

# *If the Colleges Asked the Teachers . . .*

CHARLES H. DENT

**Both pre-service and in-service opportunities for teachers may change as a result of such studies as that recently conducted by the Citizens Fact-Finding Commission in Connecticut. Charles H. Dent is assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, University of Texas, Austin.**

PRE-SERVICE curricula as well as in-service opportunities for teachers' professional preparation are undergoing changes. Schools of education and teachers colleges are securing helpful suggestions in planning the continuing preparation of both neophyte and in-service teachers through study of the interests which teachers reveal. Examples of some factors being re-considered are the amount of time desirable for the pre-service preparation of teachers (five instead of four years) and more effective ways of working with teachers on the job. A knowledge of the suggestions teachers have for their own professional development regardless of their level of experience and preparation is basic to such planning.

## **Getting Teachers' Suggestions**

When professional staff members are working with one another in a local situation in such a way that all are expressing their feelings of adequacy or inadequacy, and making plans that involve the resources of all, it is not hard to get at teachers' suggestions for their continuing development. An illustration of such information available from in-service teachers is found in Connecticut's cooperative survey of its education program conducted by the Citizens Fact-Finding Commission in

1949-50. This particular phase of the study on "Teacher Preparation and Personnel," one of six areas of the survey, yielded data which the state-wide Committee on the Need for Graduate and In-Service Training Programs used in restudying the degree programs of the state's public and private educational institutions. The intimation is not intended that professional skill be measured solely in terms of degrees acquired, although teachers' attitudes toward this measurement of their professional qualifications are important.

It is suggested that this report be studied both from the standpoint of what the teachers indicated and what they did not indicate as to their concerns for continuing growth and development. If the interests expressed by the teachers in this survey are not the significant ones, to what extent are they outgrowths of the teachers' preparation? To what extent are they outgrowths of the demands placed upon them by trying to meet educational innovations that sweep the country and that administrators feel they must impose on their schools? What types of experiences and opportunities do teachers need to provide more adequately the qualities they need for teaching in today's schools? How may such experiences and opportunities be planned for

and with teachers, which, in this case, meant all certified public school personnel?

### Many Variables Analyzed

Included in the complete study was an analysis of many variables which affect the continuing preparation of teachers such as experience, years of preparation, highest degree held, year in which it was acquired, preparation in progress and preparation being planned, and preference for study inside the state. It can be seen readily that this report cannot summarize all the characteristics of the Connecticut teaching personnel mentioned above. Instead, only those responses which seem to reflect the sincere feelings of teachers will be given to the following: reasons for studying for a higher degree, general and specific suggestions for professional growth and development, and suggestions for improving opportunities for in-service education.

When teachers gave their reasons for not working for higher degrees they were almost evenly divided into quartiles in saying: "have highest degree desired," "financial costs too high," "have home responsibilities," and "other reasons" which included "lack of suitable offerings," "choosing instructors rather than courses leading toward a degree," and "honestly do not think degrees are worth much; it is time to judge the teacher and not the degree." One teacher asked: "What will best serve both school service and approaching years of retirement?" while another stated: "Courses offered by colleges in various parts of the country seem more interesting than a comprehensive plan by a single college for a degree."

### CONCERNS FOR GROWTH

When Connecticut teachers listed their most important general concerns for professional growth and development in service, their suggestions fell into the following order, according to frequency tabulations ranging from 22.3 per cent to 6.3 per cent of the responses:

- *"Improved teaching procedures in line with current demands on the school."* (Teachers were asking for teaching procedures in line with smaller groups. They wanted practical methods of applying idealistic theories to non-ideal situations such as in overcrowded classes with poor equipment. One teacher questioned: "'Improved' or 'just changed' teaching procedures in line with current demands on the school?")

- *"Fuller understanding of philosophy and aims of present-day education."* (Teachers requested a complete understanding of the changing concepts of education. They wanted an understanding of philosophy and aims of present-day education and an opportunity to practice these. In asking for agreement on where we are going educationally and how to get there, one teacher stated: "We don't need fuller understanding of philosophy as much as we need a better philosophy.")

- *"Planning curriculum content."* (Teachers showed a concern for more articulation between elementary and high school curricula, more correlation between subjects in secondary schools, fuller understanding of core curriculum, activity programs, integrated programs, and education for life adjustment.)

- *"More understanding of how children grow and develop."* (Teachers called for further study of the so-called

social promotion. One teacher stated: "The child must not be frustrated, but the teacher is killed in the process." Many of them seemed to link "improved discipline" with this concern: "how to cope with discipline without authority," and "more ability to develop self-discipline in children.")

- *"More understanding of contemporary national and international problems in their social, economic, political, and educational manifestations."* (Several responses indicated a need for improved morals; "more understanding of how to educate for character and religious aspects of life," and a request for adding "spiritual or moral to the above statement—that is the chief lack of education today.")

- *"More understanding of skill in group processes."* (They wanted to know more about: "Dealing with individual problems with group success not put into the background;" "Understanding the impact of our rapidly changing world on the emotions of children;" "How to teach the fundamentals through the functional approach to learning;" "Developing a child-centered school.")

- *"More knowledge of subject matter in certain areas."* (Teachers said they wanted to know more about these subjects, which are listed in the order of frequency of recurrence: reading, social studies, science, mathematics, English and music.)

- *"More ability to exert and foster educational leadership."* (This statement seemed to mean: "Knowledge of what parents and taxpayers want;" "More understanding of local problems and changes necessary;" "More skill in helping parents and board members understand educational procedures and aims;" "Schools need to understand industry better;" "Identification and use of community resources as subject mat-

ter;" and "Ways and means to relieve pressure and nerve tensions felt by most elementary teachers today.")

### Specific Concerns for Growth

The specific concerns cited by Connecticut teachers for professional growth and development in service, when grouped according to frequency tabulations, ranged from 24.2 per cent to 4.8 per cent of the responses and fell into the following order: "Improving human relations"; "Using audio-visual materials and methods"; "Teaching reading"; "Planning a guidance program"; "Practicing democracy in school administration and supervision"; "Developing a community school"; and "Constructing resource units."

In both instances where teachers indicated their concerns, less than three per cent of the responses indicated "No general or specific needs," or "Other needs" that were written in.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

For the most part, the suggestions presented under the general and specific needs of teachers for professional growth and development represent areas in which institutions that prepare teachers have been offering leadership.

Possibly one of the strongest implications of this presentation is that colleges and universities should *not* double their efforts in providing the same kind of education in the same ways that they have been provided in the past. Other implications of these findings might include:

- A need for more experimentation with the types of curriculum experi-

ences that should be afforded boys and girls in public schools, and a need for self-evaluation of teaching procedures and philosophies of education in trying to make each college course an example of teaching procedures consistent with a present-day philosophy of education.

- A realization that teachers with much and little experience feel new needs for professional growth and development which may not have been cared for adequately in their pre-service preparation. (Teachers on the job need new understandings, knowledges and skills and different kinds of experiences to insure their getting these.)

- An effort to understand the changes in society that have come about through scientific developments, and the implications of these changes for teacher preparation. (Teachers in service must have a broader base of function than was necessary in a less complex society in which they may have been prepared to participate).

- Developing ways and means for teachers to be connected more definitely with the community of which they are a part. (Teachers need to learn more effective techniques for improving the quality of living in the community through participating in it and understanding its make-up.)

- Interpreting the impacts of changes in the social order so that teachers on the job may acquire skills in guiding boys and girls in working together democratically in the interest of the general welfare. (Teacher-education institutions need to interpret to teachers the importance of group dynamics and its effects on the educational program, the individual teacher, and group morale.)

- Helping teachers in service and citizens to see that both personality development and functional mastery

and use of subject matter are seen as goals of present-day education, and that there is no conflict between the two when they are both fully understood.

#### FIELD SERVICE AND COLLEGE COURSES

Through all these considerations, teachers colleges and schools of education can no longer limit their activities to the campus, but must seek effective ways of providing field services to meet the needs of teachers on the job. It is significant that teachers have suggestions both for accomplishing this and for making courses on the campus more effective.

Connecticut teachers for the most part were pleased with the offerings of the teacher-education institutions of the state; at any rate they had few suggestions for making these offerings more effective. Their chief concerns in this area were that the work should deal with more practical problems of the schools; staff members should include more persons with practical, immediate experience in schools; and staff members should change teaching procedures to accord with best modern practice.

Teachers were interested in working on professional problems as close to their homes and jobs as possible for credit during the school year, first through workshops, and, second, through extension classes. Other preferences indicated interest in campus workshops with several continuing consultants, short work conferences on campus, course offerings on campus with discussion group procedures employed, workshops offered in individual school systems during the summer, and course offerings on campus made up of

supplementary reading and lectures. It may be significant that almost six per cent of the teachers still preferred the lecture method of college teaching.

Suggestions for non-credit activities to be provided by teacher-education institutions included: teaching aids and curriculum laboratories for use in in-service teaching, educational demonstrations and clinics in the field, special consultant services on particular problems, short workshops offered in individual school systems during the school year, cultural and entertainment features, educational demonstrations and clinics on campus, directed professional study groups, and last on the list, educational conferences.

### **Recommendations for Program**

Some recommendations growing out of this study for the development of a comprehensive program of graduate and in-service education for Connecticut teachers were:

- All personnel of the state department of education, all administrative and supervisory personnel in the state, and all teacher-education institution personnel should understand one another's respective aims, philosophy and programs if the in-service education programs made available by teacher-education institutions are to be of maximum effectiveness.

- Regional activities, utilization of human resources in local situations, and collaboration of different institutions augur well for programs of in-service education.

- A study should be made on the effect of the self-supporting practices of all extension, summer and evening college programs. This study should

consider especially the influence of such practice on perpetuating the course method of meeting in-service needs of teachers and the resulting curtailment of experimentation with new procedures by local faculties.

- Extension courses, when offered in local systems, should be arranged as part of a larger program for improvement of specific phases of the school program. Extension work should not be encouraged that does not allow for group activity and opportunities for teachers to make constructive contributions to the schools and thus increase their own professional competence.

- In-service education should become increasingly concerned with the general and specific problems faced by teachers as individuals and as members of professional organizations.

- In-service education should be planned to encourage the individual to achieve maximum self-development as well as to acquire a professional degree.

- In-service education should provide newer and better ways for teachers and parents to counsel and work together.

- Teacher-education institutions should find more ways of making non-credit activities of interest to teachers and members of the community.

- Teacher-education institutions should find more ways to meet the needs of teachers who are further advanced in age and feel that they do not have many more years in service.

- The problem of finding time and energy to participate in in-service education activities after regular school hours confronts many teachers. Ways of providing time during the school day for such programs need to be explored. Health counseling may prove to be another valuable service to teachers.

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