

Initial Preparation of the Career Teacher

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FOR many years sharp criticism of most programs of in-service teacher education has been common. Conant extended this condemnation to practically all types offered during the school year, including essentially all graduate or extension courses. On the other hand, courses or activities requested by teachers to assist them with specific areas of concern are often rated very highly by the participants. But even a cursory review of board of education offerings in individual school districts clearly indicates that most of the work could be classified only as essentially adult education served up cafeteria style. Few would deny that well designed, professional in-service teacher education programs, which seek to produce career professionals, are the exception rather than the rule.

Increasingly the proposal is advanced that preservice and in-service teacher education be joined together and lengthened into a well-conceived, total teacher education sequence. Such a program should appeal chiefly to mature, committed young adults who are willing to undertake a seven- or eight-year progression of experiences to reach a high level of professional prestige and remuneration. The findings in studies of graduates of fifth-year programs, in which the participants have been very carefully selected, strongly support the proposition that able, mature, committed persons are at-

tracted to well-conceived, longer programs leading to certification.

Some Basic Considerations

Most teacher education programs in America, however, are still locked into undergraduate, four-year bachelor's degree curricula. Preceding certification, the most extensive direct experience—student teaching—is the most generally accepted part of the professional curriculum. Yet perceptive observers of this gigantic professional operation—the graduation and certification of some 265,000 annually—are raising serious questions about the functional effectiveness of student teaching. Does student teaching in fact really bring these young graduates to the stage of demonstrated competence and assured self-confidence?

In analyzing such concerns, this writer's experience forces him to take these perhaps radical positions:

- That truly professional teacher education can only come when this curriculum is broken out from the stranglehold of the four-year bachelor's degree.
- That present-day, terminal, one-shot student teaching can be demonstrated to be

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educationally, psychologically, operationally, and financially unsound.

• That the direct experience phase of teacher education should be completely redesigned into a series of experiences beginning about the junior year and continuing at least into the third year of employed service.

In documentation of the above, any detailed examination of student teaching will demonstrate that it simply cannot get teachers ready for the difficult challenges of today's schools. The threats inherent in many student teaching situations almost completely preclude substantial learning, while the "numbers game" and the competition for good places almost defy any rational solution. Likewise the cooperation of two entirely separate sets of institutions in one professional activity and students who do not have a legal right to teach are factors which help to explain why no state provides an adequate financial basis for a sound program.

Redesigning Direct Experiences

A comprehensive projection of a redesigned sequence of direct experiences has been reported in the literature,¹ but only its in-service elements will be developed here. However, to put these portions in proper perspective, a brief listing of the major types of experiences included in this design follows:

1. A *pre-internship experience* during the first half of the junior year for self-selection, guidance, and to produce readiness for professional courses and experiences.

2. At least a year and a half of *clinical experiences* (defined as for the junior medical student) on a one-to-one, one-to-two, or one-to-three basis, with an accompanying in-depth study of the behavioral sciences and professional education content.

3. A paid *internship*, preferably for a year on a half-time basis, with accompanying professional and advanced content courses.

4. A two-year *residency*, the first two

¹ L. O. Andrews. "A Curriculum To Produce Career Teachers for the 1980's." *Theory into Practice* 6 (5): 236-44; December 1967.

years of regularly employed teaching, with a reduced load at least the first year and a planned program of school-college sponsored professional growth throughout.

5. A carefully designed *combined teaching-study program* leading to the degree of Educational Specialist, to prepare specialists in instruction—teaching team leaders.

The above projection assumes the inclusion of three other major elements plus the concurrent study of a carefully planned sequence of professional content. All students would have an early exposure to the "reality" of teaching-learning in the area to which they aspire. Second, students would study a carefully integrated variety of vicarious "laboratory specimens" brought into the classroom through the use of the media. Included would be recorded classroom episodes, critical incident films, micro-teaching, filmed models of teaching behaviors, simulation, mini-courses, video and audio tape recordings, etc. Third, it is assumed that some form of differentiated staffing will eventually develop in all schools. One such pattern would include these roles:

Instructional Specialist—Teaching Team Leader

Professional Teacher

(Provisional Teacher—bachelor's degree graduate would hopefully be phased out)

Resident, Intern, Student Teacher, Assistant Teacher—A.B. graduate

Paraprofessionals:

Teaching Aide

Teacher's Aide and Volunteer Assistants

Technical Aide

Clerical Aide.

The In-Service Phase

An in-service teacher education program designed on the above hierarchy might have these characteristics:

1. Only teachers on the two highest levels would be known as professional teachers and paid accordingly. They would be assigned to direct the work of the various pre-

professional and trainee levels, including the assistant teacher with a bachelor's degree and only a brief introduction into professional teacher education.

2. If the colleges financed the pre-internship experience and the clinical experiences were chiefly volunteer activities, the rest of the program could eventually be financed adequately with state and local funds since all of the trainees would be regular employees.

3. The internship (employed status) would be the first stage at which the development of professional skills would be the primary objective. Thus most of the critical threat—brief time, immediate evaluation for certification, and conflict of roles between school and college—would be removed.

4. Both the objectives of the residency and the advanced experiences and study leading to the specialist status would be carefully defined in terms of specific competencies, now seldom included in either student teaching or in-service education.

5. Some examples of the competencies desired in the professional teacher specialist of the 1980's could be listed as: diagnostician of pupil needs and learning problems; developer, applicator, and evaluator of learning strategies; specialist in the use of instructional technologies, in curricula, in evaluation techniques, and in the laboratory phases of teacher education.

6. A variety of means are now available, as never before, involving newly designed activities and a wide range of uses of the media, "laboratory specimens" as referred to earlier, to enable the in-service teacher to objectify teaching-learning problems outside of himself for study in a much less threatening way. These approaches may well prove more effective and more commonly used at in-service than at preservice levels.

7. Proper attention to the affective needs of trainees and teachers and to affective learnings must and can be built into this model in ways which can largely eliminate the threats of the present student teaching

and the almost universal professional hazing—"rites of passage"—forced on most beginning teachers.

8. One approach to No. 7 above is to provide dual supervision from both the school system and the college, with the latter in a gradually declining amount, but on a very different model from the usual student teaching pattern. The in-service person would have comprehensive supervisory support from the inside, but there would always be that "outside ear" to listen and to give professional support and counsel *on request*. Such service can be financed and supplied by adherence to a minimum credit, course, registration, scheduling practice, in contrast to freely proffered service which finally breaks down and disappears.

9. A most significant outcome of a careful design of this model would be the planned introduction at appropriate stages of the applications of many of the research concerns of the 1960's, such as interaction analyses, new approaches to evaluation, and behavioral objectives. Yet that introduction would not need to be the forced lock-step inclusion which is almost a necessity if done at the pre-service level; rather these applications could be introduced when experience had brought readiness to a high level. Several other most desirable approaches could much more easily be built into this elongated model, such as: designing specific experiences to meet individual needs, a variety of team supervisory techniques, forms of sensitivity training, and structured practice in pupil diagnosis.

10. A Master of Teaching degree could be given at the end of the internship, together with initial, regular certification (bypassing the bachelor's degree entirely), and professional certification could come after the completion of the residency, which might actually include some intensive preparation for one of the specialties so commonly desired in teachers today.

The above model is not likely ever to be adopted exactly as presented here. But similar models can and will be developed through close school-college cooperation. □

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