

Off-Campus Student Teaching

MORTON S. MALTER

A trend toward use of off-campus centers in student teaching is analyzed and commented upon by Morton S. Malter, assistant professor of education, Michigan State College, East Lansing. The author helps to coordinate the secondary student teaching program off-campus. He is also co-editor of the 1951 yearbook of the Association for Student Teaching.

INCREASING USE of off-campus centers in student teaching programs represents a definite trend in education. One reason for this trend is the belief that these centers are more "realistic," and hence more desirable, than on-campus, laboratory schools. Another reason for the trend is that on-campus schools cannot accommodate all of those requiring student teaching. The extensive facilities of off-campus public schools are essential today for maintaining and expanding adequate student teaching programs. All signs indicate that off-campus centers are likely in the coming years to become even more important for student teaching programs.

Many problems are created by shifting student teaching into the field. The off-campus center and the teaching institution must agree upon proper financial arrangements. The college must provide transportation to and from the center. The college coordinator must work closely with the center administrators in selecting teachers and in placing students. The college must provide more personnel to supervise programs located relatively far away from the campus. Both the college faculty and student body assume the added responsibility of maintaining desirable relations with an off-campus com-

munity. These problems, of course, vary in intensity, and many institutions have solved them to a satisfactory extent.

Off-campus and on-campus programs also share many problems in common. These are the fundamental problems associated with the purposes of student teaching and the best means of implementing them. Coordinators of off-campus programs sometimes neglect these problems, partially because of a preoccupation with the administrative details created by the shift into the field. Too many of us also are convinced that any realistic field experience is *a priori* desirable. But, unfortunately, these fundamental problems are not shaken off merely by moving our place of business. Moving the location of student teaching generally means only we must seek their solutions with respect to new conditions.

An Association Studies Off-Campus Student Teaching

The Association for Student Teaching in 1949 appointed a committee to study the many problems associated with off-campus student teaching. The committee developed a questionnaire on off-campus policies, which later was circulated to eighty colleges. The committee reported to the 1950 meeting of

the association the results obtained from this pilot study. The association requested the committee to develop the questionnaire further and to conduct a more intensive investigation. This was accomplished, and 125 institutions submitted reports. Results of the investigation are incorporated into a major portion of the association's 1951 yearbook.¹ In addition, three authors reported independent studies on some phase of off-campus programs.

The major thesis in the committee's report is that direct experience, as provided through off-campus student teaching, can contribute to the education of future teachers. The committee does not believe, however, that off-campus student teaching is *necessarily* a good experience. To be useful, off-campus programs must have definite purposes and provisions for implementing them. As Virgil E. Herrick states, when these objectives or plans for achieving them are inadequate, the experience is "about as valuable for teacher training as is tossing children out of a boat for swimming." Any type of off-campus program, in other terms, cannot be considered as *the* experience to make our future teachers.

A large amount of data were accumulated and interpreted in the course of the association's off-campus student teaching study. The data, as already implied, reflect to some extent upon current practices in selecting student teachers, experiences provided and methods of administration. What follows is an attempt by this writer to summarize and interpret the data collected in connection with several of the

basic problems occurring in off-campus programs.

Experiences Provided in Off-Campus Centers

There is general agreement that student teaching should involve experiences other than those occurring within the confines of the classroom. The student teacher should study and analyze the off-campus community. He should familiarize himself with the specialized guidance program. He should attempt to analyze the responsibilities of the administrative and supervisory staff. He should confer with parents; assist with extra-curricular activities; supervise school lunchroom and playground programs. In short, he should actively experience the many major responsibilities of the teacher.

Allan D. Patterson found a wide discrepancy between actual practice and what we believe should be experienced in the off-campus program. By far the outstanding responsibility of student teachers is directing classroom activities. On the other hand, fewer than half of the students reporting took part in assisting with extra-curricular activities. Only one-fifth had helped to keep school records; one-tenth had participated in guidance activities; a few had visited the homes of pupils. A limited number worked with teachers on professional study committees. "Most significant," states Patterson, "was the absence of any lengthy or varied list of responsibilities of these types in any one reply."

These "disappointing" findings derive in part from the fact that two-thirds of the students carried college courses in addition to student teaching.

¹ *Off-campus Student Teaching*, Thirtieth Yearbook of the Association for Student Teaching, 1951, Lock Haven, Pa., 206—ix.

This is a typical situation, for 69.4 per cent of the institutions reporting in the association study also require student teachers to carry additional campus work. In addition, the average distance of the off-campus centers from the college is 9.9 and 16.2 miles for elementary and secondary schools respectively. Travel time combined with attempts to carry extra campus work obviously minimizes the extent to which students can participate in experiences outside the classroom.

How To Extend Teaching Experience

There are several methods for extending the scope of the student teaching experience. Students can be made to live off-campus, practically requiring them to forsake campus offerings. They can be required to "clear" their programs entirely for student teaching, whether or not they live off-campus. Or the student teaching experience can be extended to cover several sessions. In many institutions, the extension of the scope of student teaching through any of these methods is blocked by several obstacles: Students must complete part of a required academic sequence during the student teaching period. Many students cannot arrange for adequate financial support if required to live off-campus. Others are involved in R.O.T.C. units or other essential campus activities. In spite of these obstacles, over thirty per cent of teacher education institutions do require students to live off-campus, returning only for "athletic contests," "seminars" or "other reasons."

Attempts to increase the scope of the student teaching experience merit our support. The intention is to indicate

that the duties of the teacher are complex and that many experiences are necessary to provide a background for guiding children. But in spite of these reasonable objectives, we clearly should recognize possible limitations in the movement. The first is that mere multiplication of experiences does not necessarily result in a desirable education. It is conceivable that at the present stage of the off-campus movement our efforts should be directed toward improving the *quality* of the experiences within the classroom. Patterson, for instance, states that supervisors do guide students in planning units and in employing conventional recitation procedures. They seldom refer, however, to the "use of committee procedures, panel discussion, directed study or cooperative planning."

Secondly, the student teacher himself is mainly preoccupied with maintaining classroom discipline and teaching in the narrower sense of "getting ideas across." This argues, on the one hand, for providing him with simultaneous experiences to broaden his educational outlook. On the other hand, let us not underestimate the student's struggle in the initial phases of classroom teaching. He may require one or more sessions merely to gain a feeling of security in working within a classroom. Before involving the student in a range of activities *during* student teaching, we should determine that he is succeeding in teaching in its narrower sense. This does not preclude involving students in many field experiences prior to what we define as student teaching or following that experience. In fact, many persons consider these other field experiences as part of student teaching.

If student teaching is defined in this broad sense, the writer cannot argue with extending its scope considerably.

Integrating Off-Campus Student Teaching in the Educational Program

In general, student teaching is a culminating experience for both elementary and secondary majors. Over 90 per cent of the teacher education institutions offer student teaching in the senior year. There is a noticeable trend to provide several sessions of the experience for each student, especially for elementary majors. Approximately 32 and 22 per cent of the institutions require two or more sessions of student teaching for elementary and secondary majors respectively. Elementary majors generally take the first session of student teaching earlier in their program than do those preparing to teach in the secondary schools.

Qualifications needed prior to electing off-campus student teaching vary in different institutions. The greatest emphasis is placed upon academic readiness, i.e., the completion of a sequence of courses and the maintenance of a prescribed grade average. Of lesser importance in being admitted to student teaching are personality, character, social maturity and so forth. The extent to which these latter factors are used to bar students permanently is not indicated in the association survey. The writer has met representatives of institutions professing to select students for student teaching on the basis of personality traits. When pressed, however, they admitted that a negligible number of students were barred even temporarily on the basis of personality or related factors.

The problem of when to include student teaching in the educational sequence is persistent, especially if only one session is offered. On the one hand, the student should be sufficiently mature both socially and educationally if the experience is to be meaningful. On the other hand, the experience tends to make meaningful the education courses which follow. In fact, some methods courses are practically meaningless unless based upon student teaching or an equivalent experience with children.

The problem of properly integrating student teaching in the educational program is partially resolved through providing several sessions, in an earlier and in a later part of the curriculum. As already indicated, many institutions are providing for two sessions of the experience. Among the obstacles preventing many other institutions from offering two or more sessions of the experience are the following: Two terms of student teaching would complicate the problem of finding adequate places for student teachers. Required course sequences would prevent many students from engaging in two sessions of student teaching. Finally, many administrators hesitate to permit "immature sophomores," or even juniors, to do student teaching in their schools. This is especially true when the student teachers are assigned to secondary schools. Sophomores are "too young" to work effectively with high school students. Furthermore, they are unlikely to have the proper background to teach "chemistry" and other specialized courses. These reasons do not apply to elementary majors, partly accounting for the fact that they are, in

many institutions, experiencing student teaching earlier than secondary majors.

Increasing the number of sessions devoted to student teaching in effect broadens the scope of the experience, a point considered in the preceding section. Caution again is urged before increasing the number of sessions. Conceivably, it is more desirable to improve the quality of the single session than to provide merely for a longer experience. This is especially true if the college does not have sufficient personnel to work in each of the sessions. Again, whenever additional student teaching is required, several campus courses necessarily are eliminated. We must seriously consider the relative value of the additional student teaching session and of the eliminated campus courses. If the campus courses are too "abstract," it may be better to make them more concrete than to rely too heavily upon experiences in additional sessions of student teaching. For campus courses do serve the purpose of providing students with a more progressive educational outlook than is ordinarily obtained in off-campus centers. Increasing the sessions of student teaching at the expense of campus courses might result in "better adjusted teachers," but they might be too well adjusted ever to consider taking the leadership in improving our educational system.

Administration of Off-Campus Programs

There is considerable recognition of the need for close cooperation between the college and the off-campus center in administering the student teaching program. They must cooperate not only

in guiding the student teacher but also in solving curricular and other educational problems. At present, however, this cooperation tends to be one-sided with respect to problems other than those involved in guiding the student teacher. The association survey, for example, indicates that many colleges do help off-campus centers with curriculum problems and the selection of new teachers. No reference is made, however, to off-campus personnel offering advice to the college with respect to the curricula for educating teachers. This omission is understandable, for many off-campus supervisors are taking graduate work in the near-by teacher institution. They are in the unfortunate position of being both a colleague and a student of the college coordinator.

Approximately 45 per cent of the institutions assign only one to ten students to each college coordinator. This might suggest there is considerable recognition of the responsibilities entailed in the job. However, many of the college coordinators are assigned extra campus courses and other responsibilities. In practically all off-campus centers, the supervising teacher is assigned only one to three student teachers. This is an excellent sign, since the supervisor does have the major responsibility of guiding the day-to-day activities of the student teacher. Many college coordinators stated they were unable to visit or consult with the student teacher a sufficient number of times during the session. This could weaken the program if it means the coordinator is unable to help various students, to determine the direction of the program or otherwise to contribute.

On the other hand, the administrative concept that student teachers *must* be visited a certain number of times is untenable. The coordinator might better devote his efforts to arranging seminars intended to improve instruc-

tion throughout the off-campus centers. For in the final analysis, the success of the off-campus program is directly related to the selection, competencies and growth of the supervising teachers who participate in the program.

A Program for Pre-Service Training of Core Teachers

HARRIS HARVILL

Harris Harvill, director of secondary education, State Teachers College, Troy, Alabama, states that "the one central purpose of the core is education for the democratic common life (citizenship)."

EXCEPT AT Troy State Teachers College (where even now only the broad outlines of such a program are emerging) pre-service programs for the training of core teachers are presently nonexistent in Alabama teacher training institutions. This is an incongruous situation, credible only in light of a disruptive decade of worldwide upheaval. For Alabama, under the leadership of state-wide consultants Doak S. Campbell, Hollis L. Caswell and Henry Harap, early became interested in the core idea and, following a six-year state-wide Curriculum Development Program, committed itself in its 1941 Course of Study to the core curriculum organization as the preferred organization for Alabama high schools. The 1950 Course of Study bulletin (the first issued since 1941) again gives prominence to the core idea.

Need for pre-service programs for the training of core teachers in Alabama is made further evident by the two-year study recently made by the writer which shows forty-three Alabama secondary schools in twenty-two counties now experimenting with the core curriculum. In these forty-three secondary schools there are one hundred forty core teachers who teach one hundred ninety-eight homeroom core sections enrolling six thousand thirty-two Alabama pupils.¹ More experimentation with the core curriculum is now going on in Alabama secondary schools than ever before. Add to this the endorsement of the core idea by both the Educational Policies Commission and the National Association of Secondary

¹ Harris Harvill, "Development of the Core Curriculum in Alabama Secondary Schools," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1951.), p. 143.

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