

EDUCATION: AN APPLIED MULTIDISCIPLINARY FIELD? THE ENGLISH
EXPERIENCE

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The historian of literacy Harvey J. Graff has demonstrated the importance of a historical perspective in tracing interdisciplinarity in the United States through the twentieth century and across several case-studies in the university curriculum (Graff 2015). Graff argues that disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity have been closely linked and dependent on each other in a symbiotic and dynamic relationship over time, and should be understood in relation to each other. According to Graff, the tension between them has been played out in different ways from one discipline to another, often resulting in what he calls 'interdisciplines'. Both disciplines and interdisciplines, he suggests, are products of the modern research university, with their origins in the nineteenth century. He points out also that interdisciplinarity is possible within disciplines, for example in the new social history and social science history that developed from the 1960s onwards (Graff 2015, chapter 4).

This chapter will investigate the character of disciplines as they emerged and developed, and also the idea of interdisciplinarity, in the case of educational studies and research in the UK. There has been increasing international interest in the history of educational studies and research over the past decade. In the United States, the most important work has no doubt been Ellen Condliffe Lagemann's *An Elusive Science*, which traced the 'troubling history' of education research through the

twentieth century, highlighting its variety and range, defining itself as a 'discipline history' in the sense that it sought to investigate 'the changing ecology of knowledge and the politics that has been part of that' (Lagemann 2001, p. xiv; see also Lagemann 1997). David Labaree, also in the US, has valuably examined the low status of schools and departments of education within the academy, commenting that 'The ed school is the butt of jokes in the university, where professors portray it as an intellectual wasteland; it is the object of scorn in schools, where teachers decry its programs as impractical and its research as irrelevant; and it is a convenient scapegoat in the world of educational policy, where policymakers portray it as a root cause of bad teaching and inadequate learning.' (Labaree 2006, pp. 2-3). Labaree explains this poor reputation in terms of the historical association of schools of education with teacher education.

In western Europe, Hofstetter and Schneuwly have analysed the institutionalisation of educational science in terms of the number of academic chairs, textbooks, institutions and posts that supported educational research, publications in specialised journals, and public discourses in education (Hofstetter and Schneuwly 2004). Other recent European work has begun to chart the development of the educational sciences in different European countries since the Second World War (Laot and Rogers 2015). In the Baltic states, too, there has been a growth of interest in this theme, for example with the publication of two edited collections on the development of the educational sciences in Baltic countries during the twentieth century (Baltic Association of Historians of Pedagogy 2009; 2010). In Western Australia, a comparative history of five different departments of education in universities across the State has also been produced (Gardiner et al 2011).

There has until recently been relatively little written on the history of educational studies and research in the UK as a whole (see McCulloch and Cowan 2017 for a detailed social history of educational studies and research in the UK). A number of studies have considered the development of particular disciplines applied to education, for example a collection edited by Furlong and Lawn on the 'disciplines of education' (Furlong and Lawn 2011). This focused on the state of the key disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, economics, comparative and international education, and geography in relation to educational research, and argued that although they were all confident about their own roles and importance, they were becoming increasingly small and isolated. This view differed markedly from that of J.W. Tibble forty years before, who in 1966 had edited a widely noted work, The Study of Education, which framed the study of education fundamentally around the 'foundation disciplines' of philosophy, history, psychology and sociology (Tibble 1966; see also McCulloch 2002). Another significant recent work is John Furlong's 'anatomy of the discipline' of education (Furlong 2013). Furlong's work seeks first to consider the history of the study of education in UK universities, and then to understand the current situation of Education in relation to teaching and research.

Certainly, this is an interesting and distinctive example of an academic field of study that has been powerfully shaped by the disciplines, but which has also sought to present itself in different ways over the longer term. Rather than a discipline, it may be most helpful to label this as an applied multidisciplinary field: applied rather than pure; multidisciplinary rather than unidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or indeed transdisciplinary; and a field rather than a discipline. Key disciplines have exerted a vital role in this field, and continue to do so, despite predictions of their death or demise, through what we might call the extended university project involving academic

conferences, societies, journals and centres, as well as education departments. At the same time, there have been interdisciplinary visions and initiatives at regular intervals over the past eighty years, episodes that have punctuated and also helped to shape the making of the field during this time. These have included key organisational developments in the field, the Standing Conference on Studies in Education (SCSE) (founded in 1951 and renamed the Society for Educational Studies (SES) in 2001), and the British Educational Research Association (BERA), established in 1974. At an institutional level, also, there have been significant initiatives in interdisciplinarity, with the Institute of Education London and the University of Leicester providing useful examples of these. Leading individuals in the field have also embraced interdisciplinary ideals in different forms. All of these initiatives and ideals have had a strong disciplinary base, while the power of the disciplines exerted itself to shape the character of the initiatives themselves. Disciplinarity was the other side of the coin of interdisciplinarity, with the outcome of their symbiotic relationship often being a multidisciplinary formation of the field.

1. Theories of interdisciplinarity

Theoretical debates over the role of the disciplines and the nature of interdisciplinarity have been current since at least the 1970s. Differentiating between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity has occupied much of this activity. In the 1970s, Hugh Petrie defined the key difference between these approaches:

The line is not hard and fast, but roughly it is that multidisciplinary projects simply require everyone to do his or her own thing with little or no necessity for any one participant to be aware of any other participant's work. Perhaps a project director or manager is needed to glue the final product together, but the pieces are fairly clearly of disciplinary size and shape. Interdisciplinary efforts, on the other hand, require more or less integration and even modification of the disciplinary subcontributions while the inquiry is

proceeding. Different participants need to take into account the contributions of their colleagues in order to make their own contribution (Petrie 1976, p. 9).

More recent analyses have largely maintained this basic distinction. For example, one of the leading theorists in this area is the American scholar Julie Thompson Klein, whose 1990 volume Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice (Klein 1990) set the tone for much detailed work. According to Klein, a subtle restructuring of knowledge has produced new divisions of intellectual labour, collaborative research, team teaching, hybrid fields, comparative studies, increased borrowing across disciplines, and new pressures on the traditional divisions of knowledge. All of these trends, she argues, have encouraged a trend towards unity, synthesis and convergence, and the growth of 'interdisciplinarity'.

Klein has also produced a general model or taxonomy of interdisciplinarity that serves to highlight the key distinctions between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity (Klein 2010). In this model, multidisciplinary is about juxtaposing, sequencing or coordinating different disciplines, in which they complement each other in a common endeavour leading to a partial integration of work. Interdisciplinarity is a more radical shared enterprise in which the disciplines integrate, interact, link, focus, and ultimately blend together. Transdisciplinarity is more radical still, conceived as an activity conceived with the university but moving beyond the academy with the aim of transcending, transgressing and transforming boundaries in society as a whole (Klein 2010, p. 16). While 'conventional taxonomies' should not be jettisoned, she affirmed, 'they need to develop open, dynamic, and transactional approaches capable of depicting research in a network representation that is more aligned with changing configurations of knowledge and education' (Klein 2010, p. 28).

Beyond these fairly abstract distinctions, Klein also identifies the traits that she associates with what she terms the 'interdisciplinary individual'. She argues that in terms of career patterns it is usually well-established and senior academics who have the confidence and experience to be able to step out of line and engage in interdisciplinary activities (Klein 1990, p. 182). On the other hand, according to Klein, the enthusiasm and creativity of many new scholars may lead them in such a direction, regardless of the conventional obstacles and restraints of the modern university. She also proposes a number of character traits of the interdisciplinary individual, including reliability, flexibility, patience, resilience, sensitivity to others, risk-taking, a thick skin, and a preference for diversity and new social roles (Klein 1990, p. 183). There are also certain abilities that might be linked with such individuals, including a capacity to look at issues from different perspectives, and also skills such as differentiating, comparing, contrasting, relating, clarifying, reconciling, and synthesising (Klein 1990, p. 183). Appraising the work of such individuals through their career and biography, she suggests, might be an effective means of highlighting their contributions to interdisciplinarity.

An idealised theorisation of a trend towards new forms of knowledge production was Gibbons et al's The New Production of Knowledge (1994). According to Gibbons et al, 'a new form of knowledge production is emerging alongside the traditional, familiar one' (Gibbons et al 1994, p. vii). The older form, they proposed, could be characterised as 'Mode 1': disciplinary, hierarchical, institutionalised. The new knowledge production, Mode 2 knowledge was by contrast transdisciplinary, non-hierarchical and non-institutional. It would be diffused more evenly and efficiently throughout society to help guide problem-solving efforts. This work attributed the structural shift towards Mode 2 knowledge to the expansion of higher education since

the 1940s, the increasing number of institutions, a vast expansion in the supply of knowledge, and increasingly internationalisation and globalisation which encouraged both collaboration and competition across nations. Overall, they contended,

In transdisciplinary contexts, disciplinary boundaries, distinctions between pure and applied research, and institutional differences between, say, universities and industry, seem to be less and less relevant. Instead, attention is focused primarily on the problem area, or the hot topic, preference given to collaborative rather than individual performance and excellence judged by the ability of individuals to make a sustained contribution in open, flexible types of organisation in which they may only work temporarily (Gibbons et al 1994, p. 30).

This was a confident vision of the future that emphasised social benefits and improvements rather than the potential problems and complexities of new forms of knowledge production.

The British political scientist Wyn Grant has also analysed this general development. He explores the intellectual and practical challenges involved in working across disciplines, especially in teams and in 'thick' interdisciplinary work across the social and natural sciences, but points out the potential rewards in terms of understanding and responding to the large urgent problems of today such as the environment and climate change (Greaves and Grant 2010). Both Klein and Grant emphasise, moreover, that interdisciplinarity does not necessarily replace the disciplines but indeed depends on disciplinary knowledge for its further development. This is also a key point for Peter Weingart, who insists that disciplines and their derivatives, specialities and research fields remain 'the principal organisational unity for the production and diffusion of knowledge'. At the same time, Weingart comments

boundaries between the disciplines are softened, and new interdisciplinary fields emerge, allowing cross-boundary research activities. Even if social and political interests were to promote interdisciplinary approaches, according to Weingart, this would be unlikely to lead to a system based exclusively on interdisciplinarity, and therefore he concludes that 'traditional disciplines and inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary research fields will exist side by side' (Weingart 2010, p. 13).

Further discussions have assessed the nature of boundary work around and across the disciplines. Klein has suggested that impermeable boundaries are associated with tightly-knit, convergent communities, indicating the stability and coherence of intellectual fields such as the physical sciences and economics, while permeable boundaries are more characteristic of loosely-knit, divergent academic groups, signalling a more fragmented, less stable, comparatively open-ended structure like sociology. She also points out that some fields of knowledge are hybrid in nature, including child development, cognitive science, women's studies, biopolitics and criminology (Klein 1993). The potential for interaction between and among the disciplines is frequently emphasised. For example, Jan Parker suggests that higher education curricula in the humanities need to build on both core disciplinary and supra-disciplinary texts, as well as 'texts which both inculcate and question interdisciplinarity, preparing students to work in interdisciplinary collaborations' (Parker 2008, p. 264). The sociologist Neil Smelser insists, moreover, that 'The boundaries of most disciplines have become so permeable and indistinct, and so much exportation and importation has occurred that if one ranges widely in his or her discipline, one is being in effect interdisciplinary.' (Smelser 2003, p. 653). These ideas are taken further in new work by Richard Thaler on the making of behavioural economics, a combination

of psychology and economics, over the past half-century, highlighting the vagaries of individual decision making (Mullainathan and Thaler 2000; Thaler 2015).

The case of Education

There have been a number of attempts to define the nature of education as an academic study, with the question of its relationship to academic disciplines always to the fore. In the 1960s, the philosopher of education Richard Peters claimed that education was not a distinct discipline, but a field where a group of disciplines had application, as with politics. All questions of educational policy and practice, according to Peters, were hybrid questions that should be broken down into their various components: 'In brief, we must make an end of the undifferentiated mush that is often perpetrated under the heading of educational theory before the different types of question have been distinguished; but we must make sure that the research and training carried out under the aegis of the different disciplines is brought together again in an integrated conversation on matters of common concern.' (Peters 1965, p. 3). This view itself stemmed from the major role of the so-called 'foundation disciplines' of psychology, sociology, history and philosophy in the development of educational studies. In the 1960s in particular, these disciplines were at the heart of the study of education, treated separately and independently in a number of key texts of the time such as J.W. Tibble's The Study of Education (Tibble 1966; see also McCulloch 2002, Biesta 2011).

More recently, many formulations have been offered. Alan Blyth in the early 1980s described the study of education as 'a new form of synthesis..., an autonomous but interrelated field of study', that would be able increasingly to collaborate with other disciplines (Blyth 1982, pp. 13, 16). The historian Brian Simon regarded it as an

'interdisciplinary field' (Simon 1990, p. 138). In the 1990s, Keith Hoskin reflected on his own experience in an education department to dismiss claims that education should be regarded as a discipline. Hoskin was especially conscious that the historical roots of educational studies and research, at least in England, lay in teacher training, which left it in a position of low status in the academy. He noted that it was widely regarded as 'a melting-pot for the "real" disciplines, best disregarded in serious academic company' (Hoskin 1993, p. 271). Moreover, as Hoskin recalled, 'In my first post, in an Education Department, the then-professor went out of his way to define Education in this subdisciplinary way: as a field made up in some way never quite specified (and certainly never achieved) of a combination of the real disciplines, psychology, philosophy, sociology and history, each rendered appropriate to our concerns (and thus inevitably inferior to the disciplinary models) by the addition of the prefix Educational' (Hoskin 1993, p. 272).

The study of education has its own distinctive history so far as the tensions between the disciplines and interdisciplinarity are concerned. Until the Second World War, except in Scotland, it struggled to develop as a recognisable university subject (see e.g. Lawn et al 2010). As J.W. Tibble noted, its position had always been 'ambiguous and peripheral' (Tibble 1966b, p. 1). Very little time was allowed for future teachers to study broad educational issues, and so the courses were regarded as being superficial. The schools, for their part, tended to regard them as being irrelevant to their practical needs, and too remote from the classroom (Tibble 1966b, p. 1). Overall, they suffered from very low status and esteem within universities.

As early as 1877, the famous essay on 'Education as a science' by Alexander Bain insisted that the scope of the study of education should be confined to its psychological dimensions, that is, 'the means of building up the acquired powers of human beings'

(Bain 1877, p. 6), thus leaving its environmental aspects for other departments to pursue. An emphasis on psychology over other potential approaches to the study of education continued well into the twentieth century. 'Educational psychology' was an established subject of study by the 1920s, fostered for example by Cyril Burt, appointed to the London County Council in 1913 as the first educational psychologist (Tibble 1966b, p. 10).

Day training colleges for the training of elementary school teachers in connection with local universities or university colleges were established in the 1890s under the Education Department's Code for 1890, following the recommendations of the Cross report of 1888. The first day training colleges were set up at Kings College London, Manchester, Durham, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham and Cardiff, and the first chair of education in England, Mark Robinson Wright, at Durham in 1895 (Gordon 1980, pp. xi-xii). These included study of the theory, history and psychology of education, and increasingly catered for the training of secondary school teachers. Nevertheless, they were designed on the whole for teacher training purposes rather than for the academic study of education.

The separate disciplines of education, in particular psychology, history, sociology and philosophy, emerged at different times and have had their own trajectories and institutional traces. Educational psychology developed strongly in the 1920s, especially through the work of Cyril Burt and Charles Spearman in London and Godfrey Thomson in Edinburgh (Tibble 1966). This growth was supported further by the British Psychological Society (founded in 1901), the psychology of education of the BPS from 1919, and the British Journal of Psychology of Education edited by C.W. Valentine from 1931. The institutionalisation of the philosophy of education began strongly from the 1940s, with the analytical approach developed through Hirst and

Peters at the IOE London, and the introduction of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain in 1964 and the Journal of Philosophy of Education in 1967. The history of education also became well established after the War, although the defining work of Brian Simon and the establishment of key texts and a society and journal took place in the 1960s and early 1970s with Simon's Studies in the History of Education (Simon 1960), the History of Education Society (1967) and History of Education from 1972 (McCulloch 2010, 2011). The sociology of education became increasingly prominent from the 1950s, dominated initially by the London School of Economics and the British Sociological Association (itself established only in 1951), but increasingly influenced by the Institute of Education in London especially through Basil Bernstein, the inaugural Karl Mannheim professor of the sociology of education from 1977 to 1991. Other developments included the establishment of the British Journal of Sociology of Education in 1980 and the sociology of education conferences held initially at Westhill College, Birmingham (see also e.g. Barton and Walker 1979; Szreter 1980; Banks 1982; and Whitty 2012).

The diversity of subdisciplines and approaches to educational studies generally thwarted attempts to develop it either as a discipline in its own right or as a fully interdisciplinary subject. Other factors included the continued low status of educational studies in the academy and its applied nature related to educational practice in the schools and other educational institutions. Nevertheless, there were a number of interesting and significant initiatives to redefine it in an interdisciplinary direction. Two key developments that were interdisciplinary in nature from within the field were the Standing Conference on Studies in Education (SCSE) (later the Society for Educational Studies) in the 1940s and 1950s and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in the 1970s.

The SCSE originated from the activities of Section L, 'Educational sciences', of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, led by Fred Clarke, director of the IOE. Clarke's short book The Study of Education in England (Clarke 1943) highlighted the lack of esteem of this area of study, and emphasised that greater planning and purpose would be essential in the postwar society. In 1949, Clarke became the president of Section L (founded in 1901), and in this capacity he championed what he described as 'the widening scope of the study of education'. This emphasised the idea of an 'educative society' as was envisaged in the Education Act of 1944, which would include an enlarged vision of the study of education, embracing sociology, social psychology, the social history of education, comparative education and philosophy (Clarke 1949).

It was this potentially interdisciplinary vision that underpinned the creation of the SCSE as an elite professorial body in 1951, and the British Journal of Educational Studies the following year. However, both the new Society and the Journal that it gave birth to revealed the tensions that existed within educational studies, especially between the specialisation of the core disciplines and their more generalised contribution to the study of education. There was an increasing emphasis on the separate roles of the disciplines which by the 1960s had become uppermost and distinct to an unprecedented degree (McCulloch 2012b).

The establishment of BERA was also motivated at least partly by the allure of interdisciplinarity and an awareness that the separate disciplines had tended to cultivate supposed respectability at the expense of practical applications in the improvement of schools and teaching. As K.B. Start of the National Foundation for Educational Research emphasised in private correspondence with other key figures in the formation of the new Association, Brian Dockrell of the Scottish Council for

Research in Education, John Nisbet in Aberdeen, Noel Entwistle in Lancaster and Gordon Miller at the IOE London, 'The lack of a central association and forum in which the interdisciplinary study of education can be promulgated has exercised the minds of most of us in the last few years.' (Start 1973). According to Start, 'The idea of a British Educational Research Association to which can be brought all those with interests in education as an area and with skills involved in other disciplines has obvious attractions.' (Start 1973).

A meeting was held in Birmingham in October 1973 that agreed on open membership (unlike the elite basis of the SCSE) and 'interdisciplinary commitment, so that whatever disciplines seem relevant to educational research in the widest sense shall be included' (Whitfield 1973). At the inaugural conference of the new body, held at the University of Birmingham in April 1974, the presidential address of the first president, John Nisbet of the University of Aberdeen, confirmed this approach (Nisbet 1974). Nisbet suggested that the large increase in educational research over the previous ten years, accompanied by greater funding and a widening range of approaches had encouraged the growth of specialisms that had now to be contained within a national professional organisation. BERA's inaugural meeting took place at the University of Birmingham on 4-5 April 1974, chaired by Edgar Stones. It agreed to establish informal relationships with kindred organisations 'to avoid conflict and reduce duplication of activities'. It was hoped that this would both strengthen the achievements of BERA itself, and promote the representation of other bodies (BERA 1974, minute 4). It was agreed also to avoid a duplication of dates with those of other conferences. The first annual conference of BERA would be held in September 1975, with the aim also of maintaining a principle of interdisciplinary approaches to educational research (BERA 1974, minute 5). Yet it soon became, as Alec Ross of

Lancaster University anticipated, a 'jamboree' of many different groups (Ross 1974) that was essentially multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary in nature.

The first president of BERA was John Nisbet from the University of Aberdeen (the brother of Stanley Nisbet), then the chair of the Educational Research Board of the SSRC. Nisbet chose to present his inaugural address to the Association at its first meeting on the state of the art of educational research. He emphasised the growth of the field over the previous thirty years, which he suggested had carried with it the danger that the study of education might 'split up into less and less meaningful subdivisions' (Nisbet, J. 1974, p. 2). His own department at Aberdeen, although still relatively small, held special meetings to ensure that there was some link between the various aspects of educational research, and every member of staff was required to carry out some tutorial work across all the boundaries. Nisbet's research, conducted with Noel Entwistle at Edinburgh, included theoretical issues, a historical section, a chapter on comparative studies, an empirical study, and a small piece of action research. Overall, Nisbet took the opportunity that his presidential address at BERA afforded him to 'argue strongly against the fissiparous trend in current educational research' (Nisbet J. 1974, p.). Yet there was within his own design of the field more than a hint of multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary features, and it was these former aspects that tend to assert themselves in the field as a whole.

Departments and disciplinarity

These tensions between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity were also experienced at a departmental level. This tendency was exemplified in two leading university education departments of the postwar era. One of these was the Institute of Education London, a specialist institution that since the 1930s under Fred Clarke had established

itself as a dominant institution in the field (Aldrich 2002; McCulloch 2014a). The Leicester department was new, and based in a new university, but quickly became regarded as one of the most important departments in the country,

In the 1960s and 1970s, the discipline-based approach of the IOE was at its most rigid and influential. This was the intellectual home and heartland of Richard Peters, the successor to Louis Arnaud Reid as the professor of the philosophy of education at the IOE. Intellectual depth in a particular disciplinary area was prized above breadth or range of studies. As the Institute grew rapidly in size, it was also most convenient to compartmentalise studies in different areas rather than attempt to embrace educational issues in general terms. From this point of view, a typical exchange took place in November 1965 between Peters and a comparative educationalist, Brian Holmes. The latter agreed with Peters that teacher training courses should be based mainly on specialist teaching by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and comparative educationists, rather than through seminars conducted by every member of staff. He emphasised that 'There are too many areas of special study to make it possible for teaching to be undertaken in every area by non-specialists.' (Holmes 1965).

Yet it was still possible to challenge or at least mitigate this dominant regime. For example, a new initiative designed to lessen the IOE's dependence on a discipline-based approach was the creation in 1972 of the Department of Curriculum Studies (DCS). This reflected the prominence of curriculum change as a national issue in which teachers and LEAs had key roles, and the significance of the Schools Council for the Curriculum and Examinations, introduced in 1964, as both an initiator of curriculum innovation and a provider of funding. Within the IOE, this trend was led by Denis Lawton, appointed initially as a researcher in a sociological project in 1963 and

later as a senior lecturer in curriculum studies from 1967 before being promoted to a professorship in 1974 (Aldrich 2002, pp. 150, 172). Richard Pring, a philosopher and lecturer in the department and later a professor at Exeter and then Oxford, has recalled that the IOE was 'a rather feudal society, ruled by the strong, "autonomous barons" of the "foundation disciplines" and chaired by a director with limited power over his baronial subjects' (Pring 2005, pp. 195-96). The DCS was intended to provide a means of bringing these disciplines together in the study of the school curriculum, as well as linking theory to practice. However, it largely failed to bring into existence a distinctively interdisciplinary approach to educational studies and research.

According to Lawton himself, the rationale for the DCS was that, as he put it, 'there is a need in the highly specialised Institute for one department which would (a) be concerned with the development of educational theory generally and curriculum theory in particular, and (b) be concerned with interdisciplinary courses and encourage other departments to contribute to the work' (Lawton 1974). He suggested that the DCS should be relatively small and avoid becoming a 'mini-Institute', and that it would be helpful to establish a formal structure to 'make decisions about proposals of an interdisciplinary kind' (Lawton 1974). It was committed from the beginning to bringing the different disciplines together to study the curriculum as a whole, an endeavour that was reflected in its staff members who had experience of one or more of the foundation disciplines (DSC 1981). In practice, it retained an emphasis on the separate disciplines working together more than a fully integrated approach.

This emphasis on the disciplines was reflected in Lawton's own publications. For example, Lawton's Social Change, Educational Theory and Curriculum Planning, published in 1973 (Lawton 1973), was organised first in terms of the principles of curriculum planning, including separate chapters on social factors and psychological

theories, then a socio-historical study of the school curriculum in the UK, and finally an examination of how theory was implemented in practice to become what he called the 'common culture individualised curriculum'. By the time of his professorial inaugural lecture in 1978, Lawton recognised the increasingly active role of the State in the school curriculum by also stressing the importance of politics in shaping the curriculum, but he retained a fundamentally disciplinary model (Lawton 1978 / 1980). Nor was this approach unusual among curriculum theorists. John Kerr, professor of education at Leicester and a specialist in the science curriculum, edited a volume entitled Changing the Curriculum (Kerr 1968) with chapters on the contributions of philosophy (by Paul Hirst), history (by Kenneth Charlton), psychology (by Philip Taylor), and sociology (by Frank Musgrove). Such texts, and the intellectual frameworks on which they were based, served to structure courses in curriculum studies.

By the early 1980s, with Malcolm Skilbeck having succeeded Lawton as the head of the CSD, the disciplinary model of curriculum studies was under review but with little consensus as to what should replace it. According to Skilbeck's summation at a staff conference held in July 1982, 'There was general agreement that curriculum studies had developed beyond the discipline based model that the department originally embodied (according to DL [Denis Lawton] more for pragmatic than ideological reasons) but less clarity as to what it had developed into.' (Skilbeck 1982). Skilbeck went on to propose three potential models for course and research in curriculum studies that the department might adopt. On the first, curriculum studies would be treated as a picture of the field of curriculum studies itself, its history, literature, methodology and current position. On the second, it would focus on current issues or problems. On the third, it would become an orientation to action, and it was argued

that courses should be framed more clearly around this overall approach rather than one of understanding and reflection. Staff discussion around the relationship between the core courses and the disciplines, according to Skilbeck, 'generated the most discussion and the least agreement!'. Indeed, the contribution of the disciplines remained unresolved (Skilbeck 1982).

At Leicester, there was an impressive grouping of educationists including Tibble and Simon, as well as Robin Pedley, Jack Kerr, Geoffrey Bantock and others. Simon had emerged in the early 1960s as the leader of the 'new' history of education, his approach taking its cue from Fred Clarke's ideas about a social history of education but interpreting this innovation on Marxist lines (see e.g. McCulloch 2010; McCulloch 2011, chapter 4). His discipline-based contribution to Tibble's iconic collection emphasised the importance of the history of education in terms of understanding education as a social function, or 'a vital contribution to social history' (Simon 1966, p. 95). He thus rejected what he characterised as its traditional production of 'a somewhat indigestible mass of dates and facts, orders and Acts' (Simon 1966, p. 91), and elsewhere as 'a flat record of acts and ordinances, punctuated by accounts of the theories of great educators who entertained ideas "in advance of their time"' (Simon 1966a, p. 95). It was much more important, according to Simon, to consider the social origins of such ideas, which would in turn illuminate 'the elements in society ready for change at different times..., why changes of a particular kind were needed, what assisted or prevented their realisation, what compromises were made, break-throughs achieved, and with what effect' (Simon 1966, pp. 95-96). This was an approach to the history of education that resonated with contemporary political tensions over the direction of educational policies, for example on comprehensive schools designed for all abilities and aptitudes, and especially with controversies over social class and

education. In many ways, then, Simon's contribution to educational studies and research was based squarely in his key role as the national leader of the history of education as a subdiscipline.

At the same time, however, Simon also harboured strong interdisciplinary ideals of education as a field of study. Simon's inaugural lecture as the professor of education at Leicester University, also in 1966, reiterated his disciplinary approach but also attempted to explain his perspective on education in general, and emphasised the interdependence of the disciplines. He aspired towards a 'fruitful cooperation' between the disciplines in education, 'in which no one lays down all the laws but everyone rubs off corners' (Simon 1966/1980, p. 91). Indeed, he insisted, 'There cannot be a permanent leasing out of concessions in the field of education to other disciplines which then operate exactly as they would at home' (Simon 1966/1980, p. 91). Simon therefore argued in favour of a conscious cultivation of interrelations. As befitted a historian, he chose an arresting historical analogy to make this point, proposing that what might be hoped for was 'something like that settlement whereby an Anglo-Saxon country, invaded in turn by Danes and Normans, triumphantly emerged from the process as English' (Simon 1966/1980, p. 91). This notion of 'interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation' (Simon 1966/1980, p. 92) is interesting as it marks Simon out as a leader and champion of his own discipline who also promoted interdisciplinary ideals.

The head of department at Leicester was J.W. Tibble, who supported the disciplinary approach at Leicester also. Tibble had graduated in English at the University of Leeds in 1922 before going on to teach and then being appointed as a lecturer in education at the University College of the South West (later Exeter University) in 1929, where he stayed for thirteen years. In 1946 he was appointed to a professorship of education

at what was then Leicester University College and built the department up over the next twenty years. In the 1960s, the disciplines of education were offered in the context of a general education course outside a subject-method course component, with Simon teaching the history of education, Geoffrey Bantock taking educational philosophy in the form of a historical study of educational theorists, Tibble himself teaching sociology, and Mary Swainson and Collins taking psychology (Jones 2001). Simon himself had joined the Leicester department as a lecturer in 1950, and when Tibble retired in 1966 he, Bantock and the science educator J.F. Kerr were all given professorships. While generally sympathetic to the 'four disciplines' approach, which he later argued had 'promoted a higher level of educational studies generally than had existed before', and gave many of its students 'a wider, more informed, view of the nature of education as a social process', Simon was nevertheless critical of some of its more adverse effects. For example, as he recalled, each student was asked to follow courses on any two of the disciplines according to their choice, and a split developed between the 'method' tutor on the one hand and the 'basic course' tutor on the other that betokened a tension between theory and practice (Simon n.d.).

Nevertheless, in his role as head of the Leicester department in the 1970s, Simon continued to support a fundamentally disciplinary approach. In a formal note to the university's vice-chancellor in February 1974 to recommend future developments in the School of Education, he requested that strength should be built up in the relevant specialisms in order to support the further development of work for higher degrees and diplomas. The original 'four disciplines' approach now required modification, and cooperation with the education service and schools demanded greater expertise in research design and statistics. In terms of the disciplines, he argued that the School was best known for its work in his own area, the history of education, which had also

developed links with other areas of the university such as urban history and the history of science, although he pleaded that it needed more cover in pre-nineteenth century history of education. He explained that his own wife, Joan, who was well known as an author of academic studies in Tudor history of education (Simon J. 1965) was only 'called in unofficially' (Simon 1974). Simon noted that staffing in the philosophy of education appeared adequate, while the sociology of education was tending to publish in sociology journals rather than supporting interdisciplinary work in educational studies. There was meanwhile, he proposed, a 'crying need for a good educational psychologist with experience in teaching in ways relevant to the intending teacher, who could also participate in research' (Simon 1974).

Simon's contribution to the debate about the future direction of BERA was also notable. As president of BERA in 1977, he argued in his presidential address that BERA represented 'a coming together from various disciplines' (Simon 1978, p. 2), which would in his view encourage 'submerging the undesirable aspects of contributory disciplines while extracting the most from them from the educational point of view' (Simon 1978, p. 4). Simon, indeed, was emphatic in his belief that 'The study of education has manifestly suffered from subordination to disparate modes of approach and methodologies deriving from fields quite other than education which have simply been transferred to the educational sphere, and which, once there, have tended to maintain their own distinctive languages and approaches, to pursue their own ends.' (Simon 1978, p. 4). At the same time, he also warned against a growing tendency to 'let a hundred flowers bloom' which might encourage a tendency to 'pull in different directions' rather than focusing on the conceptual and practical problems of education as a whole (Simon 1978, p. 4). Here were the competing yet complementary pressures of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity expressed at their

most explicit. Simon, one of the leading disciplinary exponents of his generation, was also one of the most prominent advocates of an interdisciplinary approach.

Conclusions

This paper has highlighted the changing and contested set of relationships involving educational studies and interdisciplinarity through a brief historical review. It has proposed and attempted to demonstrate that the extended university project embracing a wide range of institutional spaces has been the locus for this continuing debate, and also that a critical historical approach is well suited to such an examination. These tensions seem likely to continue into the future albeit in a broader context that is continuing to change rapidly.

There is scope for a great deal of further research to deepen our understanding of educational studies as an applied multidisciplinary field. The social and historical experiences of the journals, societies, centres, conferences, projects and other spaces and places in this field still await detailed treatment. The role of what Klein has described as 'interdisciplinary individuals' in pursuing an interdisciplinary agenda within a broadly multidisciplinary context is a further key issue for detailed analysis (Klein 1990; see also McCulloch 2014b). And finally, increased comparative, international, transnational and cross cultural awareness is likely to extend still further our collective engagement with educational studies as an applied multidisciplinary field.

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