

The Changing World

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NEEDED: A NEW TEACHER EDUCATION

NO SMALL PART of the present crisis in education can be attributed to the weaknesses of teacher education. In the case of a large proportion of American teachers it cannot truly be said that they have been given a professional education. Large numbers of them are graduates of liberal arts colleges in which their instructors had little insight into the problems of public education and in other cases refused even to admit that they were engaged in the business of preparing teachers. I know many teachers who have told me that they came out of their college experience with less faith in public education than they had when they left high school. To be sure the teachers colleges have done better in this direction. They believe in education and they give their graduates some insight into the problems of the public school. As far as the university schools of education are concerned, their programs have been ineffective for years. Usually a few education courses are superimposed upon an otherwise unrelated body of liberal arts courses. Through it all runs a pious hope that the student will somehow integrate his professional and general education. In no type of teacher training institution have we developed practice teaching or other direct experience to anything like the level which now characterizes medical education. In fact, if teachers colleges and universities were to establish teacher education on a quality basis comparable to that obtaining in medical schools the cost of instruction in such institutions would probably be doubled.

The plain fact is we have not faced the problems of teacher education squarely. In no one of the various types of institutions that now deal with the problem have we adequate facilities and realistic conceptions

of our task or of the resources needed to do that task effectively. For one thing, we need a new curriculum in teacher education. In the past our educational courses have had a scientific foundation which is too narrow. The older professional education courses were based largely upon psychological material and this often of an outdated character. There are many other sciences which have much to offer to the teacher; among them anthropology, biology, sociology, economics, and political science. In schools of education and teachers colleges we need scientists in the various areas that throw light on the human organism and on the human behavior. These scientists should be studying education, utilizing the specialized knowledges of their field. They would play a part in teacher education somewhat analogous to the role played by physiologists and bacteriologists in medical education. These scientists apply bacteriology and physiology to medical problems. So we need anthropologists, biologists, and other scientists who will apply their scientific knowledge to the study of educational problems. When we get such staff members we can develop a new content for education courses. We can integrate this content with the general and specialized preparation of teachers.

Finally, we must find some way of giving prospective teachers a practical experience, not only in teaching but in various types of community service. In the schools of the country there are millions of children who lack the needed individual instruction. Similarly, there are thousands of teachers in training who need experience in working with children. Why hasn't someone the inventive genius to bring

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and not officials, under the aegis of our best periodicals remembered that "teaching" alone cannot make children learn, that some children never learn as well as we want them to learn, no matter what any one does; if *all* administrators, and not only some of them, would assume that teachers in the classroom know far more about the children in their classrooms than any supervisor; if *all* administrators, and not only the most revered, would now and then inspect the teachers' work in a spirit of humility and with the purpose of learning instead of criticizing; if there were fewer "training" efforts and more matter-of-fact acceptance of teachers' complaints, judgments, opinions, and hints; if *all* administrators, and not only the most thoughtful and best beloved, remembered at least occasionally that for good teaching they are, in the last analysis, the least necessary of all school personnel whose existence is justified pedagogically only if they make the teachers' work easier and more worthwhile; if *all* administrators, as well as those who in their souls remain teachers to the end of time no matter what they are called, remembered that for education the essentials are the teachers and their talents, our school systems would stand a better chance of doing a real job of educating.

The great teacher is humble because he knows how much more there always is to learn; the great supervisor is a human being, who also knows his limitations, and his associates—even the least to the proudest—love and respect him for it. The useful administrator knows he is not wiser than the teacher simply because he has more power and a larger salary. He knows he gets his position and the higher salary because so few persons want the thankless job, i.e. his salary is the answer to supply and modern demand. Let the administrator tell the teaching force just that, and see how quickly morale improves and how much more responsibility teachers will accept for their own success.

Teaching will not improve so long as others want to do the thinking; teachers who have brains and ability will not want to be called teachers if that means carrying out orders. Talking about it never made any teacher better, criticism never did any good—it only "riles" the good teacher and makes the less industrious willing to let the administrator do the work. Why think when thinking is not needed, why use one's intelligence when intelligence is not wanted, but only obedience.—MYRTLE MANN GILLET, *Supervisor, Special Education, Philadelphia Public Schools.*

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these two groups together and give prospective teachers experience and children needed instructional service? Similarly, schools of education, teachers colleges, and other institutions preparing teachers are located in rural or urban communities that need community services of various sorts. The students in these colleges could secure fine experience in this type of community service and the communities could benefit from the services rendered.

We shall never have a really vital education until we have a vital teacher education, and we cannot secure this education out of formal bookish materials and even more bookish experiences. Teach-

ing is a vital human endeavor; it is constantly changing in terms of the life which supports the school. Teachers must understand human beings. To do so they must know something of the sciences which throw light on the human organism and behavior. But they can best study these sciences when they spend at least part of their educational lives and experiences working with people in schools and communities. Some schools of education, teachers colleges, and liberal arts colleges are going to undertake this kind of program in the near future. These schools will lead the way to a really effective teacher education.

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