CHARLES TAYLOR KERCHNER

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Casely Coleman

Dear Casely,

Your excellent article spurred some thinking on my part and a hope that my experience might be helpful your project.

To begin, we need to go back a little more than a century to talk about scholar-practitioners in education in the U.S. Beginning early in the 20th Century jobs teaching and administering schools became professionalized. One got a job because of credentials rather than political connections.

In response for the need for training and credentials, hundreds of Teacher's Colleges were formed. Although there were exceptions, most were not academically distinguished, and they operated outside of the traditional university structure.

Particularly in what was known as School Administration (later Education Administration) these were largely trade schools, heavy on practical knowledge, light on exposure to the academic disciplines. Practical knowledge. The first widely used text was published in 1917, *Public School Administration,* written by Elwood P. Cubberley, the dean at Stanford.

Starting in the 1960s, an interest in making education for school leaders more rigorous and connected to the academic disciplines. In the late 1960s five institutions took the lead in attempting to blend knowledge of practice and disciplinary academic expertise in psychology, political science and policy analysis, organization behavior, and economics. The five were Teachers College, Columbia University, University of Chicago, Stanford, and my school, Claremont Graduate School (now University).

In each case, the practitioner scholars were edged out by faculty whose primary allegiance was to an academic discipline, who published papers in discipline-related journals, and who gained prestige by their standing within the discipline.

Late in the 1970s, the Ford Foundation commissioned British educationalist Harry Judge, who was at Oxford, to travel and do a survey of U.S. schools of education. The memorable quote from his report was that the prestige of a school of education was related to *how far away* it was from actual schools.

Several institutions—including mine--decided to push back a bit. I had no working background on elementary and secondary education. I had entered the field as a policy maker and staff member of the Illinois Board of Education and on the Chancellor's staff at City

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Colleges of Chicago—moving money and programs. But I looked at where my institution was and where I thought it needed to go, and I decided to change institutional direction.

We hired a marvelous practitioner/trainer, who had run staff development education for all of Los Angeles. Our program was a smashing success. He and I taught well together, and we were able to create practitioner-scholars. The academic argument to them was that we knew that they were not going to be research scholars, but that the tools and language would be valuable.

We were quite successful in creating a Research Institute that undertook applied research for school systems and other educational institutions. The scholars and practitioners worked well together and did credible work.

We also entered into agreements with school systems to admit a group of practitioners who were destined to be their next generation of leaders. The students went through the program together and provided mutual support.

The major shortcoming in our plan was that my practitioner colleague never became a scholar. This prevented him from applying for tenure. So, we created a clinical professorship for him: not as prestigious, but continuing employment.

The other major problem we faced was jealousy on the part of other faculty, who thought that our program was capturing all the students while their classes were undersubscribed. We never totally solved that one.

The program continues. We are now on our third generation of practitioner-scholar leaders.

I hope this is helpful.

All best wishes,

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