

Core Teachers for Secondary Schools - A Study

HAROLD ALBERTY

Although there have been many proposals for the organization of core programs in secondary schools, little attention has been given to the preparation of teachers to take responsibility for such programs. Harold Albery, professor of education at The Ohio State University, Columbus, reports an exploratory study by a graduate seminar dealing with the present status and improvement of programs for the pre-service preparation of core teachers.

THIS ARTICLE is a brief summary of a report by a graduate seminar in secondary education at The Ohio State University conducted during the winter and spring quarters, 1949, dealing with the present status and improvement of programs for the pre-service preparation of core teachers for secondary schools.¹ The major purposes of the study were:

- ¶ To determine the status of the core program in a group of selected public high schools
- ¶ To determine the status of core teacher preparation in a group of selected teacher-education institutions
- ¶ To discover the extent to which state programs of teacher certification are impeding or facilitating progress toward curriculum reorganization
- ¶ To determine what special competencies are needed by core teachers and how best to prepare prospective teachers for such competencies.

Definition of the Core. For purposes of the study, the core was defined

in terms of broad problems or units of work which cut across subject lines and provide for the "common learnings" needed by all students at a given grade level. The core was so defined because the group wanted to include a number of current conceptions, all of which have the common element of breaking with conventional subjects for the purpose of meeting more effectively the common needs, problems, and interests of adolescents.

THE ATTITUDES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Letters of inquiry were sent to officials in selected school systems which seemed most likely to be concerned with curricular reorganization at this time. In the thirty-seven responses to the inquiry, fifteen states widely distributed geographically are represented.

The following generalizations represent the judgments of these administrators:

- ♦ There is general agreement among superintendents that teacher education institutions should prepare core teachers
- ♦ Some schools are not planning to in-

¹ Members of the seminar: G. Bradford Barber, Marion Batey, Roderic Du Chemin, Lewis Evans, Robert Greer, Hugh Laughlin, Victor Lawhead, Lucile Lurry, Anthony Milanovich, Carolyn Newsom, Harold Reynard, Tien-Hsiang Tu.

- introduce the core curriculum until core teachers are more generally available
- ♦ Most schools now operating with core programs plan to extend such programs as adequately prepared teachers become available
 - ♦ Problems of staff replacement have caused some core programs to be discontinued
 - ♦ The demand for core teachers is greater in the junior high school than in the senior high school
 - ♦ The tendency to introduce the core curriculum in the seventh grade creates the greatest demand for teachers at that grade level
 - ♦ Thirty-three of the thirty-seven administrators favor the core in principle; twenty-one of the schools represented utilize it at some level.

THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHER EDUCATION OFFICIALS

In order to determine the extent to which teacher education officials recognize a need for preparing core teachers, the seminar solicited the attitudes of a number of such officials with reference to this need. Letters of inquiry were sent to officials in institutions which, in the judgment of the group, were most likely to be considering this problem.

Of the thirty-one replies from teacher education officials, seventeen indicated that there was a need for such preparation; two stated that there was no such need; the others were noncommittal. Among those who saw a need for core preparation, there was a wide difference of opinion in regard to the seriousness of that need. Some educators made positive statements which reflected a feeling that the preparation of core teachers was a crucial need in teacher education. Others expressed interest in the problem and suggested that desirable experimental programs ought to be

set up to pioneer in preparing teachers for the core curriculum.

PRESENT STATUS OF TRAINING FOR CORE TEACHING

The letter of inquiry referred to above was sent to college deans and other teacher education officials in thirty-four institutions. The following is a summarization of the information gleaned from the thirty-one replies:

- ♦ Three schools have definite core teacher education programs
- ♦ Three schools have special courses dealing with some aspect of the core curriculum
- ♦ Thirteen schools provide for study of core in regular education courses
- ♦ Nine schools are planning programs for the preparation for core teaching in the future
- ♦ Three now provide opportunities for observation and participation in core work, and two expect to do so later.

Those who believe the core curriculum to be the most promising replacement for the no longer adequate departmentalized curriculum and who wish, therefore, to see the core used in our secondary schools by teachers well prepared to utilize it, will find little real encouragement in the data presented above.

THE CERTIFICATION OF CORE TEACHERS

Letters of inquiry were sent to the certification officials of each state and the territory of Hawaii. The directors of certification were asked to state the attitudes of their departments toward core curriculum development and to describe the provisions made, if any, for the certification of core teachers.

Forty-seven replies were received.

The data received from eight of the respondents were not sufficiently clear for use in tabulating. Out of the thirty-nine replies which could be used, no respondent stated that his department discouraged core curriculum development. Twenty certification officials indicated that their state departments permitted the core program, while nineteen definitely replied that their departments encouraged the core curriculum organization. *No state has set up specific provisions for certifying teachers for the core.* The fact that thirty-nine state departments of education report that present certification requirements do not interfere with certification of core teachers, and that nineteen of these state departments definitely encourage core curriculum development, is evidence that certification requirements are no hindrance to core curriculum development.

SPECIAL COMPETENCIES NEEDED BY THE CORE TEACHER

The special competencies needed by core teachers were determined by considering the general questions:

What are the characteristics of the good core teacher?

What should the good core teacher know and be able to do?

The general procedure for answering these questions and establishing a list of special competencies for core teachers involved the investigation of a list of generalizations itemizing the working knowledge needed by all high school teachers.² These generalizations

were then studied by the group to determine what restatement was necessary in order to adapt them to the work of the core teacher. The result was a list of fourteen competencies which seemed to mark off the job of the core teacher from that of the special area teacher. These fourteen competencies were then placed in two categories, as follows:

Those competencies which can be met within the framework of general professional courses such as general secondary methods, philosophy of education, history of education, educational psychology, and adolescent psychology:

- The core teacher should know the contributions of the leaders in the field of general education and how to utilize these contributions in developing and improving the core program.
- The core teacher should be able to interpret present-day events and movements as they relate to the learning activities of the core.
- The core teacher should understand the processes of growth and maturation in children and adolescents for the purpose of identifying common basic needs and interests at various levels of development.
- The core teacher should be able to develop learning units in broad problem areas for the purpose of improving human relations.
- The core teacher should know how to utilize and direct the various types of student activities (e.g. student councils, assemblies, publications, social clubs, parties, and sports) and relate them to the "common learnings" of the school program.

Those competencies which require special courses or experiences for prospective core teachers:

- The core teacher should be able to evaluate

² Alberty, Harold, "Working Knowledge Needed by the High-School Teacher," *Educational Research Bulletin* (The Ohio State University), XXVII (April 14, 1948,) pp. 90-96.

programs of leading schools which emphasize the core curriculum and to understand their contribution to the improvement of education.

- The core teacher should be able to draw upon major fields of knowledge (the humanities, social studies, science, and the arts) in helping youth meet their common needs and solve their problems.
- The core teacher should understand the nature and significance of controversial issues in terms of the major fields of knowledge and develop suitable techniques for dealing with them in the core class.
- The core teacher should know how to utilize guidance and counseling techniques in relating the activities of the core to the total development of the adolescent.
- The core teacher should know how to utilize the resources of the community (e.g. institutions, organizations, agencies, and personnel) in solving the common problems dealt with in the core.
- The core teacher should be able to utilize the occupational opportunities of the immediate and wider community for providing general vocational orientation for the adolescent.
- The core teacher should have the ability to utilize techniques of cooperative planning and to work with colleagues in co-ordinating all the learning activities of the core group.
- The core teacher should know how to set up problem areas based on common problems, needs, and interests and how to utilize them in developing learning activities.
- The core teacher should be able to build resource units related to broad problem areas and to utilize them in planning learning units with the pupils.

A PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR PREPARING CORE TEACHERS

General Education. In order to prepare core teachers within the general

framework of present teacher education programs, the group proposed a basic requirement of approximately one hundred quarter hours in four broad fields as follows: (1) The Social Studies, (2) The Arts, (3) The Humanities, (4) The Natural Sciences. This requirement, a substitute for the present requirements of majors and minors, is justified on the grounds that the core teacher needs to be familiar with the major fields of knowledge.

Professional Education. In addition to the general courses now usually included in the preparation of the high school teacher, and as a substitute for the usual special methods courses and student teaching in a major field, three new courses were proposed for the students who are preparing for core work. The content of these courses was derived from the nine special competencies listed above. The following are the proposed courses:

1. *Introduction to Teaching in the Core Curriculum.* (Approximately four quarter hours) This course would deal with such topics as these:
 1. Philosophies of education and psychologies of learning in their relationship to the core program.
 2. The history and the development of the core concept in American secondary education.
 3. The different types of core programs and the relationships of these programs to the total school curriculum.
 4. The responsibilities of the core teacher in understanding and meeting the problems associated with home-school-community relationships.
 5. The use by the teacher of guidance and counseling techniques in the core class.

6. Understanding group dynamics and establishing the appropriate relationships among high school pupils necessary for successful work in the core class.
- II. *The Development of Materials for Core Teaching.* (Approximately eight quarter hours credit) This course would deal with such topics as these:
1. Techniques of identifying common adolescent needs, interests, and concerns.
 2. Techniques of organizing common problem areas to be used in the core program.
 3. Developing resource units in terms of the established problem areas.
 4. Techniques for developing learning units from resource units.
- III. *Student Teaching and Practicum.* (Approximately fifteen quarter hours) For the student teaching experience, assignments should involve working with a core class for two or three hours each school day. Students should work with the regular core teacher under the supervision of the instructor of the practicum. In the practicum, students will have experiences in planning learning units, selecting reading materials, previewing audio-visual aids, making arrangements for trips, contacting speakers, and engaging in other activities related to the problems of core teaching.
- The practicum will also give special attention to problems of counseling, writing reports to parents, handling accumulative records, using special area consultants, evaluating procedures, all of which involve techniques of cooperative planning and working with other teachers in co-ordinating all the learning activities of the core group. Institutions, organizations, and agencies of the community will be investigated in terms of their contributions to the development of learning units.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The group realized that the proposed program is still rather traditional, but believed that it would be a step in the right direction. A more drastic revision would involve a reconstruction of the program of general education in terms of broad problem areas instead of fields of knowledge and the breaking down of the present compartmentalized professional curriculum.

WE RECOMMEND . . .

In the light of the foregoing study, the seminar group recommends that:

- ¶ Literature concerning core programs now operating in secondary schools be made more generally available through the publication and distribution of reports, monographs, and bulletins.
- ¶ High schools now organized with core programs and teacher education institutions work out cooperative arrangements for increased opportunities for participation and directed teaching in core classes.
- ¶ Teacher education institutions canvass the schools they serve to determine the probable demand for core teachers.
- ¶ Teacher education institutions provide consultant services to high schools that desire to experiment with the core curriculum.
- ¶ Teacher education institutions provide facilities for student teaching and participation in core curriculum work.
- ¶ State departments of education make provision for a major in core teaching which shall consist of a minimum of twenty-five quarter hours in each of the four broad fields (Humanities, Social Studies, Arts, and Sciences) and for appropriate professional requirements.
- ¶ State departments encourage core curriculum development in high schools by modifying standards for accreditation, by providing consultant service, and by preparing and distributing instructional materials dealing with the core curriculum.

Copyright © 1949 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.