

The case for field study presented by Edward C. Solomon, director of field work, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N. Y., is directed particularly toward the curriculum of a liberal arts college. Its claims, however, pertain in equal force to the program of a teachers college. The opportunities which this type of study presents for developing knowledge and understanding of people and the communities in which they live, make it a necessary part of the professional as well as the general education program of prospective teachers.

LIBERAL EDUCATION without field work is like bread-baking without yeast. They are both indispensable ingredients if the processes are to yield products approaching expectations.

The individual should find in liberal education, experiences which cultivate growth toward emotional maturity; toward emancipation from, as well as understanding of, the ways of the past in order that wise and independent ways of adjustment to the future may be selected and created; and toward the ability to contribute creatively to appropriate social change in a democratic society. In short, all the student's powers to deal effectively with concrete life situations should be strengthened and integrated.

In this endeavor, the minutes of the previous meetings of mankind are important and should be consulted when relevant to the learner's needs. But minutes of meetings, at best, convey second-hand information, even when read aloud and interpreted by the wisest chairman, and do not provide sure guides to the disposal of "old or new business." Nor does the reading of the minutes allow for the kind of participation which builds the individual's power to deal with the business of subsequent meetings. Only by attending meetings also,

thrusting one's intellectual roots into the fertile soil of real life experiences, do minutes come to have real meaning. Firsthand knowledge is essential to intellectual life. To provide meaningful, direct experiences is the function of field work at all levels of education and in practically all subjects.

The term, field work, is here used to designate participation, observation, and research carried on for educational purposes outside the college classroom. It is the expanded laboratory in which the student can sharpen his ability to see, to smell, to hear, to feel, and can improve his ability to formulate a problem, to gather, classify, and interpret data in terms of the problem, and to work effectively with his fellowman. Field work will vary in its nature and the extent of its use according to subject matter, the purpose of its use, the needs of the students involved, the resources of the college faculty and facilities, and according to the potentialities and requirements of the community.

Sarah Lawrence College from its inception has made extensive use of field work because of its educational philosophy and because, empirically viewed, field work has generally yielded expected results. Other undergraduate colleges, though far too few, have also

found field work indispensable. A few examples drawn from the experience of Sarah Lawrence are presented to suggest possible ways of using field work.

Learning the "Hows"

Short field trips taken to nearby places by individuals or groups for observational purposes in connection with the materials studied in courses are the obvious and most frequent type of field work. Although limited in scope and difficult to manage successfully, they are useful in providing concrete illustrations of concepts, and expanding the student's perceptions.

For example, a class in economic behavior visited an elevator-manufacturing plant to examine the modern industrial process in action. The tour began where the raw materials, such as bar stock and pig-iron, were received and followed them through each stage of production to the finished elevator in operation: from furnace to foundry—machining to subassembly—final assembly to shipping. During the tour students had ample opportunity to ask questions of workers, as well as of the plant representative who acted as conductor.

The tour was followed by a period of full discussion with a company official. The company's corporate structure, markets for its products, wage structure, labor policies, attitude toward OPA, and reconversion problems were among the topics emphasized. At the time, negotiations on a new contract were taking place between the company and a labor union. This was discussed with the management representative and during the lunch hour, the group heard the union side at a rally for workers conducted by the president, business

agent, and district representative of the union.

The observations made during this one day furnished grist for the class mill in surprising abundance considering the brief and fragmental nature of the experience. They gave added meaning to the dynamics of the industrial complex. Students saw human beings as well as products and charts. The experience was also valuable in revealing sharply the different ways in which the realities of the situation filtered through the screen of preperceptual patterns of the different observers.

Considerable preparation preceded this field trip. Reading included a description of the company's organization, history, and products, and also the contract between the company and the union. The class discussed and agreed in advance upon the major points of interest to be observed. Organizational details included obtaining permission for the visit from the company's home office; consultation with the works manager of the plant; arranging transportation; and notifying the various college offices from the dean's to the dietitian's.

This same class during the year also visited the National Maritime Union headquarters, the New York Stock and Curb Exchanges, a stockbroker's office, a large advertising agency, and areas in the city providing examples of good and bad housing. The class brought "field trips" to the campus—an expert on the cotton-picking machine, a reporter from the shopping service of a metropolitan daily, a representative from UNRRA, a railroad official, and the officers of a trade union.

Experience Plus

In addition to these group activities,

almost every student in the class did field work in connection with an individual project. For example, one student in making a study of city planning, interviewed several city-planning commissioners and then visited different areas in a city which illustrated zoning classifications. She also participated as an interviewer in a housing study conducted by the College for the State Division of Housing. Another student in preparing a paper on the conditions of work of seamen went aboard a typical merchant ship, interviewed shipping company and union officials, and spent many hours talking to seamen at a union hiring hall and at the Seamen's Church Institute.

It should be kept in mind that the above is an account of field activities of one class. Some classes use field work more and some less extensively. Classes in the community, child psychology, and preparation for social work come under the "more" category; classes in literature, philosophy, science, under the "less."

Classes in political and natural science heard Baruch's address, and Gromyko's comments at the initial meeting of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission. Chemistry students spent a day at the laboratory and plant of a company which manufactured yeast and alcohol. The operation of the most advanced type of mechanical calculator was demonstrated for a mathematics class. A class in design visited workrooms of garment manufacturers. Physics students went into plants to see in commercial application the principles of optics, mechanics, and motors. Students of drama saw professional plays in production and visited concerns which supply

costumes, lighting, and other equipment and services for theatrical producers. A class in industrial relations attended hearings on labor cases, conferences, meetings of labor unions, and visited plants, employment agencies, and picket lines of striking workers. On numerous occasions one could find groups of art students at art shows and museums; music students at concerts; dance students at recitals; child-psychology students at child-guidance centers, nursery schools, institutions for mentally and physically handicapped and delinquent children. Students of the community participated in numerous meetings in the community, religious, political, business, and made many trips in studying its ecological structure. (Indeed, several people in the community refer to themselves as off-campus faculty members, and well they might since they are so often called upon for assistance.)

Although individual students in almost all classes take such trips as are deemed appropriate for individual interests and needs, some classes use individual field work almost entirely. Some field trips are less successful if participated in by more than one person. To illustrate, a student studying political forces in a community wished to interview a local political boss who was a very elusive person, straight out of Lincoln Steffens. She managed to obtain the interview after considerable effort. It is unlikely that he would have met with a group of students and certainly he would have been rather non-committal in such a situation. As it was, the student tapped a rich source of information about political organization which could have been obtained in no other way. Incidentally, she was aston-

ished to find him a charming and intelligent person, astonished because of her preconceived notions of political bosses in general and this one in particular.

Overall Study

Research projects are better suited to the purposes of training in research methods, in working cooperatively in a group, and with people in the community, and in achieving the discipline and craftsmanship that accrue from systematic and extended jobs of work. Moreover, through research projects—housing surveys, studies of child-care needs, of recreational and educational facilities in certain neighborhoods, of employment problems—the college can effectively contribute to community life and bring about a closer functional relationship between itself and the community.

Illustrative of this type of field work was a recent housing study made in the city of Yonkers. The staff was composed of twenty-eight students from classes in introduction to social science, the community, consumer economics, statistics, and creative writing, under the supervision of one instructor and the director of field work. The purpose of the study, undertaken with the cooperation and at the request of the State Division of Housing and the local Municipal Housing Authority, was to ascertain the relocation problems and probable eligibility of families residing in a slum area soon to be cleared for the construction of a low-cost housing project.

Four students had the responsibility for the project as a whole; others were utilized in special tasks such as inter-

viewing and writing. The preparation involved defining the problem, a study of the literature, conferences with housing officials, drawing up of the schedule, testing and revising it, preparation of instructions for interviewing. Recruiting and training of student interviewers came next. Publicity in the local newspaper and announcements in the neighborhood's two churches prepared the residents for the visits of the interviewers.

Most interviewers worked in pairs, although some preferred to work alone. They went to their first interviews somewhat anxiously because almost all were inexperienced and because most of the families in the area were Negro. The second interviews came easily and then they went to work with zest and confidence. One pair of freshmen reported that the lady of the house fainted at the door when they announced that they were from the housing authority. They carried her to a sofa, revived her, and, at her insistence, completed the schedule!

Students were impressed with the cordiality and intelligence of the people they met and with how well they managed on the low incomes and the miserable shelters which characterized the area. The teacher of the introductory course in social science reported that his students, all from high-income groups, had shown little interest in or understanding of levels and standards of living before they "saw for themselves." Since the interviewers were calling on official business, getting and giving information beneficial to the interviewees, the project did not have the objectionable slumming aspect often associated with field work.

The canvass had to continue for several weeks, a test of interest and energy, especially with the need of going back again and again to recheck schedules or to locate residents not at home during previous visits. The data from the schedules were processed, analyzed, and written up, a huge task, by the four students with overall responsibility. Participants tended to forget their many hours of hard work, their cold ears and numb feet when the study appeared in final mimeographed form and they received a published statement of appreciation from the Housing Authority.

Out-of-school-time Assets

Many students hold part-time jobs, some paid, some volunteer, throughout the school year as a part of their course work. From these jobs they bring into class, problems and materials for study and, conversely, are able to work out in concrete social situations, principles learned in class reading and discussion. Responsible attitudes and habits of work result; some situations offer pre-professional training and an opportunity for "trying-out" an occupation. A student interested in social work may work one day a week in a social welfare agency. The college conducts a nursery school on the campus as a laboratory for students of child psychology in which students with adequate training participate. A student interested in a career in personnel work may serve as an interne in the local office of the United States Employment Service.

During the last year of the war, members in a class in industrial relations worked three nights a week during a summer term in a war plant processing quartz crystals for radar equipment.

During the period of employment, in addition to learning job skills, the class studied the organization and policy of the company, the problems of converting the industry to war production, labor organizations, labor-management committees, factors affecting workers and production, job analysis, the role of government agencies, and reconversion problems.

Some students work at jobs during their vacation time that have educational relevance. Recognizing the need for integrating the summer period with the rest of the college program, the college increasingly assists students in finding and selecting such jobs as well as in planning summer reading and study.

College and Community

Programs involving college and community cooperation serve to bring about constructive relationships between these groups as well as meet other educational needs. An example is the Labor Education Committee, organized last year, after full discussion between labor leaders in the area and representatives from the college concerning educational needs of labor leaders and rank-and-file union members in lower Westchester County. Representatives from AFofL and CIO unions and from the college comprise the nine members of the committee. The program was inaugurated with a series of forums held in different union halls on subjects pertaining to the history of labor unions, analysis of the strike situation, and political action. These were followed by a class in labor law for union leaders and several programs for membership meetings of locals. The Labor Education Committee recently assisted the Yonkers Federation

of Churches in organizing five sessions on labor problems for its School of Religion for Understanding Our Times to take place this fall. Plans are under way for a full educational service for labor unions this year with programs for membership meetings, classes taught by faculty members and students, and forums for larger groups. One union has requested student assistance in editing a periodical.

Because of such activities and because members of the college have taken an active part in community life, the college is coming more and more to be thought of as a valuable and trustworthy community institution. Each year requests pour in for aid of one sort or another. With this growing reliance upon the college have come richer opportunities for field work. Also with increased interaction there seems to be more understanding on the part of the people in the community of what the college is attempting to do.

Knowledge Is Increasing

Several purposes in using field work have been suggested. Through field work students receive indispensable training in gathering, analyzing, and utilizing real life materials for socially desirable reasons. College-community relations may be enhanced. There is another purpose. The college is accumulating a growing body of knowledge and information about communities in its vicinity useful to teachers, students, and to the communities themselves. Furthermore, experience with field work as curricular material has deepened the understanding of education. Some material indicating this is already available in

both manuscript and published form.¹

How It Works

Most educators agree in principle on the value of field work in education that liberalizes. Some disagree on the extent and ways of its use. But none denies that an ambitious program of field work requires prodigious organizational and teaching effort. This last consideration probably accounts for the slight emphasis given it in most colleges. Although "reading" is easier than "walking," skillful organization can facilitate the use of field work and improve its effectiveness.

Sarah Lawrence College has experience in this regard to submit for criticism and for whatever use it may have for others. All matters concerning field work come under the purview of the Field Work Committee. A subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, it is presently composed of eight members, four faculty members and four students. The committee reports to the Curriculum Committee and the president of the college. It meets every third week. The chairman of the Field Work Committee is the director of field work. He teaches a course, *The Community*, which is built around field work. He has a full-time assistant and two part-time student assistants.

A review of the duties of the director of field work will indicate the organization for field work.

¹ Helen Merrell Lynd, *Field Work in College Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). Esther Raushenbush, ed., *Psychology in Individual Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). Jean Carol Trepp, *The Uses of Field Work in Teaching Economics* (Bronxville, N. Y.: Sarah Lawrence College, 1939).

1. Acts as chairman of Field Work Committee and receives advice and direction from the representatives of faculty and students.

2. Assists teachers and students in planning and arranging field-work activities. Ultimate decisions are the responsibility of the teacher and his students.

3. Keeps records of field work in progress, completed, planned. These records are indispensable in coordinating, planning, and evaluating field work.

4. Coordinates all field work activities for efficiency and integration of courses.² Keeps the college informed about field work through student meetings, the student weekly newspaper, and a bi-monthly mimeographed bulletin, *Field Work Log*. This helps prevent duplication and stimulates interest in field work.

5. Directs certain field studies and field trips. Takes charge of most research projects and cooperates with teachers and students in carrying them through to completion. Is responsible for a comprehensive plan of community studies being carried forward by the College in Yonkers, suggesting areas needing study, sources of data, and techniques of research.

6. Acts as liaison between the community and college in matters pertaining to field work and in related matters. Requests from the community for field studies and student workers are referred to him.

7. Evaluates field work continuously in order to improve the quality of similar experiences.³

8. Makes reports as required: twice a year a comprehensive formal report to the president and the curriculum committee, informal reports to the field work committee from time to time.

9. Makes completed studies available for

² For example, four classes interested in juvenile delinquency joined together on a program of field trips and meetings. Economies of effort were effected and the points of view of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and social work were brought to bear on the subject.

³ Soon the College hopes to begin a systematic evaluation of field work as compared with other teaching methods.

use. Studies involving field work and reports on field experiences are kept on file in the office of the director. Some are bound and placed in the college library; a few have been published as parts of books.

10. Recommends budget and approves expenditures for field work out of college appropriations for this purpose.

11. Supervises work of assistants.

As the above outline of duties indicates, the major function of the director of field work is to assist in enriching the content of courses; the minor function is administrative work. Obviously, a thorough liking of working with people, and of teaching, is an essential qualification for a director. A background of experience in both rural and urban communities is desirable. He should be qualified by educational training for faculty membership with emphasis on research and teaching in the field of social science. Knowledge of school administration is also advantageous.

The Pro and Con

In conclusion, some questions might be raised that bear upon the success or failure of field work in college education.

• Is the particular project in field work important to the student doing it? • Is the project focused upon particular problems connected with course work? • Is it related to reading and other media of learning? • Does it come at the appropriate time in the student's growth and sequence of learning experiences? • Is it superficial in nature or is the field experience conducive to thoughtful observation and analysis? • Do the results expected justify the costs in time and energy? • What effects will the project have upon people in the community? • Does it satisfy a community as well as an educational need? • Can the project be carried through according to

objective standards of accuracy and excellence? • For an observational trip, have adequate plans been made for its preparation, execution, and for individual reporting and analysis of the new materials afterwards? • Is there a sufficient number of students participating for stimulating comparison of observations or too many for independent contact with the situation? • Will some other medium serve the educational purpose better than a field work project? • Does the project motivate the student toward new undertakings?

Field work as a method of study is no simple panacea for the ills that beset education in this chaotic postwar world. But, in the words of Helen Merrell Lynd, “. . . by its directness, its freshness, and the nature of its materials it can become at the present time a particularly valuable means of helping free the individual to make full use of his power.”⁴

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 160, 161.

Preparation for Leadership

WILLIAM T. GRUHN

In planning teachers-college curriculums, a variety of ways have been used in accomplishing the purpose of acquainting students with the school as only one part of the total community in which it exists. William T. Gruhn, associate professor of education, University of Connecticut, Storrs, describes the way in which the University of Connecticut plans for community experience as a part of student teaching.

TODAY'S TEACHER numbers among daily responsibilities, tasks that carry him far beyond classroom walls. He supervises clubs, assemblies, social functions, and other extraclass activities; he assumes responsibility for certain administrative activities; he participates in professional-improvement activities, such as local faculty meetings, curriculum planning and revision, and meetings of local, state, and national professional organizations; and he is active in various civic interests of the local community. Teacher-education institutions must, as an integral part of the pre-service program, provide contacts with these various duties and responsibilities of the teacher in service. Such is the intention in the observation and student-teaching activities which constitute a major part

of the teacher-education program at the University of Connecticut. Designed to give students an all-round experience in the duties and responsibilities of a teacher, the program includes opportunities to extend participation beyond campus boundaries.

The State as the Laboratory

There is no demonstration or training school at this university. All observation and student teaching is carried on in selected junior and senior high schools throughout the state. Each school is selected in terms of the contribution which it is believed can be made by that school to the particular student concerned. The first consideration is, of necessity, the type of teachers available in the student's teaching fields. Other

Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.