

Intensive Programs— Are They Here To Stay?

How have emergency programs for teacher preparation worked out in actual practice? Have some significant and lasting values emerged through initiation and evaluation of these programs?

THE QUESTION posed by the title may have been asked by persons with one of two thoughts in mind: (a) Is this makeshift emergency measure going to continue putting incapable teachers in our schools? (b) Have we learned something about teacher education which should be preserved in our system? The thoughts which are offered in response will, I hope, have a bearing on both interpretations. They are not presented as facts. They are ideas and opinions of the author coming from experience with the Connecticut program and particularly as operated at New Britain. They are observations strongly slanted which I believe could be documented, but which busy involvement with the operations has prevented my doing. The profession as a whole seems to have been prone to regard the idea of the intensive program in the attitude of "this too shall pass away" and consequently worthy of no serious effort except on the part of the few who are on detached service for this temporary duty. This attitude I hope to challenge.

For those of us having the responsibility, the intensive program has become—

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at least for a time—a life's work. For nine years we have seen teachers going through the program into the classrooms of Connecticut, sometimes in larger numbers per year than from the regular program. Many children have now gone through their elementary school experience with one or more years of it at the hands of an intensive program teacher. A matter of such importance we could not treat as merely a nuisance to be tolerated temporarily, but have taken it as an alternative program of teacher education with the same objectives as our established college curriculum—that is to say, the adequate preparation of teachers to conduct desired educational programs for children.

Out of the early years of the program's operation we developed insights and skills which convinced us that ours was not an impossible task, subject only to the percent of error usual in human affairs. The acceptance of our products by the "field" and the progressive integration of the program into all aspects of the educational set-up have been recognition of its parallel status as bona fide teacher education—not merely a nod in the direction of upholding certification regulations. It must be emphasized that there has been no acceptance of a dual standard in evaluating intensive program

teachers, except possibly in the weeks of initial adjustment. Likewise, there has been no compromise with certification regulations, except in allowing uncertified teachers to begin. These teachers are, therefore, equal eventually in the matter of course preparation to many "regular" teachers graduating from approved schools of education which require satisfaction of certification requirements only.

What Are the Values?

The reasons for the extent of satisfaction with our program in contradiction to the misgivings of practically everyone at its outset can be cited in a description of the operations.

1. It takes an inductive approach and relies on the development of insight to facilitate more learning in less time. The teacher candidate begins his professional program in a classroom oriented situation for an 8-week summer session. Unified around participation in an actual teaching-learning situation involving children, this program provides experience in planning and evaluating instruction. Actual living of an elementary school set-up, together with lectures and directed group activities develops an over-view of the purposes and procedures of the elementary school. The emphasis during this period is on understanding the structure and guidance of good learning experiences from analysis of actual situations.

2. It is a job-related in-service program that derives guidance from demonstrated needs in individual cases rather than being a provision of all things to all people because we do not know who needs what. Following the summer orientation, the candidate becomes a fully responsible teacher under college as well as local guidance. For at least a year, a college supervisor devoting full time to this work visits the new teacher and gives consult-

ant assistance and direction. In close cooperation with local supervisory personnel, this supervisor carries on individual and group in-service education related to the teacher's actual situation.

The intent of the supervision is to have each teacher perform at his highest possible level of efficiency. Here, as in other human affairs, that individuals differ widely is the only generalization that can truthfully be applied to all teachers in the intensive program. The quality of performance runs the scale from outstanding to unsatisfactory, with the majority being "average." A great many progress in understanding and skills very rapidly and are ready to attack problems at quite an advanced level by the end of the year. The majority have gained a background which obviates the necessity of course work at the "introductory" level in many areas. All have a clearer idea of the aspects of their performance on which effort should be concentrated.

To this intent, a second summer program permitting flexibility yet kept to areas of common concern is required. This is a 6-week program. Here, in the setting of a workshop, individuals plan instruction to be carried on next year or they work on the development of specific techniques. The basic pattern of a unified instructional program is amplified and appropriate content and methods of experiencing it are developed in instructor-led presentations and demonstrations. Individuals in small common-interest groups apply the understandings gained to the working out of projects which are shared with the whole class. In addition, specific consideration of the development of skills in reading and of meaningful arithmetic instruction is provided in separate class periods.

It is in the content of this second summer program that the role of induction

and insight in facilitating coverage of desired content fully and faster is clearly evident. It is offered as proof positive that professional content is not being watered down in order to enable intensive program teachers to become certified. The explanation is to be found in the educational principles observed and the fact that our candidates by reason of wider experience and more maturity have learned elsewhere many of the things that have to be taught to undergraduates. Too, this makes possible course content organization on different bases and omission of some elements without impairing the quality of the learning outcomes.

3. It is a program which encourages the majority of teachers to complete the Master's degree, and to do so in the spirit of rounding out preparation for a job which is by now not only understood intellectually but on which the future of the individual depends. Although applicable work in foundations of education or psychology from undergraduate programs may be credited toward certification, most candidates must complete a majority of the professional requirements, and these may be taken at the graduate level. With this lead, the advantage in completing the Master's is evident. Course work remaining for certification after the second summer in the "methods" areas is selected apropos of the individual's demonstrated needs in teaching special subjects of the curriculum or in specialized aspects, such as evaluation. In this way it is assured that an individual's precertification program will take him beyond the "introductory" phases of methods, and that he will not be working in areas in which he is already proficient to the level aimed for by the course work, or that he will not elect to further his proficiency only in areas in which he has experienced success. This

guidance is also continued in connection with work toward the Master's remaining beyond certification since the "plan sheet" prepared in connection with certification is passed along with the supervisor's evaluation and recommendations to the graduate advisory committee.

The fact that this work does in truth advance the teacher's preparation beyond the undergraduate level is further borne out in comparison with the experience of "regulars." All data with which I am familiar in the matter of comparing first year performance in Connecticut between "regulars" and "intensives" indicates that differences are not of easy definition. Also, any group of supervisory personnel discussing "what to do with the beginning teacher" gives further evidence that even among those who have had all the prescribed methods courses and student teaching there must be a "shake-down" before they can make use of much they have been taught. Our experience has shown that they and the "intensives" have problems at the same level after each have had teaching experience.

There are certain ways in which the Program is an emergency measure at present. It will continue as such as long as it is handled as a "conversion" measure. In the face of a critical shortage of teachers, we have to accept likely "personalities" without holding out for any or all of the elements of a background which will enable them to pursue the Program at the level I have indicated as desirable. In the case of these individuals, unless they are of superior intellect, there can reasonably be a question as to the adequacy of the program beyond equipping them to get children on to the next grade and doing them no harm in the process.

I believe that—without going into the

statistics or documentation which space does not permit—barring a major shift in the cultural pattern, a great many good potential teachers will still elect for one reason or another to take a “regular” college degree instead of entering teacher education in the freshman year. Many of these will change their objectives in the course of their degree program, but will prefer to continue for a liberal arts degree. The profession stands to gain from “recouping” them through the intensive program. However, cooperation between the advisory personnel in the respective colleges can enable the individual to continue rather than convert his program. For some years I have been contacted for advice to juniors and seniors in liberal arts programs as to what to take as most fitting preparation for pursuing the intensive program. The University of Connecticut has gone so far as to prepare a bulletin for prospective candidates outlining ways of improving their background by selection of courses.

In summary, I would like to state a prejudiced view and commend it to the profession for serious consideration. (I am not recommending the view—merely asking that it be assessed and not dismissed as a foredoomed failure.) There seems to me to be reason to answer our title poser along these lines:

1. The intensive program warrants careful attention as a conversion measure for at least a time yet. By this means will be provided better teachers for the gap in our supply-demand equation than by any alternative open under existing circumstances. Teachers so added to the ranks of the certified will be teaching children over the years of their possible tenure and therefore should be as well prepared as possible. There is no reason to deal with the program as merely a means of amassing credits to meet the letter of the certification law. Good teachers can be produced in this fashion if there is careful adaptation of the curriculum and adequate guidance of the individual as he pursues it.

2. A pattern of teacher education with increased content background in the undergraduate years along with an experience related professional precertification program extending into the first years of teaching and under a more job-dictated program of study seems to be at least one aspect of the intensive program that might be welcomed here to stay. The possibilities of more effective use of existing educational facilities and a higher level of precertification preparation toward better teachers for our times should be enough to make the idea worth serious scholarly attention.

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in many of the New Mexico local study groups for curriculum development. We believe this is as it should be—for good schools will become better only when

educators and lay citizens work together. This type of leadership in New Mexico is developing programs to meet the needs of the school-age child and also to enrich community living.

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