

at times and in certain professions the practitioners have supported such movements not on the basis of what *ought* to be defensible standards for admission to the profession, but on the basis of *how many* should be admitted since restriction of numbers, regardless of ability, would improve the practitioners' position in the supply and demand picture.

To illustrate the variety and size of professional training programs in the United States, the accompanying table shows some more important college-level professional programs together with number of professionally accredited institutions engaged and the numbers of professional degrees given.

The numerical significance of professional teacher education in the entire professional training field is readily apparent.

We have rather quickly sketched various influences or pressures upon pro-

fessional education and have briefly glimpsed several problems in which these pressures can be noted. It is quite possible that an occasional professional college may wish for a less complicated life and for unhampered opportunity to construct and to control its own program in a purely meditative surrounding.

Because professional training so directly affects the public and because of the nature of its basic control, these pressures must exist; nor, after reflection, would one have it otherwise. These pressures produce challenge, they inspire experimentation to meet problems and they do bring better programs than would be true if the colleges were not frequently forced to defend or to rethink their positions.

Editor's Note: The National Commission on Accrediting on October 10 officially approved NCATE as official accrediting agency for teacher education.

J. ALAN ROSS

Trends in Liberal Education

Several factors are considered in appraising the task of liberal or general education in America today.

THE United States Office of Education in reporting statistics includes in the liberal arts college category "institutions in which the principal emphasis is placed on a program of general undergraduate education." In accordance with this classification the Office reported 732 liberal arts colleges in the United States in the fall of 1955.

While "liberal arts" provides a convenient term for the classification of a

major segment of higher education in America, the higher institutions so classified are widely divergent in purpose and program.

The meaning of liberal arts as applied to the curricula of colleges is difficult to determine. This was not so when Cassiodorus composed his treatise, *De artibus et disciplinis liberalium*, through which the seven liberal arts, grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, arithmetic,

geometry, and music, were perpetuated to become the curriculum of the universities.

It is not possible today to formulate any list of which it may be said with confidence that these are the liberal arts. The academic battlefields of the centuries are littered with the remains of bulwarks erected by the seven liberal arts against the onslaught of the humanities and by the humanized liberal arts against modern languages. Science was accepted only after struggle and more recently the newer social studies have battled against a finite view of the meaning of "liberal" in the conception of liberal arts.

Confronted with an accumulation of subjects, Elliot and his contemporaries in promoting the principle of electivism implied that all subjects contribute equally to a liberal education. This movement, while understandable as a means of counteracting the insistent demands of an entrenched and static curriculum, was a sharp break with the liberal arts tradition. The elective system depended upon chance to provide the culturally unifying experiences which had been the major contribution of the liberal arts curriculum.

General education, as a movement, came into being in the 1930's to offset the atomism and confusion brought about by electivism in the liberal arts. It was realized that a people may be as readily cut off from its cultural roots by a hit and miss curriculum as by the edicts of a dictator. General education may be looked upon as an attempt to recapture the prime characteristic of the original liberal arts which lay not in subject matter, but in unity and the relevance of subject matter to time and place.

It is true, viewed today, that the unity was one of meagerness and exclusion.

The embryonic forms of the newer learnings which were to prove so disruptive to academic conceptions while freeing the Western world from pestilence, drudgery and unorganized barbarity were easily subsumed under one of the seven liberal arts. Only the intellectually able were admitted to studies. The serf shivering in his hovel and the leper crouching at the gate were the concern of saints rather than scholars.

All this notwithstanding, the liberal arts in their medieval origins provided for those whom the age defined as suitable subjects for education an access to culture highly relevant to their needs as individuals and to the needs of society as these were then defined. This is all that may be expected of liberal or general education in any age. Liberal education in its attempt to free the individual must continually free itself from outmoded curricula while preserving cultural continuity and achieving relevancy to its time and place.

Task of Liberal Education

What are the influences which should be taken into account in appraising the task of liberal or general education in America today?

The following factors seem important:

1. It is obvious that we are only a short distance along the way of industrial technological change. Atomic power and automation give promise of producing a degree of leisure and a level of productivity such that the total population may be educated to the limits of its desire and potential.

Some implication of what is likely to occur in higher education in the next fifty

J. ALAN ROSS is professor of education, Western Washington College of Education, Bellingham.

years can be drawn from an examination of changes in secondary education since the beginning of the century. In 1900 secondary schools were caring for 11½ per cent of their age group. They are now caring for almost 80 per cent and by 1965 according to projections they will be caring for 83 per cent.

The tremendous increase in attendance at the secondary school level cannot be attributed to expansionist tendencies among educators. Change has occurred in response to social and economic forces which have removed the age group from the economic life of the country while at the same time requiring higher levels of performance from greater numbers upon initial entry to a full time job and to the mature functions of citizenship. Meanwhile great progress has been made in adjusting a general education offering to the varying capacities of a relatively unselected student body. If the able have suffered in the process, this is a fault which intelligence and resources can correct in a system which purports to meet the needs of all. There are those who express a preference for the program of the Boston Grammar School over that of a comprehensive high school in a large city. Their preference cannot be considered a significant commentary upon secondary education since it reflects a complete lack of insight into the forces which have shaped secondary education.

The future of higher education in America may parallel what has taken place in secondary education in the past. In fact, it is easy to see that the same forces are already at work. In 1900 higher education dealt with 4 per cent of the age group, 15 per cent in 1940, and nearly 30 per cent in 1954. Many expect the percentage to reach between 40 and 45 per cent in 1965. Almost 50 per cent of the effort of higher

education is now directed to preparing for professions or semi-professions which barely existed in 1900 or at least did not demand college preparation. The contribution of general education has been inestimable in giving definition to college education for businessmen, government workers, teachers, home economists, architects, journalists, librarians, and social workers.

This is only a minor indication of what is to come. The opportunity and necessity to provide general education for a continually widening segment of the population cannot be avoided. As never before, general education programs will be related to preparation for many occupations and made accessible to wide ranges of ability.

In this connection the present revival of interest in the problems of teacher preparation by liberal arts colleges is of interest. If entered upon in such a manner as to avoid the defensive errors of the past, the movement can be of great benefit to a field where the problems of general or liberal education are acute. More important, perhaps, may be the benefits to the liberal arts colleges, for through intelligent adaptation to the task of preparing teachers, relevancy and relationship to contemporary problems throughout the curriculum may be achieved.

2. The technology which has so profoundly altered conditions within the nation has produced more marked changes in the relationships among the peoples of the earth. It is obvious but still necessary to say that modern transportation and communication have reduced the world to less than the size of a principality. In the meanwhile, our nation has come into a position of world leadership.

It is desperately important, perhaps a

survival matter, that we have great numbers of students who understand the languages, customs and problems of the peoples of the world. This understanding must be accomplished within a broad and humane framework of general education. Unless we are firmly rooted in our own culture, we have nothing to offer others, nor do we have a stable foundation from which to proceed in the understanding of other cultures.

3. While the major tendency in the years ahead may be one of delaying entry into a profession or occupation, the demands for early specialization of the ablest will likely be intensified. For such persons liberal education must be provided at any time that they may emerge from their laboratories or offices and most certainly before they function in any public policy-making capacity. In a society where leisure is the privilege and problem of all, general education may make one of its greatest contributions in adult education. Large corporations are leading the way in providing general education programs for their mature executives. General education cannot be confined to the first two years of a college career.

Of the various approaches to the stating of objectives for liberal or general education, which seems most appropriate to our time? It is obvious that for the historical and contemporary reasons stated above, the anti-intellectualism which has characterized the rear guard battles of

the older liberal arts must be avoided. This is anti-intellectualism because it has conceived intellect so narrowly and defined its worthy object so rigidly as to deny validity at one time or another to most of those exercises of intellect by which man has mastered distance and energy and has gained some understanding of himself. If man is to master himself, intellect will be directed by a liberal education relevant to the time and deeply rooted in the culture. Objectives may best be stated as capacities to be developed to varying degrees in students of varying ability. Unity may best be sought through relating the curriculum to the personal, social and civic needs of the student.

The trend in liberal or general education today is toward concern with development of values, with acquisition of concepts that interpret social and natural phenomena, with training in the manipulation of symbols used in the expression of ideas and aesthetic experience, with cultivation of appreciation for or response to artistic and factual content, and above all with the syntheses of these and the subsequent tendencies to action.

Higher education in America is now and will continue to be challenged by the opportunity to provide programs for a greater percentage of the population than has sought college education in any other age or place. Individual and social necessity require that a major portion of the program be liberal and general.

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