

► Learning is an active process. When a student learns something it is because he himself has done something. He has changed. He has experienced something. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to so arrange things that the student is challenged and free to learn.

► Each student has a different tempo and differing techniques of learning. Therefore, the teacher plans with the group a variety of activities in which each may function best.

► Students learn much from each other. Oftentimes they teach each other from a richness of experience the teacher does not have and they share problems fruitfully. Therefore, the teacher makes many opportunities for students to know each other well and share with each other.

► Students learn best when they are doing something real.

► And they carry into their own work optimism and determination as well as techniques when they feel they have been party to a job well done.

These are essentials of the activity approach to learning. They are not formulae and tricks. Each teacher and each class must discover anew their applications. Each fresh discovery builds courage and faith. Active-mindedness, the inquiring spirit, the zest for a real job—well done—are fundamentals of the morality of democracy. This is the activity approach to education!

Teacher Education in England_____

I. N. DICKINSON

Among the many delightful and stimulating experiences enjoyed by participants in the UNESCO seminar on the Education and Training of Teachers was the opportunity to see several of the English Emergency Teacher Training Colleges. Not only were we impressed with the positive way in which these colleges were meeting the problem of teacher shortage, but we were interested in their possible impact on the education of both teachers and children in England. It was my privilege to spend one day at the Wall Hall Training College in Hertfordshire. I am, therefore, particularly pleased to include in this issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP an account by Miss I. N. Dickinson, principal of the College, of the way in which an experience curriculum functions in teacher education. Miss W. M. Pearce and Miss M. E. Davies, members of the College staff, assisted in the preparation of the article.—GAH

IN MAY 1945 the first Emergency Training College in England was opened at Wall Hall, Aldenham, Hertfordshire. The house, built on an older foundation early in the nineteenth century and standing in particularly beautiful park-

land, was owned for many years by J. Pierpont Morgan, the American millionaire. Of no particular period of architecture, the pseudo-medieval façade of the house, covered with richly colored creeper, captures the imagina-

tion of students who enjoy the homeliness and informality of the comfortable, spacious rooms inside—rooms varying in style from ivory and gilt classical decoration, silk wallpapers, and oak paneling, to the least attractive but practical and light construction hall neatly hidden in the backyard.

The College was intended to provide a residential course of eighteen months' duration for one hundred women who would teach in primary schools—that is, children from two to eleven years of age. The original staff consisted of women with varied experience and background, only one of whom, with the exception of the principal, had had any previous experience in training colleges. The students ranged in age from twenty-one to forty-one, and in experience from factory to land army, police-woman to actress.

Education for Personal and Professional Satisfaction

Education must be thought of in terms of activity and experience, and this is as true of training college students as of children in nursery schools. How could the life and learning at the College be planned to help students to understand as a living reality the philosophy which underlies modern education?

Their comparative maturity and the variety of their past experiences were strong assets. But their own memories of schools and learning were limited and consisted mostly of the "facts to be stored and knowledge to be acquired" type of school in which the most successful teacher was the one who maintained the heaviest silence, and the role of the children was to re-

ceive gratefully what the teacher offered. The training had somehow to be made a live experience with the student as an active participant, finding enrichment in the course planned, in the mode of attack, and in widening contacts of all kinds.

In addition, the practical problem of teaching children in large classes in not-so-large rooms had to be met, and this involved experiences which would give a thorough understanding of children and the means by which they learn. And so the course had been planned for the student *as a person* and the student *as a teacher*. Yet at no time can these two aspects be truly separated.

Physical Aspects Contribute

The growth of the student as a person is helped very much by the surroundings of the College. The beauty of the park with its river and trees; the calm of the garden with trim lawns and clipped hedges; the graciousness of the house with its suggestion of ease, leisure, and time for contemplation all combine to increase sensitivity and awareness.

The internal organization of the College is planned to give a maximum degree of responsibility to the students and yet to interfere as little as possible with their private inclinations. There are no rules, and all clubs, councils, and committees are elected by and run by the students themselves.

The staff is at hand when needed. With one staff member for approximately every ten students, individual attention and easy relationship between staff and students are possible. Much work is done through discussions on prepared topics with small groups of not more than fifteen.

Attention Focused on a Community and Its Children

The first month of the course is planned to give an opportunity to become aware of the problems of modern living, and groups of students are shown how to investigate a neighborhood and to assess its contribution to the lives of the people in it.

Visits are made to rural areas and different types of urban districts—for instance, poor industrial and new building estates. Reports are compiled on the type of dwelling available, on the provision of varied services such as doctors, nurses, shops, infant welfare clinics, social facilities for children and adults, playing fields, youth clubs, social centers, and entertainments. Time is spent in the places of employment, farms, factories, and shops, and the student actually works with the employee where this is practicable. Special attention is also given to children and their behavior. They are observed in school all day, playing in the street and in the playing fields, in the shops, on the buses, in the trains.

In this way students have the experience of first-hand knowledge. They become aware of social problems; they begin to see the need for a knowledge of the children's background; and they begin to acquire an acute concern for the characteristics of child behavior and development.

Skills Developed in Real Situations

For all this work, carefully compiled schedules for observation are supplied. The students collect the information and their experiences are pooled in group conferences. The writing and

giving of reports at these conferences gives useful practice in English composition and voice production. Since it is a natural outcome of the work undertaken, it is accomplished with greater ease and more sense of reality than would have been the case had the introduction been made through formal methods of training in writing and speaking. This is especially true for those whose schooldays are far behind and for whom easy manipulation of words is something that has to be achieved by fresh efforts.

This preliminary course is further enlivened by debates, discussions, and lectures, not only with the college staff but with workers who have first-hand experience in the problems revealed by the survey—education administrators, teachers, welfare officers, and magistrates.

Creativity Has Its Place

Imperceptibly at first, but with remarkable impetus, the development of creative powers of all kinds appears in this community of shared and widening interests. Contributory causes probably include the quality and visual wealth of the environment, which provides a cross-section of much that is changeless and changing in the English way of life; the infection of the first-rate which comes from visits to the London art galleries and museums and to concerts and theaters; and above all the opportunity—in many cases given to these grown-ups for the first time in their lives—to realize themselves as painters, writers, musicians, and actors. They show a vivid awareness of the shapes and colors, the sounds and surface textures of the countryside as it changes

from spring to summer and from autumn to winter; and with great bravery translate these impressions into painting and poetry.

Perhaps, too, the intensity of the course makes strongly personal work almost inevitable as there are no dol-drums, as it were, to encourage nervous or diffident imitation. The art course is compulsory for every student. Many of them have said, "I should never have taken art from choice, but now I begin to see what it means and I wouldn't have missed it for anything." These creative experiences in music, speech, and art, as well as providing a kind of aesthetic stretch, have also produced more discerning criticism from the students.

Nearness to London has meant that musicians and others actively engaged in the arts, as well as speakers on a wide variety of topics, have been able to play or lecture to the College. Many of the students who have enjoyed College excursions to London and to places of historic interest in the more immediate neighborhood arrange similar expeditions for the children they teach during their school practice and share with them their new-found delight in such places as the ancient city of St. Albans and the Roman Theater at Verulamium.

Actual Teaching Has Values for All

School practice is indeed important in the course, taking up one quarter of the time. This has usually been taken in three periods of varying lengths. It has been found, however, that after a short introductory practice, real teaching experience is not possible in a period of less than four weeks, excluding all time given for observation and preparations.

The schools are receptive and cooperative. They are aware of the shortage of teachers and are interested in these older students. In many cases, however, the methods in use have been teacher directed, and careful planning has been necessary to insure that the students have an opportunity to try the methods discussed in college.

Much has been done to let the teachers know about the methods and the philosophy which lie behind the students' approach to teaching. Conferences of different types have been held. One at which teachers for the whole area were present was given over to open and frank discussion. Others were of a more intimate nature, and careful details concerning students and impending practices were discussed with the teachers most nearly concerned, in many cases those in whose classes the students would work.

Another method of cooperation appreciated by the teachers has been to hold an exhibition of work done by the students and children during a school practice. These have aroused much interest and effectively dispelled such arguments as, "Of course it's very nice, but I couldn't do it in *my* classroom with *my* size of a class."

As the result of preliminary planning and cooperation, teachers in most schools have allowed the students to take complete charge of their classes for periods of at least a month. Practices of this kind are invaluable and not to be compared with periods of student-teacher control which have their place at the early stage of training, but do not offer sufficient scope or provide the experience which gives a student confidence to go out as a pioneer able

to make the child the true starting point for the teacher.

The impact of the Training College on the schools has been freshening and quickening—not only because features of students' work have been adopted by many teachers but also because the prospect of visits from students and their tutors tend to make even the most complacent teachers more aware of their work and of the children they teach, adding zest to what has perhaps become commonplace.

Alive Persons Succeed in Teaching

At the end of the course it is quite

apparent that the students have increased their powers as persons. They are aware of many new problems, of unsuspected abilities, and of more varied ways of gaining enjoyment, accompanied by a determination that their growth and development should go on.

The most successful teachers among our students have been those who are most alive as persons. It would seem that, whereas a training college must train its students in the techniques and skills of teaching, this alone is not enough. Knowledge of living as a full, rich experience is one of the first attributes in a successful teacher.

Developing Dynamic Teachers

MARGARET LINDSEY

What experiences did you have in college which especially contributed to your ability as a teacher? Margaret Lindsey, coordinator of teacher education, Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute, takes some entries from a beginning teacher's diary to answer this question and to illustrate the *real* experiences so necessary in pre-service training.

AS AN INTERN TEACHER in an elementary school in a small midwestern city, Janet Dunn impressed the personnel working with her as being a beginning teacher of unusual promise. When a supervisor from her college came to observe her work in October, Janet, the principal, the elementary supervisor, and the college instructor joined in a discussion of the neophyte's progress. All agreed that she had adjusted quickly to the new situation, had unusual professional zeal, and had promise of becoming a superior teacher.

What experiences, the principal asked, had she had in her college training which contributed to her ability to understand children, her exploratory thinking on curriculum problems, her interest in growing as a person and as a teacher, her interest in and ability to comprehend social problems, and her skill in working cooperatively with children and colleagues?

Briefly Janet mentioned some of the activities which had been of most consequence, adding that if he really wanted to know she would check her

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