics that concentrate on education and related matters. There is little redundancy with GSAS course offerings, although students sometimes find it daunting – for a few, academically, for more, financially – to make full use of GSAS resources. Over the years, the Ph.D. at Teachers College has encountered one persistent difficulty arising from the need to have substantial representation by GSAS faculty members in Ph.D. defenses at Teachers College. As a result, in Area A, Psychology, where the Teachers College programs are larger than their University cognates, the process creates a heavy burden on potential University defense participants. In Area B, in contrast, the programs have been small, relative to cognate GSAS departments, and consequently having effective involvement from GSAS colleagues in dissertation advisement and defenses has been comparatively unproblematic.

Serious problems for Area B have arisen from the effects of cumulative changes in GSAS and the College over the past 40 years. Signs of these problems are evident in the separate self-assessments and the process of preparing them for University review. The sense of a common enterprise addressing the social, historical, philosophical, and comparative foundations of education has weakened and the feeling that each component program is a well-bounded, autonomous effort has strengthened. It is becoming clear that these changes are complicating efforts to optimize complementation with cognate departments and to provide individual programs with effective collegial context and critical mass sufficient to influence the common understanding of education in the national and global culture. The parts may have ceased to sum.

Challenges have arisen from changes at GSAS. Positive developments there have ironically complicated efforts to synchronize the programs at Teachers College with GSAS in a fully complementary way. Can Teachers College preserve parity with GSAS programs by improving conditions for Ph.D. study for its students? At the time of the Weinreich Report, conditions of work for Ph.D. candidates in GSAS and in Teachers College were roughly equivalent. Subsequently, the level of financial support for Ph.D. candidates in GSAS has risen much more rapidly than it has for Ph.D. candidates at Teachers College, widening the disparity in the conditions under which students work towards the Ph.D. At the same time, nominal tuition rates in GSAS have risen more rapidly than at Teachers College, creating a financial disincentive for TC students seeking to enroll in GSAS courses, for whom the tuition rates are all-too-real, not nominal. In some cases, cognate departments have closed important courses to Teachers College Ph.D. candidates or altered their course offerings in ways that do not serve Teachers College students well. Like GSAS, peer universities have markedly upgraded support packages for doctoral students and too often an Area B program will fail to enroll its top applicants because they get substantially more support elsewhere, enough more to make them choose their second choice.⁵ Such developments have made it more difficult for some College Ph.D. programs to interact with their cognate departments as fully as possible.

To keep pace with the changes at GSAS and in peer universities, the Ph.D. programs in Area B need individually and together to strengthen their capacity to enroll top students, to support them well, and to make the full resources of the College, GSAS, and the University fully accessible to them. In the face of this imperative, a very significant, recent development internal to Teachers College, namely its departmental reorganization, has worked in the opposite direction, seriously complicating arrangements to maintain a common collegial context and critical mass for the programs in Area B. Prior to reorganization, one department, Philosophy and the Social Sciences, grouped the Area B Ph.D. programs together and provided an important venue for substantive collegial interaction between them. A shared commitment to Ph.D. quality scholarship and research defined the academic ethos of the

⁵ Since the Evans Report in 1952 observed (p. 6) that the best Ph.D. candidates at Teachers College were fully on a par with the best in GSAS, the point has been often repeated. The Evans Report, however, went on to observe that the problem of differential quality was not to be found with the candidates who excel, but with those at the norm and the laggards, and it suggested that with those there could be a problem of inferior quality at Teachers College. Be that as it may have been, the growing disparity in levels of support available between GSAS and Teachers College risks aggravating quality differentials as College programs reach deeper into their applicant pools in order to enroll a cohort of students than do those in GSAS.

Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences. It bears reiterating that the Area B Committee itself cannot provide such an ethos for it is a GSAS entity, operating primarily through its Chair, working in conjunction with the Office of Doctoral Studies, to facilitate fulfillment of GSAS procedures as students work to earn the University's Ph.D. Area B responded to the expectations GSAS articulated through the Weinreich Report through the Department, which provided the actual academic substance and support for Ph.D. work – the daily discussion of ideas, the interaction between faculty members and students, program design, cross-program colloquia as well as the discussion of common standards, admissions criteria, the allocation of student aid, and shared policy concerns.

Through its reorganization in 1995-96, the College disbanded the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences and relocated its component programs in five of the nine newly organized departments.⁶ As a result, the three programs here submitted for review – Economics and Education, Politics and Education, and Sociology and Education – are now in three different departments. Unlike the overall organization that it replaced, the recent reorganization occurred with little attention to its serviceability for the Ph.D. at Teachers College.⁷ The Ph.D. was tangential to the purposes and rationales of the recent reorganization. Hence, the current departments provide a more diffused academic context for Ph.D. programs, dramatically for those in Area B, significantly for those in Area A. As a result, the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences endures as a felt absence. The Area B Committee, itself, ultimately a GSAS committee, is not constituted in a way that it can replace that absence, providing a unified collegial academic context as Philosophy and the Social Sciences had done, for its traditional oversight role has not changed. Increasingly, the component programs in Area B have been operating largely as separate entities in significant academic and collegial isolation from each other. In this situation, each gains little critical mass within the College and each must negotiate matters of concern with its cognate department in GSAS entirely by its own devices.

Even at this early stage, the self-assessment process makes it evident that Teachers College needs to strengthen support for the programs comprising Area B in their efforts to work in a complementary relation to cognate departments in GSAS and to maintain a coherent critical mass within the College. To do this well, the College must develop a structure that can provide a shared context for the programs while not disrupting or interfering with the College's current departmental organization. In addition, this new structure must interact with the relevant components of GSAS smoothly so that it can promote substantive collaboration effectively. This structure must be able to raise funds, working with both GSAS and Teachers College, to improve the level of financial support for Ph.D. candidates. The Area B

⁶ As a result of later adjustments, the seven component programs are now in four different departments, not five, although the Chair of the Area B Committee is in a fifth department.

⁷ For instance, the document, "Mission Review and Reorganization of the College" merely mentions the Ph.D. twice (pp. 1 & 6) in listings of degrees offered through the College. In a footnote, it repeats a mischaracterization, echoing through College documents, of how and why students can work towards a GSAS Ph.D. through Teachers College. The note suggests that the College offers Ph.D. programs in fields in which GSAS does not, which feeds a persecution complex – "why are *they* reviewing *our* programs?" More rigorously speaking, GSAS designates Teachers College and a specific portion of its faculty as its means for offering those programs. The programs are GSAS Ph.D. programs, like all other Ph.D. programs at Columbia University – hence the current reviews, which are simply part of the comprehensive review by GSAS of all the Ph.D. programs it offers.

Committee, itself, cannot unilaterally set itself up to accomplish such goals, for such a committee has no budget and no authority to seek funding, to sponsor fellowships, to convene academic meetings, or to develop a program of intellectual inquiry and publication. Neither the letter nor the spirit of its charge adapts it to provide a collegial academic context or to shape an ethos of scholarship and research. To provide appropriate support to the separate programs, the College needs to develop something in place of, or in addition to, the current Area B Committee.

Either in place of Area B or in addition to Area B: one of two strategies would seem to make sense in responding to the current void. On the one hand, in place of: the College might seek to have the University disband the current Area Committees and replace them with new committees, reflecting a revised conceptualization of the relevant scholarship, rationalizing the way the Ph.D. programs group in each of the College's current departments.⁸ With such a strategy, the current departments would fill the void by providing both collegial academic context for Ph.D. work within them and higher-level support from the chairs in interacting with GSAS. In turn, the new area committees, better correlated to the departmental grouping of programs, would assume the administrative oversight activities of the current committees. On the other hand, in addition to: the University could preserve the existing Area groupings of Ph.D. programs and the College could develop a *non-departmental*, collegial structure that would have a substantive academic rationale and agenda, status as a cost center, and institutional backing by both Teachers College and GSAS in an effort to provide Ph.D. work with effective, substantive support. The first strategy would make good use of the College's current administrative organization, but it would create Ph.D. program groupings that had limited critical mass and little academic coherence relative to the organization of GSAS. As a result of this first strategy, the three programs here reviewed would be in three different, often disparate groupings, each with a separate Area committee.

In relation to the substantive character of the Ph.D. programs at Teachers College, and to the organization and interests of the faculties and departments of GSAS, the intellectual rationale for grouping programs in Area B continues to make much sense. Additionally, the College has an attractive way to provide a non-departmental, collegial arrangement that can give the programs critical mass and an effective support structure in working collaboratively with GSAS, namely the Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education. The Trustees of Teachers College established this Institute in 1965 in response to an initiative by Lawrence A. Cremin, then Chair of the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, "with the purpose of sponsoring research and publication in the fields of history, philosophy, and the social sciences, as these bear on problems of educational theory and policy."⁹ Thus, the original purpose of this Institute was to support scholarship and criticism in the same areas as the teaching programs included in Philosophy and the Social Sciences. In all probability, this overlap between the Department and the Institute somewhat inhibited full development of the latter in the 1970s and 80s, and with Institute membership restricted to a subset of the Department faculty, it introduced an undercurrent of division

⁸ Although obviously the College has significant input into them, the Area Committees are part of a GSAS governance structure that ultimately reports to the Dean of GSAS. The four Area groupings, also, derive from actions by GSAS, not by the College. The Weinreich Report fully recognized that it might at some juncture become appropriate to regroup programs in the Area committees.

⁹ Lawrence A. Cremin, "Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education," briefing paper for the initial meeting of the Institute's Advisory Council, December 11, 1969.

within the Department. When Cremin became President of Teachers College, he had neither time to give the Institute strong leadership nor had he passed its leadership on to anyone else. As a result, the Institute came to serve mainly as an administrative vehicle for a few funded projects, and since the early 1990s, it has merely persisted in the obscurity of its inactivity. All the same, its original agenda remains more than ever timely.

Recently I proposed resuscitating the Institute, not then knowing about the review of Ph.D. programs getting underway, and I suggested goals for the Institute that would start, nevertheless, to adapt it to serving as a replacement, with respect to the Ph.D. programs in Area B, for the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences. My original proposal would be much stronger were it developed further to serve as a structure, complementary to the College's current set of departments, providing a center of academic initiative and scale for the Area B programs. Furthermore, it would be far better were the goals for a newly active Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education to be grounded by GSAS and the College, together charging it with the mission of providing the collegial academic context for the Ph.D. work in the social, historical, philosophical, and comparative foundations of education.

In gist, here is what could happen. Members of the faculty authorized to sponsor Ph.D. students in Area B would become the faculty affiliated with the Institute. Through it, they could work towards a primary fund-raising goal of securing full, five-year support for Ph.D. candidates in Area B programs. They could organize meetings and discussions for those in the College and University communities interested in the implications of philosophy and the social sciences for education, promoting interactions between the College and GSAS. They could use it as a venue for considering shared standards, admission criteria, combined planning, and developing concerted priorities for the separate Ph.D. programs. Through it, they could manage contributions from Teachers College to the GSAS Teaching Center. Their activities in the Institute would not preclude the current College departments from providing their programs with further collegial context, special efforts to mobilize support for Ph.D. candidates or good offices in interacting with GSAS, the University, and the scholarly public. Through the Institute, faculty members wishing to do so, could seek external support for their research and scholarship, adding another option to the spectrum of existing centers and institutes. Further, they could extend membership to faculty from Ph.D. programs in Area C and D, should a need for scale and critical mass in those programs become evident as well. In sum, in diverse ways, through a newly active Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education, faculty members could diminish the isolation of their separate Ph.D. programs within the current departmental structure and they could better secure a supportive critical mass and a shared ethos of serious scholarship and advanced education.

It would be premature to adopt either this proposal, were it suitably filled out, or potential alternatives to it. The basic ideas for providing critical mass for separate Ph.D. programs need much further development with input into them from all interested groups. Part of the relevant context, a matter of great importance and complexity, involves long-term changes in the field of education itself, changes in which Teachers College fully participates. Both the Evans Report and the Weinreich Report were colored by a national critique of education as a field, and schools of education as institutions, as havens of a slack anti-intellectualism. As a response, a response adopted in the reports and by those responding positively to them at the College, educators would use the distinction between the Ph.D. and the Ed.D. to bring intellectual rigor and excellence to their field. The Ph.D. was a degree appropriate for advanced scholars and researchers, while the Ed.D. was a degree designed for highly trained professional practitioners. The

effort was to sharpen the distinction between the two degrees and to create a strong institutional base within a leading school of education for rigor and excellence in Ph.D. scholarship.

Issues change. Over the past 40 years, a rhetoric of research scholarship has come to dominate the field of education. AERA, the American Educational Research Association, has become far and away the leading professional association. Science-based policy has become the nation's official preference. Everyone in the field does research. The production of peer-reviewed studies, whether quantitative or qualitative in method, increasingly constitutes the nearly exclusive ground for promotion and tenure in schools of education. The Ed.D., qua professional degree, has become a research degree, a development in the field that substantially contributed to the College's disbanding the Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences with its commitment to the special value of Ph.D. quality research and scholarship. In a darkness in which all practitioners are researchers, why should there be a special place for the preparation of researchers independent of practice? Together, Teachers College and GSAS should face that basic question.