

General Education Within Education

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The authors report the following plan as a step toward effecting a general education program within the field of teacher education. George H. Henry is associate professor of education, and Daniel Wood is instructor in education at the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.

THE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES, though they have been groping toward general education ever since Meiklejohn's experiment at Amherst in 1918, are generally unconcerned about efforts to work out a scheme of general education at the high school level. On the other hand, paradoxically, schools of education, though they alone push programs of general education at both the elementary and the high school levels, have been derelict in effecting a similar much-needed integration in the field of teacher-training.

Probably because certification courses run on the average to only 20 or 30 credit hours, the teachers colleges presumably think the area too small to integrate; but despite the smallness of the area there has been a steady piling up of new items within courses, with the result that course names are often lacking in integrity and overlap incredibly—such questionable and narrowly conceived courses, for instance, as "Introduction to Teaching," "Principles of Secondary Education," "Educational Psychology," which are without a frame of reference one to the other, and are devoid of social context. Even courses in the sociology of education lack a richness in the human dimension in regard to the tragedy, the struggles, the aspirations of individual educational re-

formers, and are particularly remiss in a treatment of education as it passes through time, a fault inherited from a static sociology.

Toward remedying these defects, the writers have accepted the challenge and built the following course as a step toward general education within education.

What purpose should direct the creation of such a course? We did not want it to be a survey or a merger, but an integration around a central theme. That theme, we decided, should be, *What kind of public education is appropriate to a democratic society?* Three ideas controlled our development of this theme. *First*, such a course should be organized in terms of what we already know about how people learn, and thus should aim unashamedly to reach the inner life of the prospective teacher, not strictly to objectify its subject matter. *Second*, it should be based on the essential issues of formal education in a culture. *Third*, since method is as important as content, the course should proceed under all sorts of methods of instruction so that students may have the opportunity of appraising these methods while being inside them. We shall take up each of these three points in turn and show how the course actually operated.

RELATE THE MEANING OF TEACHING
TO THE DEVELOPING LIFE OF THE
STUDENT

Here our aim is to revive the liberal spirit fast disappearing from the conventional liberal arts subjects by trying to graft the subject matter of education into the present on-going search of the student to relate his expected life work to what he now considers life to mean. We found that the student does not know what teaching *can be* in building his life; at the same time his conception of life itself is still pretty inchoate, but very real.

Our first task, we saw at the outset, was to make him critical of his own education while his education is in progress. How can we do this? The student must become aware of these three aspects of teaching: (a) That a developing philosophic outlook is necessary to give life its meaning; (b) That this outlook determines, consciously or unconsciously, the kind of theory of education a teacher thinks he has; (c) That a teacher cannot be a master teacher if he cannot justify his own methods in light of a theory of education. In short, he should come to see that his deepest values are reflected in the way he conducts his classroom. All these, once the purpose of liberal education, must now be done in our course if the education of the prospective teacher is to be related to his inner life and to the organic life of the community. Through what content and how can we create this kind of awareness? The content moved through three phases: (a) The Background of Modern Education; (b) The School in a Changing Democratic Society; and (c) The

Community School Idea. Let's take up the first of these.

THE ISSUES OF FORMAL EDUCATION
IN A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

The Background of Modern Education

We began by tracing the strands of so-called modern education through a study of the lives of five education reformers: Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Dewey, and three other men who profoundly influenced modern education—Marx, Darwin and Freud. And we examined each life in a three-fold way: What kind of philosophy did each one hold, what educational ideas sprang from that philosophy, and in what way is their method consistent with their theory of education?

We did this to show the student that these questions together were, to paraphrase Havighurst, the prime developmental tasks of each of these men, the wrestling with which sustained them through sacrifice and adversity: that this task would be each student's as well, so long as he hoped to be a teacher. This approach meant, *on our part*, a way of looking for growth in them as student-teachers besides a measuring of their understanding. All this came, *on their part*, as a considerable surprise that learning the art of teaching was inseparable from their interpretation of and their expectations from life.

This synthesis, of course, is a blend of the history and the philosophy of education; and our inquiry leads us further to observe how new ideas and events as they arose in the past two hundred years have changed the nature

and scope of education. As these strands are traced, it is soon revealed that just as there is no static creed called Progressive Education, so there is no fixed belief called Traditional Education; that even "traditional education" is not the traditional education of a century ago, which is certainly indicated by what it chooses to attack in Progressive Education rather than what it deliberately espouses.

We cannot go into detail here about how we dealt with each man, but we can sketch in the nature of the integration we propose. Beginning with Rousseau, we analyze his concept of the "natural" and the way it shifted the emphasis from subject matter to the child, and how it affected the eighteenth-century doctrines of original sin and the divine right of kings. Then, too, there is nothing more significant in all education than to reveal how the political issue of "freedom and organization" at the societal level—and the *Social Contract* must be studied—is tied in with the educative issue of the "child and the curriculum" at the methods level. How this problem was handled by subsequent reformers is in a way the story of modern man. Other trends we trace are the part sense-impressionism played from decade to decade, and the way the mind has been variously explained, and the way evolution has been used conflictingly as in Froebel and Dewey. Another beautiful thread to pursue is the tendency to erect a method logically instead of psychologically.

In order to bring the issues of education close to the lives of the students, we presented the material not entirely as theory but also as ideas by which

these men lived and which were in turn re-created from age to age by each man.

The inveterate optimism of books on education and of courses in education in general, on the one hand, and the stark pessimism among teachers everywhere as one meets them in committees, on the other, are blinked at in education courses and seldom analyzed. A study of subject matter as it is transmitted through the experiences of these men at least faces the phenomenon.

The School in a Changing Society

The subject matter of this part deals, first, with this topic, "The Culture and the Individual," which includes the organic, unique and dynamic elements in a culture and their effect on personality; then we proceed to the historical, the supernatural, and the biological conceptions of man. Following this comes the bearing of culture upon the nature of education, with the attendant problems of incidental and deliberate education, formal and informal education, especially the difficulties confronting formal education in a democracy at a time of great change. These may be broken into four large areas in terms of our country:

(a) *Education and the American Economic System*. This study analyzes in educational terms the great economic revolution from 1870 to 1930—how such conditions as urbanization, industrialization, "big" business, economic pressure groups, welfare state, and the depression affected public education.

(b) *Education and Social Class*. This area embraces such matters as the compatibility of democracy with a classless society; prestige in connection with our

modern intense division of labor, ideas of success, the adequacy of climbing the social ladder as an end of education, and the effect of social classes, ethnic groups, and color castes on educational opportunity.

(c) *Education and the Mass Media of Communication.* As a background we describe the revolution in communication and its onslaught on formal education, which raises such fundamental points as who owns the air, the manner of licensing radio stations, censorship, the trend toward monopoly, the ideological influence of advertising. Budding out of these come such educational concerns as the use of films in school, the failure of "educational" radio, and the present fight to secure access to certain television channels for the exclusive use of schools.

(d) *Education and Spiritual Values.* Under this is presented the relation of morality to religion, the origin of spiritual values, the American conception of the separation of church and state, the place of the parochial school in a democratic society, the spirituality of the secular school, various types of religious education, and the relation of democracy to religion. In sum, one aim of Part Two is to show that when an American school consciously and deliberately deals with these great forces, it can better perform its purpose than when it seeks to ignore them or meets them with improvisation.

The Community School Idea

The third part adjusts the focus to a closer view: How local schools are embedded in local communities. First, ways of looking at a community are studied; the theory of primary and

secondary relations; the strength of community life today; an examination of core values and alternatives; the unity-disunity theory; the community as process, including such forms of human association as pressure groups. Ultimately this leads to an inquiry into a conception of authority in teaching and how it affects the discipline of the classroom.

This rise of the community school as an attempt to create unity is critically discussed, which leads to an examination of various degrees of relationship that might exist between school and community—from the use of community resources merely to enrich subject matter to the use of the school to integrate all the educational endeavor of the community. To be specific, we study the Columbia, N. Y., Community Council in action and such schools as Holtville, Alabama, and the well-known Parker School in South Carolina, and the Melby Plan in Montana. The class reviews its own educational theories by examining such community controversies as have happened in Pasadena, California; Eugene, Oregon; and Port Washington, N. Y. The social foundations of general education thus become clear.

INTEGRATION OF METHOD AND CONTENT

To the average liberal arts teacher subject matter contains its own method; or, the teacher himself, it is claimed, *is* method. But to the teachers college teacher, method is a function of subject matter, teacher, and students *in relation*. Given the first two attitudes, method can be blithely ignored; in the third, method becomes embarrassing, because few in "education" ever know

how to teach by the methods they advocate. The course in general education we propose here is governed by a variety of methods in order that the student may compare and evaluate them while he still feels the effects of them as a means of changing character.

In Part One there are two semi-formal lectures and one group process period per week. By semi-formal we mean that the instructor will demonstrate various lecture presentations from "straight" lecture and the use of key questions to launch a new subject, to the art of carrying on a discussion while at the same time feeding out new content. In the weekly group process period the ideas of the two informal classes are put into topic or problem form that they might be elaborated on and clarified by discussion; such questions, for instance, as, "Is Rousseau's idea of negative education vital in contemporary society? Is sense-impressionism enough to teach by?"

The group process, thus, becomes a means of accomplishing the on-going tasks of the class and at the same time is thought of as a phase of the methodology of the teacher-to-be. The group process then takes place in a meaningful context—learning to be a teacher—and is not used for its own sake. The process affords many examples of this kind of experience. Once when a study of Pestalozzi's ideas of sense-impressionism led to a consideration of the place of activity in education—in particular, the extra-curricular program in high school—the class, in evaluating themselves, concluded that they didn't know enough about the psychology of activity. This admission, coming as it

did after two "lectures" and several required readings, the instructor then said something like this: "Your confession, or breakdown in communication, at once points out the value of sense-impressionism as method. This realization came from you, not from me. You now see the limitations of the lecture method. The teacher has little opportunity to know how well he is doing, and even that which is evaluated by a written examination is at best done only at the verbal level. The group process compelled you to do something with the subject matter—that is, to transfer it to another set of circumstances." The class decided that we should go over the ground again!

At each weekly session, then, little by little, the class learns to do four things: (a) To look at themselves as a *group*; (b) to be critical of the variety of membership roles in their group; (c) to be aware of when the discussion ought to be pushed into different dimensions of need and purpose; and (d) to observe the relation of the leader to his group. Teaching as democratic leadership is thus better understood, and it is not long before the nature of classroom discipline as democratic discipline stands fully revealed, for this discipline was not explained solely as *an idea* but in addition, as a *process*, a process experienced. One student—to illustrate—of her own free will apologized for not participating in the group discussion!

As we move into the second part, the method changes too. The semi-formal lecture is now limited to only one of the three sessions a week. The second session centers in an announced topic, in the exploration of which the class

is divided into several groups, each representing different aspects of the topic. Each group selects a spokesman who presents his group's development of the sub-topic. After three spokesmen have reported, the main topic is once more thrown back to the entire class. If the teacher is really interested in building a teaching personality in each pupil, he will shuttle from group to group to observe the kind of participation and contribution each student is making. Again and again some who never volunteered in class situations now try their wings in these groups, and others who seemed destined to follow in "regular" class are often pushed into leadership positions by group decision and pressure.

What particularly distinguishes Part II from Part I is the group paper. The class is divided into four committees for the duration of this section of the course, each committee to investigate one of the four areas previously described as the content of Part II. These committees are allowed to perform the spadework in the third meeting, around separate tables in the classroom. One of their first tasks is to prepare a schedule of such meetings *outside* class in order to arrange to pool their readings, prepare an outline, and draft the organization of their group paper. Before the final written report is handed in, however, probably the most profitable and interesting part of the course is planned—the presentation by the committee of their findings before the class in the form of a panel or a round table, or debate, using charts, graphs, blackboard exhibits, readings and data from interviews as aids, with emphasis in rehearsals on the manner

of the presentation. During these oral group reports the class is conducted by the students much like a section meeting at a conference of teachers, the class having a chance to quiz the panel for a while and then the entire class (panel and floor) having a mutual give-and-take, the discussion concluding with a summary of the converging consensus.

Preparing a "Live-Data Paper"

The methods in Part III are still different. At this point we introduce teacher-pupil planning as a technique, and the class, working with a steering committee, outlines the remainder of the course, which, it will be recalled, is given over to the community school idea. Since pupil-teacher planning is well known to readers of this magazine, we will not go into detail. But since this part of the course includes the use of the community as a laboratory, we shall explain in detail a requirement called a "live-data paper" that is designed to compel the student to investigate on his own a community force, resource or agency that affects the school.

From the comments of the students this project is often regarded as one of the most exciting and valuable experiences of their college career. No student is allowed to select a study without first having a lengthy conference with the instructor, and later on in class the teacher asks the students how they like this face-to-face counseling as a method. They realize that this out-of-class work and the guidance interview are together a unified method of instruction, and they are invited to try it on their pupils when they go out in

the field. What happens is that most students seek numerous interviews with the instructor as their inquiries progress. We list here some titles of these small-scale "research" papers: "Leisure Time Activities of a Fifth Grade"; "New Industry in Overbrook"; "History of the AF of T in Wilmington"; "The Lions Club of Woodcrest"; "Reading Habits of Prisoners"; "Ceremonials in My High School."

When they finish with these live-data papers, we ask students to appraise the experience, and we invite them as prospective teachers to make use of the communities where they are to teach.

Thus we allow the students to run the gauntlet of method.

Requirements Throughout the Sequence

When a course like this is begun on a campus, it operates in a hostile environment. As an example, a few "excellent" students complained that committee work was a means for "pushing through" the inferior ones. To meet this expected opposition we make no concessions to subject matter mastery or to standards of evaluation. How the course is kept from falling into process-as-process can be shown by listing here some of the "requirements" as they come in the sequence of the course.

For Part I there are weekly readings in each of the educational reformers and an examination covering them; also, an original, informal essay of about 1000 words on some phase of "educational change"; finally, a critical review of a book by one of the five educational reformers. For the latter, students read such books as *Emile*,

Leonard and Gertrude, The Social Contract, School and Society.

In Part II readings are required in each of the four areas we have already described and a weekly quiz is given on each reading. These readings are not confined to books on education particularly; for instance, under "Education and the American Economic System," a work like Fairchild's *The Prodigal Century* is required; under "Mass Media," Siepmann's *Radio's Second Chance*; under "Education and Spiritual Values," Santayana's article, "Morality and Religion." In addition there is the group paper already explained, and of course every student must participate in one of the panels. A take-home examination finishes this section, which taxes the students' powers in this way: "If the following topic had been handled by the methods used in Part I of this course, instead of through the committee work and group discussion techniques of Part II, would the topic be handled more effectively or less effectively? Topic: 'The separation of education from church control does not necessarily mean the separation of religion from education.'"

Part III continues the required weekly readings, which means, at this stage, a search for materials for reading. The "live-data" paper already referred to generally runs to about 2500 words in addition to the "raw data." An examination closes this section.

Here, then, is not only an attempt to integrate subject matter belonging to educational philosophy, the history of education, and educational sociology—with a leaning on psychology, anthropology, economics and political science—but also an attempt to integrate

theory and method, something that is becoming either increasingly slighted in our schools of education or dangerously doctrinaire; and, above all, to integrate method into the character of the student, which was the original purpose of the Socratic method; it was not merely a device by which to teach subject matter. Since recent educational theories tend to alter process (method) rather than merely to substitute one subject content for another, the *method of teaching method* can no longer be treated just as content that is to be verbalized.

There is another advantage to this kind of general education, with its accent on the theoretical assumptions within method. The community school idea by its very nature implies working with parents, and parents as soon as they confront teachers about the curriculum, immediately ask them *why* they teach something *one way* rather than another, seldom, if ever, why they teach *this* rather than *that*. But most American teachers are unprepared to defend innovations in method. How

unfortunate at a time when community-splitting controversies are increasing in number across our land!

But working under this kind of integration the students soon learn that ways of working with parents are no different from ways of working with one another, and that the theory underlying both is the same. No more can it be charged that schools of education advocate one kind of method but teach under another.

In brief, this general education course within education gives the student a chance to think along a spectrum from the highest levels of abstraction to that of examining actual pressures as they bear down on particular school policies. It affords a range of group dynamics from teacher as resource authority, through scientific method of the cooperative research kind, to reconciling normative generalizations in a group. It pulls together the strands of modern education, and at the same time teaches the various techniques and human relations necessary for such a synthesis.

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