

Why Not a Teacher-internship? _____

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A FEW WEEKS prior to the close of the fall quarter, an instructor in agriculture at the Fort Valley State College, where I am employed as registrar, said to me:

"I do not plan to submit grades for the senior elementary education majors at the end of this quarter. I feel that I can give them the grades they really deserve at the end of the winter quarter. By that time I will have had a fair opportunity to see them put into practice the things we studied during the previous quarter. I have talked with the Dean, and he has approved the idea."

The wisdom of his proposal was immediately apparent, and it occurred to me that the idea might have much wider connotations. (Senior students of the Fort Valley State College do their practice teaching during the second or winter quarter, and it is then that they have an opportunity to translate theory into practice.)

If there is any logic in the proposal to hold up first-quarter grades until students have had an opportunity to show what they can do with methods and materials they are supposed to have learned, then why shouldn't teacher-training institutions postpone the conferring of degrees for at least a period of one year in order that

students may prove themselves before the institution places its stamp of approval upon them?

A Leaf From the Medico's Notebook

The teacher-training college devotes itself exclusively to the task of training teachers who, in turn, will help or hinder, inspire or discourage, boys and girls in elementary and high schools, public and private, throughout the country. In many instances, graduates of teacher-training institutions with mediocre ability have developed into fairly successful teachers; some with brilliant minds have made poor teachers. Hence, it is obvious that a college degree, granted on the basis of the successful completion of academic requirements, is not a definite indication that the recipient can do a good job of teaching. One of the best ways of determining whether or not a person is a good teacher is to observe him over an extended period in a real teaching situation.

Perhaps our medical colleges have gone further in this direction than any of our other professional schools. I refer to the practice of having graduates serve a one-year period of internship. Even so, the medical college confers the degree as soon as the student has completed the theoretical part of his work.

Would not the teacher-training institutions do well to require their students to work on a teaching job for at least one year after completing the regular four-year course of study and grant the degree at the end of the fifth year, provided the student has performed satisfactorily as a teacher?

Here is a proposal for postponing the conferring of college degrees until prospective teachers have proved themselves on the job. A successful year of teaching after four years of work in a teacher-training institution would qualify the students for a bachelor's degree—and a job. The plan is proposed by Cornelius V. Troup, registrar at Fort Valley State College in Georgia.

In the event the student fails to do a good job, he might be required to return to the institution for a further period of study during which time particular emphasis would be placed upon his weaknesses. He would then be required to teach again to the satisfaction of all concerned. If he never develops the necessary skills, the degree is never conferred and whoever accepts him as a teacher accepts an unfinished product as far as the institution is concerned.

Under such a system, the teacher-training institution would have to work out a definite scheme of evaluation in order that the student's work might be fairly appraised. A questionnaire might be devised for the use of the principal or the supervisor under whom the student might work. The student, himself, might well be provided with a self-evaluating device. These instruments should be followed up by periodic visits from representatives of the teacher-training institution who would observe the teacher in action in and out of the classroom. These observations should also help the institution strengthen its own program.

The Plan Poses Questions

Every rose has its thorn; hence it is to be expected that there may be some conditions which might render such a proposal impracticable. First of all, what happens in the case of the student who wants to earn an advanced degree before beginning his teaching career? Would he still be required to spend the fifth year in the field as a teacher while he might be using that same time in completing the requirements for a master's degree? What of the student who attends the teacher-training institution for convenience and is interested in law, or medicine, or beauty culture? What of the in-service teacher who has already demonstrated that he is a

good teacher although he does not hold a degree?

I am not at all sure that I have the answer to these and other questions which might be raised regarding the proposal to postpone the conferring of degrees. However, assuming that those who enter teacher-training institutions do so because they are primarily interested in becoming teachers, these institutions could, with impunity, make this a requirement of all who expect to be graduated. An exception might be made in the case of the in-service teacher when the institution has satisfied itself that the person is a good teacher. It is also possible that the matter of proper certification might present another problem. Probably the solution might be found in the granting of the provisional certificate to the interne, and the professional certificate to the graduate.

Finally, what real good could be reasonably expected from such a system? (1) If a student realizes when he first enters a teacher-training institution that his academic grades earned over a period of four years will not be the only measuring rod used in determining his fitness for graduation, he is likely to put forth far greater effort to do a thorough job of learning than is true under our present system. (2) The student who goes forth as a graduate of a teacher-training institution enters the field as an experienced product as contrasted with the inexperienced graduate of the liberal arts college. This should mean that the graduates of teacher-training institutions would get first consideration in the matter of jobs.

With the provision of a practical program of education for the four-year period of study plus the additional year of carefully supervised internship, the graduate of the teacher-training institution should be the good teacher—with all that the term connotes.

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