

morale. We have more understanding of the qualities of good leadership, how it needs to function, its responsibilities and relationship to the group. A number of new instruments and techniques have been developed that are useful in securing more understanding concerning the problems and needs in a group. There is a whole new area of content here that is of special significance to

the work of the teacher. If it is true that teachers teach as they are taught, it is all the more imperative that the prospective teacher have many and continuing opportunities to understand and to make use of these processes in his own education. It is quite possible that this area furnishes one of the greatest challenges to teacher education at mid-century.

Let's Criticize Ourselves

EARL C. KELLEY

What charges are sometimes leveled at those in teacher education? Is there justification for some of the charges? These questions are discussed by Earl C. Kelley, professor of secondary education, Wayne University, Detroit 1, Michigan.

THE teacher trainer has become the favorite whipping-boy of the educational world. If it is true that the individual thrives on criticism, we in teacher education ought to experience enormous growth. There is scarcely an educational ill in our complex society which has not been laid at our door.

Most of this criticism comes from our colleagues in the colleges of arts, literature and science. The general public, the employers of our product, do not seem to be nearly so disturbed about us as do our fellow-workers.¹

TWO CAUSES OF ATTACK

I believe that there are two principal causes for the attacks upon us by those

with whom we should be joined in a common cause. The first of these (not necessarily the more important) is that they have a vested interest in teacher education. Not too many decades ago, all teacher training was done by the arts colleges. When an upstart comes along and takes a sizeable piece of work away, one is not inclined to view the matter kindly. The response to this has been largely emotional, and hence, to a degree, unreasonable. If the reader would like to see how far the emotional attack can go, he should read "The Emperor's Clothes," by Harry J. Fuller in the January, 1951 issue of *The Scientific Monthly*. Here a professor of botany, who must apply the scientific method in his laboratory, writes freely from the depth of his viscera, unencumbered by fact. It is published by a journal which, so far as I know, has never previously published an article of

¹ In a scientifically conducted parent-opinion study in Michigan, fall of 1951, 1274 parents said they thought the teachers of their children were well-prepared, 91 said they did not think so. Reported in *The Detroit News*, December 19, 1951, p. 10.

pure opinion. The subsequent letters reveal that this performance has almost universal approval of college science professors everywhere. The situation resembles most a hungry pack falling upon one of its members which appears to have fallen by the way.

The second source of criticism, and perhaps the more important one, comes from an honest misunderstanding on the part of fair-minded arts colleagues. They do not know what it is that we are trying to do. In the absence of this understanding, they naturally cannot see our reason-to-be. Much of the blame for this lies with us.

How Are We Meeting the Charges?

It would not be possible here to relate all of the charges which our colleagues level at us. Three of them seem to stand out. First, they say that we have no subject matter. Second, they charge that our work is "easier" than theirs, and that therefore, since most students are lazy and do not want to learn, our classes are full. "Bad money drives out good money." Third, they say that there is nothing to teaching anyway provided that the teacher is well-grounded in subject matter.

We have tried to meet these charges defensively, rather than constructively. We have proclaimed and exclaimed too much, and explained too little. There is much good sense among our colleagues to which we have not sufficiently appealed.

We have aped the methods of the arts colleges, claiming stoutly that we *do* have a subject matter, and that our courses are just as "hard" as theirs.

We have clung to academic research as a good method for training teachers,

because it is "respectable" among those who are doing something else. This is not intended to depreciate research in any degree as an essential human enterprise, but to say that it is difficult to see how doing a piece of research makes a teacher more competent in the task he has when he faces a group of children representative of all people.

In order to attain respectability, we have created and required courses which are "hard" but which have little or nothing to do with adding to the competence of the practicing teacher. They have nothing to do with competent action in the classroom.

These courses constitute barriers which the teacher must surmount before he can go on about his business. If he does not succeed in them, he cannot teach. When he has needed courage, we have given him fear. He has thus actually become less outgoing and less adequate to cope with human problems, more inclined to erect artificial barriers for his own students.

We have selected our prospective teachers on the basis of academic proficiency rather than searching for the human elements needed in the teacher. We have shaken them through the wrong screen.

We have penalized good prospective teachers in the name of respectability. We have done this, I believe, because we have not ourselves clearly seen the difference between the practitioner's degree and the academic degree.

From observing our practices and attitudes, I have been driven to the conclusion that we have not ourselves thought through the question as to what our role is and ought to be. I judge this from our ambivalent be-

havior. We want to humanize teachers, but we also want to make them less human. We want to give teachers courage and confidence, but we have a need to frighten and discourage them. Until we figure out what our task is, what the real problem of teacher education is, we will not be able to do it, nor will we, try as we may, attain "respectability."

Knowledge Is Half of the Requirement

It seems apparent that the task of the teacher trainer is to enable teachers to teach better than they would if they had only subject matter training. All of our efforts should be bent in this direction. This serves as a simple criterion by which we may judge our activities. If any given procedure is likely to enhance teaching quality, then it is a good procedure. If a procedure has little or nothing to do with increased teaching competence, then it is not our business. Many of our present practices would be dropped if we applied this criterion.

We need to see, and to try to get our colleagues to see, that knowledge in itself is not power. The notion that any person who has a large store of known answers can teach is not valid. Knowledge is half of the requirement. Before it can be useful to the teacher, he has to know how to bring it to bear on an infinite variety of situations involving unique people. Known answers are dead and useless until they are brought to bear upon current issues. They may be useful in contriving new answers if they are properly used, but the mere repetition and memorization of known answers is not truly educative. It is a self-perpetuating, sterile cycle unless it

is brought to bear on new contriving and new creation.

Attitude and belief release energy so that known answers become useful to the teacher and the learner. The most important thing about any person is his basic attitude toward other people. If the teacher believes that all human beings are to be cherished, he will act in certain ways toward his learners. If he believes that many people other than himself are of little worth, he will behave in another way.

Our Job: Improving Attitudes Toward Other People

Teacher trainers, then, have the task of improving the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward other people. Not much is done about this in most academic programs. The wherewithal for the release of power through knowledge for the benefit of the learner is often aborted or lacking at the end of an academic course of study.

We need to see that the teacher has a different relationship to subject matter than do others. The engineer studies mathematics so that he can engineer, but his attitude toward the bridge he is building has no effect on the bridge as long as his engineering is correct. The teacher is the only one who runs the risk of falling into a self-perpetuating spiral which is apt to be downward rather than upward. Subject matter may be dangerous when its value is only to perpetuate itself.

When the teacher performs well, he brings his knowledge to bear upon the growth of sensitive human beings. One sometimes hears the question raised as to why English teachers do not write the "Great American Novel." Why



Teachers need understanding and skill in democratic living and teaching. Courtesy, NEA Journal

don't they write, if they know so much about it? The answer, in their defense, seems to me to be that their business is teaching, not writing, and growth in teaching does not bring growth in writing, nor should it be expected to do so.

We need to see, better than we apparently do, that means and consequences, method and outcome, are completely related. We would then see that we cannot teach democracy autocratically. If we consult the learner about what is to be learned, and this seems the only decent thing to do in a democracy, he will not learn what we had in mind for him to learn. This has a bearing on our teaching of method. We will then stop teaching autocracy by what we do, while mouthing the tenets of democracy. We will stop perpetuating autocracy in our methods classes.

When we have figured out what we are for, we must then find ways of

getting others to see it. If we could get our arts colleagues to see that our function is to make their subject matter really useful in a turbulent world, better feeling would result on many a campus.

What Do Teachers Need Most?

What are some of the things which teachers need, and which we must supply if they are deficient in them?

¶ Teachers need understanding and skill in democratic living and teaching. This implies a philosophy of life consistent with democracy, an attitude toward other people consistent with the concept that all human beings have worth and are potential assets. This, I believe, can only be taught by democratic method in teacher training.

¶ They need to know a good deal about child growth and development

and mental hygiene. I doubt if this can be effectively taught in the abstract, and so we need to get our teachers to teaching earlier, and extend our in-service education.

☐ They need to be aware of and informed concerning the current social scene. They need, as the Educational Policies Commission put it many years ago, to be sensitive to the disparity of human circumstance.

☐ They need to see the importance and significance of the community, particularly the one where their children live. They need to want to find out what kinds of homes their children come from. They need to see and feel that it is not the child alone who comes to school, but a whole situation.

☐ They need a wide variety of known answers, to aid them in contriving real learning situations for their children. They should avoid too great subject matter specialization, because this will use up their time and energy acquiring knowledge which will not serve them in the classroom.

Should schools of education teach subject matter? That depends upon what the prospective teacher knows

when he comes to us. We must supplement his knowledge where it is lacking. If he knows nothing of child growth and development, if he is insensitive to current issues and to the importance of the community, then we must teach these things. If he comes to us well equipped in the knowledge it takes to be a teacher, then we will have all the more time to devote to attitude and democratic method. The answer seems simple. If he has it, we don't need to teach it. If he hasn't, then we do need to. Our task is to make teachers out of students, whatever it takes. When we have established more friendly relations with our colleagues in other colleges, they will more clearly see what we need, and provide more of it.

I believe that the basic task which confronts teacher trainers is that of defining our role in the light of present-day knowledge about teaching and learning, and revising our procedures in the light of this knowledge. This will call for dropping many of our present practices and instituting others. From what I can observe, this has not been done in most places. Until it is done, we will be vulnerable to attack, confused and disorderly in defense.

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