

# When University and Schools Relate

*Henrietta Schwartz*

**T**HERE was a time when universities could train teachers in splendid isolation, ship them off to the public schools, and enjoy the smug gratification that comes with completing a task. During this time the public schools accepted almost without question all of the products of the universities' programs. The society was putting large numbers of children into the schools, the schools had vast specialized personnel needs, and the teacher education institutions succeeded in supplying large numbers of persons who were legally certified to staff the schools.

Although critics of the universities' in-house training programs were around, their comments were not taken very seriously by the faculty members involved in teacher preparation. The critics maintained that university training programs were not producing teachers equipped to deal with a new kind of student, with the human and instructional problems of the inner city, and with the value conflicts encouraged by a rapidly changing society.

As the demand for teachers diminished, these early critics became prophets. The questions they raised about the quality and reality base of the programs were given seri-

ous consideration, particularly by the faculties of the large state teacher education agencies. The need to connect the programs to the practice produced a number of important changes in the relationships between the universities and the public schools.

In the past decade, many university faculty members have left their ivory towers and gone into urban communities for a variety of reasons. Following their lead, some private research-oriented universities in urban centers have been experimenting with new field-based models of teacher training. These universities have engaged in the initially painful process of reality testing their theories in the arena of the inner city public schools.

It would be useful to look at the problems and results of the shifts in university/school relationships produced by the experiments. Obviously, private universities will never provide the bulk of teachers for large urban school systems. Yet institutions such as the University of Chicago do perform other services. Let me illustrate.

In 1967 the University of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools embarked on a five-year experimental program addressing the problem of training teachers for urban

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schools. The experiment exemplifies the shifts in university/school relationships, and the attendant problems and outcomes of the new postures. The collaborative effort, the Ford Training and Placement Program, was funded by the Ford Foundation and housed in the Department and Graduate School of Education at the University of Chicago. Initially, members of both organizations had mixed emotions: the university faculty had reservations about their participation in the program; the public school personnel were concerned about having "ivory tower theorists" telling them how to run the schools. Yet commitments were made and operations began.

### **A "Practical Program"**

The Ford Program model<sup>1</sup> was based on two assumptions. First, each school is a unique social system characterized by institutional role sets and filled by personalities with individual needs. The implications of this assumption are to train together the persons who will be filling the roles in a specific school, and to train them as a group before they enter the school. Second, universities cannot prepare teachers for the inner city, or any other school, without the active participation of the professionals in the field and members of the communities to be served by the school. Therefore, any effective training must be a collaborative one involving the trainer (the university), the user (the public schools), and the client (the community).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Getzels. "Education for the Inner City: A Practical Proposal by an Impractical Theorist." *School Review* 75 (3): 283-99; Autumn 1967.

<sup>2</sup> H. Schwartz. "A Social System Approach to Training Teachers for Urban Schools: The Ford Training and Placement Program." *Education at Chicago*. Chicago: Graduate School of Education, University of Chicago, Autumn 1971. pp. 9-15.

The basic training mechanism of the program is called a cadre. The cadre for each target school includes new teachers, experienced teachers, the principal, community representatives, and others reflective of the social system of the school. University staff members work with the cadres, before the school year begins, and intensively during the first year at the school. Thereafter, staff assistance is provided when requested by the group.

The purpose of the cadre is to provide personal and professional support for the new teachers, renew the enthusiasm and skills of the experienced teachers, solve school-wide problems, and bridge the gap between the university, the school, and the community. Increased understandings and better communications should improve the instructional program of the school. The assumptions of the program are logical. Problems arose in operationalizing the concepts, for implementation required changes in the behavior of actors in both organizations at all levels.

At the university, participation in a "practical program" meant a reallocation of faculty resources and time. One cannot engage in theoretical research while conducting workshops for cadres in the public schools or spending hours working with new teachers. In an organization long noted for its inquiry and research, this relative change in emphasis created by the "practical" Ford Program was somewhat upsetting. The collaborative nature of the program required a policy-making committee with equal members of the university faculty and public school personnel.

It was a new experience for academics to share decisions about the staffing, the budgeting, and the content of a university training program with public school administrators. The operation of the program required additional staff members with one

foot in academia and the other in the public schools. Established faculty members viewed these action-oriented new types of staff members with the same skepticism they reserved for "practical" projects.

As the program reached more experienced teachers, many of them began taking classes at the university. Faculty members accustomed to working with young preservice students were challenged by the worldly-wise experienced teachers, often outspoken critics of the graduate programs. Finally, the use of Ford funds to support cadre projects gave some public school personnel the impression that the university had unlimited resources to be used to fill the service needs of the schools. But university resources were limited, and those available to the Ford Program were for specific uses.

For the Chicago Public Schools System, participation in the Ford Program meant a reallocation of school funds to provide support for the public school personnel participating in the six-week summer training programs. During five years of increasingly tight budgets, top level administrators spent hours finding and justifying the required funds to support the program. At the school building level special schedules had to be arranged for the part-time new intern teachers; special positions had to be established at the district level; special payroll procedures had to be arranged by the central office staff.

The program required that new teachers with each cadre be placed as a group in the school where they trained. The schools had to devise ways of placing the interns without displacing other members of the staff and, thereby, incurring union grievances. Furthermore, placing new people as a group represented a change in city-wide placement procedures. The cadres sometimes included interns training as school social workers, adult educators, reading consultants, and social psychological specialists. Positions had to be created by the schools to accommodate these role specialists.

Finally, the whole business of research had to be negotiated. Obviously, any program connected with the University of Chi-

cago was going to have a heavy research and evaluation component. This was true of the Ford Program, and 50 percent of the staff was engaged in research and evaluation. The Chicago Public Schools and the communities involved in the program demanded some control over the kind of research done. The research process which evolved was not in the traditional educational research mode.<sup>3</sup>

## Mutual Benefits

The Ford Program has not solved completely all of the problems facing both organizations participating in the program. But the program has resolved many problems and has negotiated working agreements on other issues which permit the collaborative effort to function well—in fact, effectively enough for other institutions to replicate the model. The willingness of the university and the public schools to grapple with the problems related to any collaborative effort has resulted in benefits to both.

University programs have become more realistic as a result of the inputs of public school personnel. The interaction among university faculty and public school teachers in workshops and classes has led to the development of curricular materials and instructional techniques specifically for inner city youngsters. University faculty members who presented new methods and materials to cadres in the public schools received instant feedback on the viability of the ideas and learned how best to introduce innovations to a faculty. The Graduate School of Education developed new degree programs for the experienced teachers attracted by the Ford Program.

The university has seen these programs expand and flourish. Faculty members have found ways to combine their research interests with their participation in the program. The positive relations established have permitted virtually open access to new or addi-

<sup>3</sup> Wayne J. Doyle. "Transactional Evaluation in Program Development." In: Robert Rippey, editor. *Studies in Transactional Evaluation*. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Company. (In press.)

tional projects on a reciprocal basis. The research activity is planned cooperatively with the schools, and the information is shared with the participants. The Ford Program in its many research reports contributed new knowledge in the field of teacher education. New models for evaluation of experimental programs and development of teacher selection were among these Ford conceptions.<sup>4</sup>

The Chicago Public Schools have benefited by getting new teachers who wish to work in inner city schools and who are trained to do so. The Ford Program has provided retraining for all of the experienced teachers in the cadres and, peripherally, many others involved in program activities in the schools. Cadres provided a direct line of communication for the most recent developments and research in education at the university to their application in the classroom and to noncadre teachers in the public schools. The application of new ideas was facilitated by way of Ford staff and faculty resources provided to the public schools. The university staff assisted with the planning, operation, and evaluation of projects engaged in by the cadres and the target schools. Information was provided in ways which allowed school personnel to self-correct the projects on the basis of systematic data.

There are certain conditions, implied in the operation of the Ford Program, that need emphasis. I suspect that these conditions are more important than the program or the cadre training mechanism, because they reflect a basic shift in the relationship between universities and the public schools, shifts required to support any collaborative effort.

The program required cooperation at all levels. It required a willingness to share decision making about time-honored university and public school policies. The program could not operate on good will alone, but required a reallocation of resources. For

example, costs related to the program had to be shared between the two organizations. Collaboration meant the organizations were willing to put their money where their intentions were. For the public schools, participation in the joint effort meant changes in selection, certification, and placement practices.

For the university, participation meant accommodation of a new kind of staff member. Professors are people who like to make decisions about how they spend their time and energy. Participation in the Ford Program limited faculty members' scope of decision making and made demands on time and energy which could not be dismissed. Conflicts had to be resolved by negotiation.

Both organizations had to commit themselves to evaluating and reporting the activities of the program and assisting other agencies which wished to replicate the model. The problems related to the Ford Program were handled because people in both organizations recognized that there was enough merit in the training and placement model to justify setting aside established procedures.

The high level of trust and joint effort developed between the University of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools is unique, but replicable by state institutions and their public school counterparts. If we are to reduce the dissonance between teacher training and practice, universities and public schools must develop innovative, realistic, and mutually rewarding programs and then commit tangible resources to support the efforts.

It is my feeling that the universities should take the initiative for establishing the cooperative relationships. The example set by the University of Chicago might be summarized with a paraphrase of the old cliché, "Don't call us, we'll call you." The charge should be: "If you don't call us, we'll call you again and again and again."

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<sup>4</sup> A complete list of research documents and copies of papers describing selection models may be ordered from the Ford Training and Placement Program, University of Chicago, 5835 South Kimbark, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

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