

## **On Keppel and Scheffler**

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It is an honor and a pleasure to share my thoughts about Professor Scheffler's chapter on Dean Francis Keppel in which he vividly captures the impact of outstanding leadership on an institution of learning, both in terms of substance and ambience.

I would also like to talk about Professor Scheffler. He was my teacher, my advisor and my mentor during my many years at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, while I worked on both my Master's and Doctoral degrees.

His influence on me as well as upon all the students with whom he came into contact was enormous because we were always treated as equal partners in the learning process—collaborators in thinking about teaching and learning and the role that philosophy plays in improving the quality of educational experiences for both teachers and learners. The approach he used with us modeled for us a teaching style that would shape our careers greatly as we assumed these same important roles – of teacher, advisor and mentor.

However, Israel Scheffler claims in his chapter about Dean Francis Keppel, that he, Scheffler, knew almost nothing about the field of Education when he was invited to join the Graduate School of Education faculty. Good fortune and Keppel's perceptiveness initiated a career at Harvard that lasted over fifty years.

Keppel had a grand vision about what the educational experience at the university level should be like for both faculty and students and it was quite revolutionary. He assumed the Deanship with only a B.A. degree on his resume, and later became Secretary of Education in the Kennedy administration when he left Harvard in 1961. Scheffler describes him as personable, charming, and down to earth with an ability to cut through all formalities relating to pomp and circumstance, while at the same time displaying exceptional analytical power and insight. When Keppel interviewed Scheffler for the position of instructor at HGSE in 1952,

Keppel, unlike Deans at other schools, asked no questions. Instead, he described the conditions and problems that existed at HGSE at that time. Later, Scheffler confessed to Keppel that he had had no background in Education. Keppel replied that he would not have been hired if his area of expertise had been Education. Clearly, the Dean's goal was to bring new breadth and depth to the field of Education. I arrived in the fall of 1954 and was a witness to the remarkable substantive and organizational changes introduced by Keppel and the faculty he assembled, among them Israel Scheffler.

From modest beginnings, in Lawrence Hall, where William James once taught, and where courses were offered in a dark and dingy basement room by both Robert Ulich and Israel Scheffler, the physical growth of the Graduate School has been unbelievable. Today, three large modern buildings are part of the education complex, and the huge Science Center and a walking mall with traffic flowing underneath it have replaced Lawrence Hall. But more important than physical growth were the great strides in the quality and direction of the school made under Keppel's leadership, with the assistance of outstanding faculty members like Scheffler.

As Scheffler relates in his chapter, as a new instructor, he was given less responsibility, not more, to prepare his new course, and to think about how to relate Philosophy, his area of expertise, to the field of Education. He was not permitted to teach during his first semester on campus and was told to spend the time learning about the school and its personnel. Half of his time was to be devoted to research and he was given free rein to select whatever course content he considered appropriate. The Dean told Scheffler that he was the resident expert and that "we bet on the horse and not the track." Keppel even indicated that senior faculty members should have heavier responsibilities than newcomers because, presumably, they had had many more years to organize their thinking about their subject matter. This approach, if applied broadly, would have enormous implications for new teachers at all levels, and particularly for those beginning new work or work in unfamiliar or difficult settings.

Another innovation was the equal treatment of Arts and Science and

Education courses which were sometimes taught by faculty from both colleges and were cross registered. Interdisciplinary course also began to appear in both catalogs. Keppel made it very clear that the very same high evaluation standards were to apply to both Education and Arts and Science students. This was a purposeful effort to create a level playing field in terms of both quality and prestige.

The emphasis on the improvement of public schools took on increasing importance due to Keppel's efforts, and was reflected in many new theoretical as well as applied courses and in new relationships with public schools through out the Boston area. Shaplin, an Associate Dean ran, as a reform candidate, for a seat on the Cambridge School Committee, and was elected. Keep in mind that this took place in the fifties, well before the Federal Government showed any real support for public education. When Keppel later became Secretary of Education, he was a major force in the desegregation of public schools.

During this early period there was even a new master's degree program initiated for mature women to help those with young children aspire to professional careers in education. I was one of the beneficiaries of this program, as was an acquaintance of mine who occasionally brought her well fed, sleeping, new born infant to class in a basket, when she was unable to find a baby-sitter.

In spite of the hectic pace at HGSE, Scheffler was never too busy to meet with students and to engage in wide ranging and long discussions on courses, programs, philosophical issues, career decisions, grant possibilities, and personal matters. I remember a discussion between us about the anxiety-producing task of starting to write a doctoral dissertation. Scheffler's advice went as follows: select a specific area of interest within a topic, gather and analyze your data, pretend you are being given forty minutes on BBC radio to lecture on your subject, organize your information sequentially and write a topic heading for every two or three pages of written text. Then write an introduction telling your audience what you plan to present in the body of the dissertation, present your material, and then in your conclusions, tell them, in summary form, what you presented to them and your reaction to it. VOILA!! In a brief few moments, my level of anxiety was substantially

reduced. Scheffler never failed to add clarity and bring new insights to issues and problems that are constant concerns for graduate students. In his chapter on Keppel, Scheffler in fact comments that the students were his natural allies, and often saw the relevance of Philosophy to the field of Education more clearly than others. He held faculty chairs in both Arts and Sciences and Education for many years and was always a very admired and loved teacher.

Many of us who have had the honor and privilege of interacting with him know that his life and his work reflect the highest standards of what it means to be a scholar and an educator, and that his modesty and deep regard for others enhance his outstanding academic contributions and will always be treasured by those wise enough to appreciate them.

I look forward to many more occasions, like this one, to celebrate Is Scheffler's future publications.