

Teacher Education Needs Renovating

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"What we need" is meaningless and ineffective until we reach some consideration of "how we get it." For the actual realization of a higher quality of teaching, Samuel J. McLaughlin, professor of education, New York University, and formerly head, Department of Education, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa, suggests specific means through which pre-service education may help meet the need.

THE PROBLEM of American education is to develop not only informed citizens—those able to talk intelligently about issues and events—but also to produce citizens who are *aware*, and who will work actively and aggressively for better communities and a better world. Active citizens are not produced by mere information, however accurate it may be. Active citizens are the result of having been energetic in projects for group and community betterment over a period of years. Consequently, much, perhaps all, of our educational offering must involve follow-through programs of action. To consider situations involving change without doing anything about them, produces cynicism and a sense of futility which eventually develop into the characteristics of the average citizen who lets the other fellow do the acting.

Some Components Are Missing

Surveys of the results of schooling indicate that our educational programs have lacked much that is fundamental to effective living and to the achievement of citizenship in this modern world. Polls of our armed forces showed that the majority of those questioned were neither interested in nor informed about contemporary national and international problems. The New York Regents Survey revealed that after years of exceptionally well-planned formal

education the graduates of New York schools were not informed nor aware in many important areas required for effective living which supposedly had been "covered" by well-organized courses. Studies of a cross-section of men in our Army and Navy flight schools demonstrated that these men felt serious lacks in their education in matters of family relationships, contemporary problems, mental health, and in the development of an adequate philosophy of life. Such shortcomings which are apparent after several years of formal education merit careful analysis. Without much doubt the majority of those surveyed had had our usual school courses—World History, Problems of Democracy, Biology, Geography, and Literature. Nevertheless, the very important carry-over value—a vital, active, compelling interest in problems and issues basic to a democratic society—was seriously lacking.

Regardless of an individual's education or status in life, he is going to vote on fundamental questions, select representatives, rear a family, live in a community, and perform many important functions. Consequently, a type of education which will help the individual to do better those activities he will perform merits the intelligent consideration of all educators. *We need a new education.*

This new education will ever be alive

to situations in the school, the local community, or in the wider society which needs analysis and solution, and from these situations will emerge programs in social science, natural science, family living, and world affairs. Under such conditions learning, reading, thinking, have purpose. There is no need for artificial methods of motivation. The importance and worthwhileness of the project give the necessary drive. Children and youth seek opportunities to be associated with that which seems important. Living effectively today is a rather certain assurance that the youth will live well tomorrow. If "instruction" is related to, in fact is part and parcel of, a problem of group living in the school, the community, the world, students just naturally have interest. Youth delights in working for causes.

Banish the Ivory Tower

While many of the situations which provide genuine experience in living will be in the school, an even larger number will involve the local community and local resources, the nation and world affairs. We must guard diligently against the tendency of the school to become a little aspect of living insulated from the fast-moving world. Race relations, poverty, family living are far different when they are encountered in the give-and-take of life than when they are the mere topics for reading, group discussions or debates. Without doubt we need to include many of the ideas of the work-experience plan used much in vocational education and agriculture in more fields of our school programs. An integration of the program of the school with personal and community living is the need if we are to have active citizens.

The problem of making "schooling" part and parcel of the normal personal-social-civic-economic relationships so that education becomes the process of evaluating situations or conditions, the prescribing of means of betterment, and then the actual working for the improvements prescribed, is essentially a matter of intelligent method which fits into the philosophy and psychology of the new education. The method becomes the manner in which one can locate and make use of basic areas, and situations and problems in such areas, and then outline the way in which they may be evaluated and studied according to modern ideas of the learning process. In the type of learning suggested, acquisition of information becomes a means to intelligent evaluation and to a sane program of action. However, the modern teacher does not confuse the acquisition of information with action, nor does he assume that accurate and adequate information leads to intelligent action, or to *any* action for that matter. That has been a serious educational misconception of the past. A survey of any community is rather convincing in indicating that the best "educated" seldom play a major part in community betterment. Only practice in active citizenship over a period of years will produce informed, aware, active citizens. The task of the modern educator is to transform lesson-learning schools into schools of living. Otherwise the school becomes an artificial institution separated from the true process of living.

Bury the Old Routines

This task of education today requires a teacher who wants to serve, who is intelligent enough to see the kind of

society for which we should strive, and who has the necessary courage to aim to fit individuals for that better society in spite of strong opposition. The true educator is one who sees clearly the functions and purposes of education in a democracy and has a comprehensive idea of the means of realizing those purposes in the lives of boys and girls. The day has passed when the mere subject-matter specialist can pursue his narrow plan without knowledge of the manner in which his field fits into the total educational goal. Education is a challenge to the best minds, the bravest souls, the most venturesome spirits, and the most wholesome personalities.

Not only must we see the potentialities abundant in education for living, but we must recognize also that if we are to have schools which are living, dynamic institutions where active experiences rather than academic exercises are the rule, we must have teachers who will feel at home in the modern school. And this can be true only when pre-service education has been based on a similar philosophy and practice. The teacher whose education has been principally textbookish and acquired in an ivory tower, insulated from the dynamic stream of life, will be bewildered in a modern school.

Yet with few salient exceptions, teacher education in the United States is as academic and textbookish, as separated from children and society, and as segmented and departmentalized as is general education. Such programs must soon be interred, and teacher education must be patterned after active schools in which modern teachers guide children and youth in all basic areas of living. Teacher education needs renovating.

A Keystone for Progress

A program of teacher education designed to prepare teachers for leadership in modern schools must have the following basic characteristics:

1. There must be provision for generous contacts with children and youth in many types of informal activities and conditions throughout the prospective teacher's college career.
2. Ample opportunity must be provided in the pre-service education of teachers for them to have wide experience in community living, rubbing elbows with the rank-and-file and contacting real social-economic problems.
3. The teacher's pre-service education must provide a broad general education in those areas considered essential to intelligent, active citizenship.
4. The college classes which the prospective teacher attends should use those methods which the person is expected to use in a modern school.
5. The program of general education should be characterized by unity rather than narrow departmentalization and a vital, "experience", concrete approach should be used.

Living with Children and Youth

Whatever has been accomplished or will be accomplished in the betterment of society has to come about through the medium of people. One of the major emphases in teacher education must be the acquisition by the prospective teacher of a thorough understanding of real children and youth of all types from all areas of society. Consequently, our teacher-education programs must provide for a rich and vital experience with children and youth for the *entire* college period. Learning to understand the characteristics and motivations of boys and girls is a longterm process and it cannot hope to be achieved by a few

months of "observation and student teaching."

At Cornell College a great variety of experience with children and youth was provided throughout the years of college. The program required that prospective teachers get a generous amount of contact with boys and girls during the school year by taking leadership in community activities for youth such as Scouts, Camp Fire, Hi-Y, directing recreational and playground projects, taking care of children in homes, assisting in settlement house activities, and directing clubs. During the summer "vacation" periods, they acquired positions in summer camps, playgrounds, settlement houses, day nurseries, children's homes, and recreational centers, in order to observe and study youth intensively for long periods of time. Thus creative group leadership of youth is developed through rich, directed experience *with* youth.

Getting Acquainted with America

Reading about problems and discussing them produces a far different result than that which occurs when individuals meet social-economic problems face to face in our communities and cities. Race relations, poverty, labor unions, job hunting, and housing are vastly different when they are encountered in the give-and-take of life from what they are as mere topics for reading, group discussion or debate. The problems of the underprivileged become more realistic after one has lived among them or worked with them. The psychology and problems of factory workers in mass industries become more understandable after a person has spent a few months on the assembly line.

The bulk of America's prospective

teachers has lived a very secluded life. If these teachers are from a certain economic level, they seldom have associations with other economic groups. If they live in urban areas, they usually attend urban colleges and universities and know little or nothing of rural America. Those who live in rural areas and small communities generally go to colleges in their region and are often ignorant of America's cities and their baffling problems. Nevertheless, it is those teachers who introduce our children and youth to dynamic America. A program of teacher education designed to place teachers in our schools who are equal to the great task of education must knowingly provide genuine experience in those areas and situations which form America.

For some years Cornell College has directed the summer experience of undergraduates in education so that they have had positions and responsibilities in both rural and urban areas, and have worked at both industrial and institutional jobs. They have worked in factories, stores, business establishments, restaurants, settlement houses, summer camps, recreational centers, children's homes, and rural churches. Such contact helped to develop resourcefulness and maturity of judgment.

"Courses" Come Alive

If teachers are to participate in and contribute to schools where a functional youth-needs curriculum is operating, they must have an opportunity to pursue "courses" of that type while in college. Consequently, a curriculum designed to prepare modern teachers for modern schools must get far removed from the traditional, "air-tight", subject-matter courses and provide more courses

which cut across departmental lines and are organized on a functional, experience basis. If teachers in today's schools must direct experience-core courses which deal with the personal-social-civic problems of today's youth, then the pre-service education of those teachers must involve such areas as living, vital, aspects of their education. If in modern schools teachers must deal with areas such as family living, intercultural relationships, contemporary social-economic problems and affairs, vocational orientation, and mental health, and if they are to develop dynamic areas of experience; then their college years must include educational preparation for such responsibilities.

The elimination of departmental barriers in general education is extremely important, but that is not enough. Modern teachers in modern schools conduct surveys and field trips, provide for real experience in community projects, and participate in social action groups in the community. Consequently, similar activities must be significant parts of college courses and college experience.

Overhaul the Curriculum

Professional courses in education as generally offered need a complete overhauling and evaluation. Many of them are based on an obsolete philosophy of education and on an outmoded psychology of learning. Too many are time-consumers designed for no well-conceived purpose. Furthermore, they are too fragmentary and too departmentalized. The usual school of education or department of education needs to evaluate its offerings and provide for more unity and more "integration." There are too many separate courses which head toward no particular focus.

A fusion of courses needs to be designed which focuses on the basic problems of being a genuine educator.

Professional courses in education must also be organized on a realistic, experience basis. An academic course in educational psychology pursued in a literal vacuum provides little actual assistance to the teacher. On the other hand, a thorough consideration of the modern psychology of learning is very important and necessary if the aim is to assist the teacher at that time to organize effective learning experiences. The same criticism is true of "methods" if principles are given in isolation. We need a unification of so-called theory courses with practical experience so that the good is apparent to all concerned.

For the past several years at Cornell College a course titled "Foundations of Education" has been offered which unifies the basic ideas, materials and principles of sociology and psychology around the problems of being an educator. Every unit of the course originates with a genuine experience involving a basic problem to be solved. When the nature of the individual is considered, prospective teachers study data provided in guidance materials and observe the groups of children they will have in student teaching. When the unit on the psychology of learning is studied and discussed, the prospective teacher prepares resource units which may be used when she assumes charge of the group of boys and girls she has been studying and observing. An attempt throughout is made to provide a genuine experience approach. Purposefulness has characterized the course, and every member of the group follows theory through to active production.

What'll We Do?

The pre-service education of teachers for today's schools is a tremendous challenge. The formal, academic approach can never accomplish the job. In fact such a program is certain to eliminate the creative person with a sensitive social conscience, for the creative, personal, potentialities of education will

never become apparent. Thus, schools will be staffed principally with the dull, uncreative, individuals who lack social vision. Teacher education must be designed to reveal by experience the tremendous possibilities of education as a shaper of society. Only then, will education attract the caliber of person commensurate with the task involved.

Adventures in Pre-Service

*Extraclass work
is valuable*

*Courtesy Sarah Lawrence
College, Bronxville, N. Y.*



Beginner and veteran work together

Courtesy Des Moines (Iowa) Public Schools



Glenn Cole Photo, Webster Groves, Mo.

Conferences clear the way

That all individuals teaching boys and girls for the first time in the fall of 1946 can look back to experiences such as those described herein, is a claim which never could be substantiated. That not only they, but all teachers, should have such experiences, or ones similar to them, is a claim which can be justified. Those few who have had them will, we believe, be better teachers. In-service education efforts can help in many ways to overcome the lacks. But even the best of in-service efforts can never compensate for inadequate pre-service preparation. The accounts of experiments which give emphasis to the importance of human relations, child development, community activities, and socio-economic problems illustrate, in part, how such lacks can be eliminated.

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