

Innovation: The

IF ONE can accept the premise that curriculum development is in-service education, then many exciting opportunities open up for genuine involvement in the field of education. The curriculum guide has long been the *pièce de résistance* of curriculum workers in the field. The man-hours spent, the overtime and overtaxing of teachers' energies, have been inordinately high considering the resultant change in the classroom pattern of operations.

We have sought for an answer that would allow for curriculum development at the classroom level and that still would promote the kinds of security as well as professional skills needed by teachers who are involved in change. Our search has produced one alternative which, after seven years of involvement, has proved to be successful.

The National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, has historically been a small, somewhat flexible teacher education institution. For approximately ten years, its extension operation, over a total academic year, generally involved only about 200 to 250 registrations. There was a desire to raise this involvement, and the plan of activity which will be described has resulted in a growth to its present size of 6,500 registrations per year, including some 1,000 registrations in summer extension workshops for teachers. These are not terribly large numbers by university standards, yet when a very small college experiences such growth,

it tends to rejoice and wants to share with others what it has found to be a workable solution to problems.

Cooperative Curriculum Change

In a spirit of cooperation, the administration of the graduate school engaged in dialogue with various public school leaders in the metropolitan area around Chicago. We began asking the kinds of questions that center around local needs and expectations. We used a "theme and variations" approach to field services: "Having determined what are to be the objectives for curriculum development in your school district, help us modify our master course outlines to make our workshop most useful to your staff in your environment." Districts were quite dismayed at being asked to involve themselves in planning a graduate level extension course.

Master Teachers on Site

Early in the development of this off-campus program of service, the National College of Education approached the County Superintendent of Schools in DuPage County, Illinois. The college had been invited to provide a social studies workshop under NDEA provision. We raised the question of the "warm body" phenomenon: (a) Does attendance which yields an attendance certificate at a workshop yield the kind of academic

Delicate Art in Teacher Education

MARVIN D. ENGLISH*

stature that graduate students ought to be involved in, and (b) does it really make any difference to the teacher when he goes back to teach his class?

The obvious answer was, "Well, it depends on who is teaching the course." Yet the other kinds of responses seemed to indicate that professional growth ought to involve graduate hours of credit so that the transcript could be carried by the individual who might move to another district. So-called board credit or workshop credit is a nontransferable professional commodity.

Several other very interesting alternative factors began to arise. Is it possible that the best teacher of teachers is a master teacher who has gained respect by involvement with boys and girls in the field? Is it possible that in the area of teacher education we need a strong measure of practical application to be convincing?

We began, with the County Superintendent's office personnel, to select the outstanding master teachers in the county. These individuals were interviewed and then hired as adjunct professors to teach for the National College of Education. The setting of all of these extension workshops was the classrooms in the elementary schools where the educational materials that boys and girls normally use are readily available. The classes started, not on the college calendar, but on the calendar appropriate to people who are working in the field.

Even the flexibility of scheduling began to receive praise from those involved in the program. By teaching these courses in the classrooms of the schools, we were able to show children's work in the various stages of development in all subject areas and see realistically the kinds of classroom endeavors that did occur.

To make the plan even more exciting, a broad-based fellowship program was created. In the State of Illinois, a teacher must pay a certificate registration fee of \$2.00 at the beginning of each school year. This money then goes into a teacher institute fund, which provides revenue for speakers for the various institute days during the year. The question was asked, "Is this the best use of the money and teachers' time if improvement of instruction is the goal?"

The one-shot intensified experience of a half-day institute was then compared to a ten-week workshop in which teachers would meet one full evening each week for ten weeks, in class sizes of 25 or less, where they could share ideas and mutually encourage and worry over the normal problems of teaching and curriculum development.

After the first year, it became apparent that some very interesting potentials were being touched. Teachers began bringing groups of boys and girls to class to demon-

* Marvin D. English, Dean, Graduate School, National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois

strate techniques to be used in small, micro-teaching situations or miniature experiences and to test out theories by direct application in the critical setting of the graduate workshop.

The County Superintendent of Schools then made the decision, based on a full year's observation and subjective judgment, to use portions of the institute fund to give every teacher enrolled in the workshops a 50 percent tuition scholarship. His argument: this clearly is one way in which the Superintendent of an Educational Service Region can assist in improving the quality of education offered the boys and girls of the county. Therefore, using only the teachers' certificate fees, and in no way touching public monies, an ambitious fellowship program began to develop.

Merit Performance Contract

The contracts for extension workshops take a very special form. They are contracts for adjunct professorships based purely on merit employment. That is to say, if, in the normal course of events and because we are all human, factors do arise which disturb the quality of our teaching, and if this lowering of quality becomes apparent to the class, the pupils are advised to call the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean then exercises the privilege of calling a three-way conference among the group of critics, the instructor, and the Dean.

Careful listening follows and a dialogue occurs involving the issues at hand. If there seems to be a legitimate question as to the quality of the teaching, its purposefulness and usefulness, the Dean then exercises the privilege of sitting in on one full night of instruction to supervise the teaching. At the end of that period of time, if it seems sensible

to replace the instructor, the instructor is counseled, paid in full, and dismissed for the rest of that term. This does not mean that he will not be invited to teach again but simply is a judgment based on that course, at that time, with that clientele.

This is not a simple matter. It is a true, hard-nosed decision that effective teaching, if it is to change teachers, must be satisfying, encouraging, invigorating, and stimulating to that group of teachers. If for some reason the teaching is not successful, the instructor must be changed. If a suitable instructor cannot be found, the tuition should be refunded. Teachers do not, by virtue of requirements and required attendance with an assigned instructor, benefit automatically from energy put into the class. The act of teaching is an exceedingly complex one; it is not something to be toyed with lightly; and extension or field services are not necessarily the dregs of the market. The excitement of meeting teachers in extension classes on their home grounds has proved to be a most invigorating contact.

To summarize, we have tried to help local school districts identify the classroom level of need their teachers are facing. We have assisted them in making surveys (sometimes full demographic surveys) to assess how they could help themselves. We have then tried to identify the kinds of courses needed, modifying these to be assured of their fitness, and have selected the best practitioners available to teach teachers.

This master teacher concept has been the cornerstone of our success. We have made some mistakes. We have had to dismiss instructors, some of whom had Ph.D. degrees. Yet we are trying to perform a very basic service, that of improving the quality of instruction given to boys and girls. □



Copyright © 1971 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.