NEEDED: Teachers of Teaching

THE problems of the urban school in a disadvantaged area are massive—so large, in fact, that frequently one person finds it impossible to conceive his relationship to the problem or to answer the question, "What aspect of the problem should be attacked first?"

School Persons Who Count

In the fall of 1966, Chicago was short 600 teachers; Philadelphia, 1,150 teachers; and Kansas City, 250 elementary teachers.1 One junior high school in a disadvantaged area of a large city began the year staffed entirely with substitutes and individuals who held a degree, but no teaching credential. A senior high school in the same city lacked three English teachers as late as December of that school year. These facts push the urgency of finding a solution to one problem to the forefront—how to get people who can teach into the classrooms of the schools in disadvantaged areas.

The pressures of ill-suited instructional programs, school size and control, parents’ demands on teachers, and teachers’ demands upon pupils are academic until these schools are staffed with teachers who can look at teaching beyond the “Can I survive today?” level. The school person who counts now, and in the foreseeable future, is a teacher of teaching, located in a “disadvantaged” school, and able to help the inexperienced teacher through his first days, weeks, or months of struggle into full professional status. This person must know teaching, supervision, the school system, and the school.

The Teacher of Teaching

The teacher of teaching is necessary for two kinds of reasons. The first kinds are specific to the realities of schools in disadvantaged areas, while the second are related to general weaknesses in most teacher preparation programs.

The realities of the school in a disadvantaged area situation are associated with a shortage of competent teachers—teachers who can look at teaching beyond the “How do I survive today?” level. Often the individuals in charge of classrooms of this type have had no formal training in teaching, or their formal training was ill suited to the type of class they are now teaching. This kind of person has

little chance for success unless he is a "natural" teacher or "tough" enough within himself to survive and grow despite the hazards he faces in his initial exposure to teaching.

If this trend is not reversed, the slow developer may never have a chance to become an effective teacher and the quick developer may never reach his full potential because he has never been able to stop long enough to analyze and improve his teaching. Of course, these arguments do not even consider the damage done to the pupils, damage of particular significance for those pupils who have nowhere else to get the school-related skills necessary to escape the cycle of poverty.

The second kinds of reasons for the immediate need for this teacher of teaching stem from the flaws of most teacher preparation programs. One, most of these programs do not extend beyond the confines of the institution of higher learning providing the rubrics of certification. When the individual leaves his campus he is assumed to be a teacher competent to operate as a professional. He may be visited by a supervisor or receive some orientation to the school system, but formal training has ended. He continues to grow beyond the survival level on his own.

Two, weaknesses derived from flaws in the usual teacher preparation program are more applicable to secondary schools than to elementary schools, although the latter do not completely escape them. The prospective teacher is given a series of courses which are designed to provide him with the substance to teach. These are sometimes called the "subject matter," "field" or "discipline." But at the same time another group of courses, culminating in student teaching, introduce him to teaching his particular "subject." At no time in his professional preparation does he make an extensive study of the teaching act itself.

This kind of preparation and development means that the teacher's major focus is frequently the substance of his teaching instead of the dynamics of the happenings in his classroom. As an outgrowth of this, frequently his satisfaction in teaching comes from a verbal interchange with students about the substance rather than from his manipulation of classroom activities. He has not been given the tools to make a study of teaching the source of his (Continued on page 628)
“kicks.” This makes teaching children who do not have the verbal skills necessary to manipulate subject matter a constant source of frustration.

It is hoped that the teacher of teaching described here will use his expertise to help the neophyte teacher from his early days of frustration into full professional status, so that schools in disadvantaged areas in particular do not lose the services of potentially effective teachers before they have a chance to realize their capacities. He will minimize, through early diagnosis and treatment, the damage done to children by poor teaching. Finally, he may be able to create an interest in the teaching act sufficient to make this, in addition to the manipulation of subject matter, the focus of teaching.

**Who Is a Teacher of Teaching?**

Who is this person who will help the new teacher find his way to full professional status? Before this question is answered, it must be made clear what he is not.

He is not a subject matter specialist, e.g., a specialist in the teaching of English (language arts), science, social studies, or music. He is not a supervisor who comes from a central location to evaluate performance or bail a teacher out of trouble. He is not an administrator charged with the responsibility of seeing that the school operates effectively. He is not a teacher with a traditional classroom of his own with a “look-out-for-a-few-new-teachers” kind of obligation.

This individual is a teacher of teaching; his class members are the teachers at various stages on their way to professional status; his subject matter is teaching and the problems of this particular school; and, his classroom encompasses the classrooms of the new teachers and a conference center.

The first requirement for the teacher of teaching is that he be a successful teacher of some years. He probably ought to have had at least five years of formal preparation. Some of his teaching experience should have been with pupils from disadvantaged areas, and this should have been a “happy” experience.

**Illinois Program**

The University of Illinois proposes to take a small group of teachers, “successful” in the terms above, and prepare them as teachers of teaching for the Chicago Public Schools. The first summer of the program will be spent looking at their teaching in a workshop atmosphere. The University staff will provide them with the tools to analyze their teaching, such as Flanders’ “Interaction Analysis,” and Smith’s “Strategies of Teaching.” The teaching episodes for analysis will be provided by the teachers themselves.

They will teach a group of Upward Bound students who will be on the campus for the summer. These teaching sessions will be video-taped and analyzed by the teacher and University staff. In each episode two questions will be asked: “Is this teaching you are doing applicable to children from disadvantaged areas?” and “How do you teach this approach to someone else?”

It is hoped that the kinds of performances and discussions emerging from this workshop will lead to the
identification of fairly independent teaching techniques that can be taught to neophyte teachers in micro-teaching sessions. For example, Herman Jones and Mary Smith, each experienced teachers, teach a full forty minute lesson to a fair sized group. In the forty minute lesson he uses an open, free-flowing discussion as the technique, while Mary Smith uses a rather teacher-centered discussion technique—and both appear to have successful lessons. The discussion and analysis that follow are designed to discover the independent components of the lesson that made it successful. Particular attention will be paid to those elements that seem to be separate and distinct teaching techniques so that these techniques can be recorded as protocol for use in the Teaching Techniques Laboratory the following semester.

Following this summer of studying their teaching, the prospective teachers of teaching will receive training in supervision. Initially this training will be in the clinical atmosphere of the Teaching Techniques Laboratory. They will supervise the micro-teaching sessions of a group of college students about to student teach. In the brief time micro-teaching has been used at the University, those involved in it have found that it is an excellent way to train supervisors. The micro-class (the four or five pupils taught by the college student) ratings, accompanied by a video-taped record of the class session, provide excellent feedback about the lesson. The video-taping of the supervisory session provides feedback for the quality of the supervisory session. After experience in this clinical situation, the teachers of teaching will supervise student teachers in the field. Following this, they will supervise a few teachers who are in their first semester of teaching and located in schools in disadvantaged areas in Chicago.

At the same time the prospective teachers of teaching are studying and practicing supervision, they will be pursuing course work or independent study related to a particular aspect of the urban "disadvantaged" or teaching. This work will be under the direction of an instructor who is competent in the field. For example, the teacher of teaching whose primary interest is the cultural implications of poverty in an urban setting will be directed by an anthropologist or sociologist who has made this portion of the problem his center of interest. Most of the instructors identified for this portion of the work have been drawn from the social sciences, but this does not limit the possibilities for study to these areas. Ideally, at this stage of development, each prospective teacher of teaching would study a different area so that many viewpoints about the problem could be explored, because there is no certainty about what specific knowledge has direct relevance to a teacher's behavior in a classroom.

In summary, it is hoped that these teachers of teaching will be able to have a positive and immediate impact on the teaching of many teachers in the schools in disadvantaged areas, and that they someday will be able to translate the knowledge available about the problems related to the "disadvantaged" into action by a teacher in a classroom.
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