

# *Some Midcentury Challenges to Teacher Education*

ROSE LAMMEL

**Emerging areas of abilities and understandings needed for creative teaching in our times are examined in this article. Rose Lammel is associate professor of education, New York University, Washington Square, New York City.**

HERE at the halfway mark of the twentieth century, teacher education, along with every other aspect of education, is confronted with the urgent necessity of giving its full strength and effort to cooperating in the development of a program that is more adequate to the needs and the insights of our times.

Our days at midcentury are characterized by rapid changes, tensions, fears, anxieties, some loss of faith by the people, individually and collectively, in their ability to solve the problems of these times, and crises of many sorts that have far-reaching effects on the well-being of children, youth and adults. On the other hand, these years have also been characterized by a pooling of insights, knowledge and experiences from many areas of investigation and learning concerning the basic problems of mankind in our times. We know more about conditions and causes. Recognition has been growing steadily that we in education are, indeed, involved in a race with catastrophe. An increased willingness to see the problems confronting us in a broader perspective, with less clinging to narrow specialized interests and with less partisan bias, is evidenced. Ways of work-

ing are evolving that seem to have in them the promise of bringing about a more tenable state of affairs by man for all mankind.

The indispensable role of education in all areas of life and its significance from pre-cradle days to the grave for the development and maintenance of the capacities and the disposition to live positively, creatively, cooperatively at every level of maturation in a changing world are being made clearer. Learning experiences in the school are seen as being an integral and interdependent part, but only a part, of one's total education. Family living, school and community associations, world contacts all share in the education of the individual. All such insights have bearing upon how the teacher needs to be educated for his responsibilities in guiding children and youth in their growth toward maturity in our times.

## SOME CLUES ARE AVAILABLE

Certainly, in education, as well as in other aspects of contemporary life, "new occasions teach new duties. Time makes ancient good uncouth." An educational program for children, for youth, for their teachers, which takes a dynamic role in cultural and social

advance now and in the years to come must be different in many respects from that of several decades ago. Although many innovations and improvements have been developing, programs of education for teachers in many instances still have too much of the ivory-tower quality—are too removed from the real affairs of the people. There is a tendency to look to past practices, to "ancient goods," oftener than to present and future needs. Many programs are too drawn and quartered to provide for effective preparation of teachers capable of giving leadership in bringing about an adequate education for our times.

Some significant clues as to directions for needed change in teacher education have become available in recent years. One important bench mark, rich in implications for the education of teachers, was the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. With its preliminary grass roots planning, the problem-centered approach, the interdisciplinary considerations and synthesis, the on-going plans, it represents one of our most creative efforts in the process of integrating knowledge and insights from many related fields concerning the development of wholesome personalities. Another important interdisciplinary study of the problems and needs of today's children and youth that can have great bearing upon teacher education is the recent 1952 Yearbook of A.S.C.D., *Growing Up in an Anxious Age*.

The reports of both these interdisciplinary efforts, along with others, point up the need for more wholeness and for more life-centeredness in education. For teachers to be effective and

creative in bringing about an education that is life-centered and whole for children and youth, their own education must increasingly embody these qualities. There are valid reasons for doubting the efficacy of courses, as now so often arranged, in helping the prospective teacher develop wholeness in understanding. The pieces so seldom add up to the whole. As Mayo has so aptly pointed out, child-life crosses departmental lines at the rate of several times an hour. Opportunities for broader learnings for teachers must be provided. More consideration of realistic problems than of subjects is urgently needed. Skills must be developed in the creative use of many firsthand experiences and in the selection of pertinent materials and information from many disciplines in seeking out solutions to problems that are real to the learner.

#### ABILITIES AND UNDERSTANDINGS NEEDED FOR CREATIVE TEACHING

Several broad areas of abilities and understandings needed for creative teaching in our times seem to emerge. These areas as foci of emphasis in the education of teachers are suggestive of new ways of working with students, of new learning experiences needed, and of new organizations of knowledge and insights from many disciplines around pertinent timely problems. Here also are some implications as to the need for the faculty, staff and administration of each school of education to move into more planning and working together. More communication and cooperation with less rugged individualism and rigid adherence to departmental lines are indicated.

Modern theories of learning lead us to recognize that in the development of these needed understandings and abilities, rich and continuing firsthand experiences *with* must develop alongside increased knowledge *about*. Theory, knowledge and practice need to be intimately related and interwoven. Changing the program of teacher education to make such unified learning possible is one of the greatest challenges before us now.

By way of illustration, a few of these centers of emphasis are considered briefly in the paragraphs that follow. It is a temptation to stop along the way and point out that many of the indicated understandings and experiences not only are important in the education of teachers but are needed by everyone for intelligent participation in a democratic society. The teacher as a participating, creative, responsible citizen and as a guide to children and youth maturing into responsible roles in our democratic society is in great need of competencies in these aspects.

### **Understanding Human Growth**

*Teacher education must help all prospective teachers grow in understanding human growth.* All teachers need to be deeply rooted in the understanding of people. Knowledge of growth and development, of basic human needs and motivations, of the conditions and circumstances fostering the development of healthy personalities gives direction to the learning-teaching processes. Insights are needed into the significance, for present and future well-being, of the parent-child relationships. The bearing of cultural

expectations and the influence of experiences in the community, the home, the school, the church, the various other social agencies, upon growth and maturation must be comprehended.

Development of these basic insights concerning people will be derived in part from many special areas of learning such as cultural anthropology, human biology, sociology, clinical psychology, psychiatry, research in child growth and development. It suggests the re-organization of the content around the problems of growth and development rather than around old-line subject matter compartments. At the same time, opportunities for continuous and rich association with children and youth must go along with the explorations of the pertinent content.

The prospective teacher needs to be associated with some children and youth in their homes, in school groups, in recreation groups, in summer camps, in church groups, settlement houses, hospitals and clinics. With the help of expert guidance, he must come to know children and youth as they are in their various involvements of living. Such associations will encourage seeing each person as a whole and dealing with human beings as wholes, not as I.Q.'s or reading problems, a case of measles, or a slow learner in mathematics. A brief and hurried period of observation and student teaching is no substitute for these wider and continuing associations with children and youth.

### **Becoming a Responsible Member of Society**

*A teacher needs the abilities and the inclination to be a participating, creative, cooperating, responsible mem-*

ber of our democratic society. In this connection, also, two concomitant phases of this development on the part of the teacher must deliberately be carried along together. Knowledge *about* and direct experiences *with* again must conjoin. Growth in insight concerning the nature of our society, its values and aspirations, its history of struggle and achievements, the sources of present problems, tensions, stresses and strains, the role of the individual and of groups in social action and change will rest upon pertinent knowledge from many disciplines and upon active participation in the affairs of the community in which the individual finds himself.

There is great need for the prospective teacher to be associated with others on the campus and in the local community in cooperative planning and social action. This active, down-to-earth aspect of developing understanding and skill in effective social participation has not been especially characteristic of many undergraduate programs. Often the isolationism of life on the campus and of the educational emphasis has been such as "to indolently fit actives into passives."

### **Growing in Self-Understanding**

Opportunities to increase *understanding of himself, his own motivations and problems*, need to be a part of the prospective teacher's educational program. Each needs to participate actively in developing competency in relating himself to people of all ages in many work and play situations as a basis for cooperative endeavor. Understanding of how appearance, behavior, words, gestures all are involved in developing rapport with associates is im-

portant. Cognizance of the factors that facilitate or hinder a teacher's ability to relate himself to the community in which he works can be of great help in the development of successful participation. Guidance needs to be given in selecting and experimenting with a wide variety of creative activities out of which many rich personal satisfactions can be derived. Encouragement to develop a happy and satisfying life out of school is needed.

### **Developing Better Human Relations**

Developing *good human relations* in all aspects of life is one of the most crying needs of our times. The ability of all peoples to live and work together in peace is seen to depend upon the development of good human relationships. Many disciplines have contributed to a deeper understanding of the barriers to good human relations and of promising ways of living and working for improving the quality of human cooperation. Such knowledge is basic to the teacher's major responsibility in helping young people mature into effective participation in a democratic society. The entire program of teacher education could be geared to sensitizing the learners to the essential characteristics of good human relations and could facilitate the development of talent in giving effective leadership in the development of good human relations in all areas of living.

The results of experimentation and research in group dynamics and in leadership training have provided many significant clues for *ways of working*. We have come upon insights into the value of group participation in achieving aspirations and in maintaining

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.

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## *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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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