

**THE
PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT
OF SUBJECT-MATTER**

**BY
EDGAR DUNNINGTON RANDOLPH**

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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EDGAR D. RANDOLPH.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM IN ITS SETTING

I. THE GENESIS OF DIVERSE PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

1. THREE ORGANIZING IDEAS IN FORCE.

Whatever the theory they hold of their distinctive function, schools for the professional education of teachers all recognize two crucial needs of the service,—scholarship and professional fitness. Ignoring minor variations and wide overlapping, it is clear that their responses to these abiding needs are embodied in three prevalent curricular “patterns.” Two of these make specific provision for subject-matter,—one for the actual elementary materials later to be taught;¹ the other for advanced academic studies.² The third, though attempting to realize the early ideal of an “exclusively professional” education for teachers, has always found it necessary to deal with the school studies, and in effect is usually a weakened form of the first type.³

All three likewise deal with the companion need of teachers,—professional fitness. This too they conceive of differently, some emphasizing heavily the immediate pressures upon the teacher for adjustment to the more external classroom situations and for a similar ready skill in teaching; others the less tangible qualities demanded by the ultimate purpose of the calling,—“vision,” “professional outlook,” “professional intelligence.” The first had perhaps its extreme expression in President S. H. White’s conception that the normal school should so organize its training that for the graduate beginning his public school work “every step should be mainly a repetition, not a venture.”⁴ This view of professional “fitting” was somewhat more than implicit in the earliest notions of the normal school’s function;⁵ and the mechani-

¹ Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, e.g.

² Illinois, Michigan, Georgia, Alabama, e.g.

³ Connecticut, New York, Idaho, e.g.

⁴ Proceedings, N.E.A., 1877, p. 170. See also 1873, p. 190.

⁵ E.g., Thomas Palmer, *The Teacher’s Manual*, 1839, p. 100. Barnas Sears, *Annual Report*, 1850, quoted by Barnard, *On Normal Schools*, p. 73.

cal results which in combination with the immaturity and low scholarship of the students it tended to produce, were early met by protests from many of the advocates of "strictly professional" education.¹ It was sufficiently prevalent, however, at the beginning of the twentieth century to evoke careful statements of the need for "professional intelligence:"

"It is possible for a student to acquire outward form of method without capacity to put it to genuinely educative use. . . . Immediate skill may be got at the cost of power to go on growing. . . . Later 'progress' may with such consist only in perfecting and refining skill already possessed. Such persons seem to know how to teach, but they are not students of teaching. . . . Unless a teacher is . . . a student he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he can not grow as a teacher, an inspirer, and director of soul life . . ."²

This wider view of what is professional also had its predecessors, —notably in statements of James Carter,³ Bronson Alcott,⁴ Calvin Stowe,⁵ and H. B. Buckham,⁶ for example. One phase of it (the emphasis on "vision") was well "illustrated in the educational views of President Z. X. Snyder, which are very evident in the committee report of 1898."⁷

Over the development of the typical organizations for meeting the recognized needs of teachers a brief preliminary perspective will be attempted as the most effective means of defining the problem of this study. The experience of three quarters of a century in the effort to secure both values best reveals the enduring difficulties.

To start with, it will be useful to consider that the variety of practice in the education of teachers indicates unsettled problems; that the school for teachers is still engaged in its original task of differentiating itself from schools of general education.⁸ To see

¹ E.g., Edward A. Sheldon, *Proceedings, National Teachers' Association*, 1863, p. 95; and President Newell, in *Discussions, Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1871, pp. 148, 154.

² John Dewey, *Third Year Book*, National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, 1904, pp. 13, 15. *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1877, p. 155f.

³ Barnard, *op. cit.*, p. 75f.

⁴ Bronson Alcott, *Early Intellectual Education*, American Institute of Instruction, 1832.

⁵ Barnard, *op. cit.*, p. 101f.

⁶ *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1873, p. 196.

⁷ *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1898, pp. 837-843, especially the six "centers of interest from which to derive a course of study."

⁸ *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1888, pp. 473, 512.

in what aspects of its work it has not satisfied its own ideal of its function is one purpose of this study. In the course of the exposition it will become apparent that at bottom the difficulty has always been that of securing a flexibly *relevant scholarship*,—of wedding the apparently divergent ideas of liberal education and of professional training.¹ Are they, as has often been averred, largely incompatible,—so that they must be pursued separately and each in a different spirit? This attitude was congenial to the established ideals and technique of general education and, either as a reasoned belief or as inertia, has been a persistent factor in the shaping of curricula for the education of teachers.² Or are they in reality commensurable,—so that they may be integrated in courses and curricula planned throughout with an eye single to the needs of the service? Belief in this, first clearly expressed in America by Calvin Stowe (1837),³ has had since 1865 a many-sided but sporadic and discontinuous growth,⁴ reaching perhaps its most comprehensive viewpoint in the integrations suggested by the authors of *Bulletin Number Fourteen* of the Carnegie Foundation in 1920.⁵

Starting with the sound conception of the *teacher's peculiar* need of scholarship, under the irritant stimulus of the nascent professional ideal, the new institution gradually isolated from the objectives of general education sundry items bearing on ascertained needs of the service, not all of which had theretofore been conscious concerns of liberal arts education. To these from decade to decade were added elements from the slowly enlarging professional ideal. In the 'eighties and 'nineties these came to be described as "*the teacher's knowledge*."⁶ Thus there was in practice an interplay between the ideals of liberal education on the one hand and of professional "*fitting*," on the other hand,—an interplay which substantially modified, clarified, and enlarged both conceptions of the teacher's need and gradually lessened the opposition between them. In effect this give and take always

¹ Proceedings, N.E.A., 1894, p. 853.

² Proceedings, N.E.A., 1877, p. 163; 1887, p. 499; and W. H. Payne, *The Education of Teachers*, pp. 15, 48f.

³ Barnard, op. cit., 106f.

⁴ Proceedings, National Teachers' Association, 1865, p. 277f., Proceedings, N.E.A., 1873, p. 190f., 1877, p. 146f., 1877, p. 487f., 1890, p. 718f.

⁵ *The Professional Preparation of Teachers for American Public Schools*, 1920.

⁶ Proceedings, N.E.A., 1889, p. 581; 1894, p. 853.

meant the adaptation of the older ideal and technique to the new purposes. It was a groping departure from the traveled roads of established academic procedure toward the dimly apprehended goal of a scholarship consciously *relevant* to the work of the teacher,—an ideal still in process of definition, and still taking its chief stimulus from the same relationship.

2. THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY.

The heavy concern of this study, therefore, is with the treatment given to subject-matter in professional schools devoted to the education of teachers. Looking back at the central struggle in past practice and forward with the tendencies of present effort, the monograph raises its controlling questions: *Should teachers' courses in a specified subject-matter (of, say, history, geography, arithmetic, or grammar) be given a special treatment that will differentiate them in thoroughgoing fashion from liberal arts courses in the same field? And if so, what should be the basis and methods of differentiation?*

These questions compactly state the problem of the study and indicate the direction of its constructive effort.

The first is a question about the scope of the responsibility of the teacher of subject-matter in a teachers college. What is it, as things are? This question will be answered in detail later. For the moment a perspective over the situation will be most useful. In a general way it is clear from the conspectus given above that the character of his responsibility is somewhat predetermined. In its elements, his "teaching-situation" will vary with the curricular organization and the educational philosophy of the school in which he is employed. The diversity of both of these is considerable, but a general *milieu* may be outlined. On some level or other he will teach students of collegiate rank. In most schools, at best, some nine tenths of the students will have with him only such courses as a two-year curriculum can afford. In practice the time allotted to subject-matter in a given school study will vary roughly between twenty and one hundred twenty recitations,¹ according to the values placed respectively upon the three items of the normal-school trinity,—subject-matter, theory, and practice. The teachers college will have settled whether these courses shall be on the college level or lower; how extensive they shall be; and of what character,—

¹ See Chapter III.

whether to give "reviews," advanced academic courses, methods courses, or some combination of these. All possible combinations are at present in force in schools for teachers, and so diverse is practice that under any one of the descriptive terms either emphasis may actually prevail. As regards any subject, all that can be said in advance is that it will involve work of one or more of the three types mentioned.

The third of these types brings into view the complicating element of this study. Courses in methods are, next to practice-teaching, the commonest recognition of the peculiar responsibility of the school for teachers; for, with the vindication of academic studies (an evolution covering roughly the period between 1865 and 1903)¹, the pressure for a distinctive treatment of subject-matter declined and thus the way was opened for a lapse into a type of treatment less consciously adapted to the characteristic pressures upon teachers.² Now, except in the smallest schools, whether the teacher of subject-matter will give courses in methods or not will usually depend upon whether or not he is interested in the problems of elementary-school teaching.³ As things are, ordinarily in proportion as he is scholarly he will like to avoid such courses, for typically his preparation for his work in a teachers college has not nurtured such interest; it has had no planned bearing upon teaching any group, and least likely of all is it to have had relevance to elementary-school problems. It has for the most part been the usual preparation of a subject-matter specialist; that is to say, at best he is rather thoroughly imbued with the liberal arts ideal as it touches the field of his chief concern. And although in detail this ideal really overlaps the professional ideal throughout the greater part of its range,⁴ the direction of effort of the two is fundamentally different,⁵ and without some potent intervention of fresh interests or pressures the differences are likely to be much more in evidence than the common elements. Hence, it often, if not indeed usually, happens that the differences are recognized in the organization

¹ See p. 14.

² Arnold Tompkins, *The Philosophy of Teaching*, 1894, p. 84.

³ See Lester M. Wilson, *Training Schools in State Normal Schools in the United States*, 1920, p. 39.

⁴ See, e.g., *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1872, p. 216f.; 1873, p. 190f.; 1894, p. 850f.; 1903, p. 580.

⁵ See, e.g., Dean James E. Russell in *The University and the Commonwealth*, University of Minnesota, 1921, p. 58f.

of instruction, so that frequently methods courses are deferred to other teachers,¹—sometimes to critic teachers, sometimes to members of the subject-matter department with less academic but more professional interest, but often to “theory” or “education” teachers.²

The essential point, however, is that in any event there will typically be a clear separation of methods from subject-matter courses. Subject-matter is taught first, then methods. This is the practically constant feature of the situation,³ and implies a negative answer to the initial question;⁴ namely, that in a teachers college the subject-matter teacher has only the usual responsibilities of the teacher in a liberal arts college.

Beneath the compromises that have been crystallized in this general situation lie the questions of the distinctive purposes of the professional school for teachers and the fundamental theory of its curriculum,—with which consideration of the scope of the teachers of subject-matter in teachers colleges is involved.

3. ACADEMIC TRADITION VERSUS PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATION.

It is to be noted at the outset that the answers given to these questions have always been complicated by practical concerns, and the necessity for dealing immediately with these has resulted in the establishment of temporary patterns of procedure (the compromises alluded to) which, in trial and error fashion, necessarily followed the line of least resistance and postponed facing the fundamental problem of the new institution. The low scholarship of the available recruits,⁵ for example, early suggested a function of the normal school which, *a priori*, resembled that of the liberal arts school so closely as to seem to most to be identical with it. The teacher, as the representative of culture to the rising generation, must himself possess it generously.⁶ The truth of this was patent. Here the college and academy

¹ The tendency was observable early: see Proceedings, N.E.A., 1887, p. 473.

² See Chapter III.

³ Cf. Report of the National Council of English Teachers, English Journal VII, pp. 31–32 and Proceedings, N.E.A., 1877, p. 163f.

⁴ See Chapter I, §2.

⁵ Proceedings of the N.E.A., 1871, pp. 143, 153; 1872, p. 217; 1873, p. 166; 1887, p. 497; 1888, p. 504.

⁶ Edward Everett, 1839. Quoted by Barnard On Normal Schools, p. 147f.

traditions of education and teaching had leeway,—traditions which had already through numerous now familiar utterances of distinguished Americans¹ been assimilated to the political theory of public education. No failure of the champions of "thorough and accurate knowledge" to perceive the inadequacy of "mere scholarship" for the work of the teacher could invalidate their plea for

"A class of liberal minded instructors whose vocation it shall be to place the views of the most enlightened minds within the reach of a more and more extensive portion of their fellow-creatures . . .";²

and no promise of technique could make less vital to democracy the function which they referred to the teacher's scholarship:

"A spirit of humanity should be breathed into him [the child] from all his studies. In teaching geography, the physical and moral condition, the wants, the advantages, the striking peculiarities, of different nations, and the relations of climate, seas, rivers, mountains, to their characters and pursuits, should be pointed out so as to awaken an interest in man wherever he dwells . . .".³

Here is seen the liberal arts ideal, uncomplicated by the notion of professional focusing. Implicit was the conception of the teacher's central responsibility for the conservation of significant race experience and of the school's corresponding responsibility for his scholastic equipment.

When the normal school was established, the obvious recourse to men feeling thus was academic instruction of the familiar type, whether dealing with the common branches or their upper reaches.⁴ The establishment of the normal school, however, brought into relief a theoretic rivalry of knowledge and technique, and the opposing evaluations of these elements of the teacher's equipment inaugurated the central conflict in the shaping of the curriculum: namely, the struggle of "academic" *versus* "professional." For seventy-five years those who felt the teacher's need of specific or professional education seem to have been

¹ See E. P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States*, p. 57f.; and Ross Finney, *The American Public School*, Chapter III, e.g.

² William Ellery Channing, 1837. Quoted by Barnard, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³ William E. Channing, 1833, Quoted by Barnard, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁴ Of unsuspected import for the development of the curriculum was the fact that from the beginning and at all times subsequently, the champions of knowledge were divided *a priori* over the question as to which of these was the better center for the curriculum.

profoundly influenced by a suggestive analogy between the preparation of doctors, lawyers, and divines and the preparation of teachers,—an analogy drawn by Thomas Gallaudet in 1825.

" . . . What is it that has furnished us with able divines, lawyers, and physicians? The undivided consecration of the talents and efforts of intelligent and upright individuals to these professions. . . . We have our theological, law, and medical institutions in which our young men are fitted for the pursuit of these respective professions. . . . Why not make this department of human exertion [the education of teachers] a profession as well as those of divinity, law, and medicine? Why not have an institution for the training up of instructors for their sphere of labor as well as institutions to prepare young men for the duties of the divine, the lawyer, or the physician? . . . Let the same provision, then, be made for giving success to this department of effort that is so liberally made for all others. Let an institution be established in every state, for the express purpose of training up young men for the profession of instructors of youth in the common branches of an English education . . ."¹

So frequent,² so confident, and so nearly identical with it in form and content are the subsequent allusions to this analogy that it is probably necessary to rate it among the documents of primary significance in the history of the education of teachers. The fact that those who relied upon it as the basic argument for a "strictly professional" normal school read into it a specific implication of exclusion of academic studies that was by no means warranted either in fact or in the language of Gallaudet only gradually came to light. It was not perceived by the advocates of the sufficiency of scholarship until the late 'seventies and the 'eighties. The trial of theories, however, began with 1839. Later recommendations of the adequacy of merely scholastic equipment might, and often did, ignore the challenge of

¹ Thomas Gallaudet, quoted by Barnard, *op. cit.*, p. 39. See also, *Connecticut Common School Journal*, Vol. I, No. 8, Feb., 1839, p. 81f. It is substantially Mulcaster's argument.

² Forty instances of its use were counted before 1900 in the debates upon the curriculum. Seven analyses of the fallacy of the interpretation put upon Gallaudet's language appeared between 1877 and 1903 (see p. 70f. and 92), and it gradually became clear that in the preparation of teachers the materials of general education bear a different relation to professional education from that which obtains in the case of the preparation of doctors, lawyers, and divines. See *Proceedings, N.E.A.*, 1877, E. C. Hewitt, p. 151; 1880, G. L. Osborne, and F. Louis Soldan, p. 180f; 1881, J. C. Gilchrist, p. 203; 1888, Joseph Baldwin, p. 477; 1892, N. C. Schaeffer, p. 787; and 1903, Henry M. Johnson, p. 578. With his customary clarity Henry Suzzallo stated the relationship in 1908. (See footnote, p. 29.)

"method;" but in so far as they reflected the operative factors in the educational situation they had to take account of a growing insistence upon other needs of the teacher that by many and influential persons were regarded as equally important with knowledge. If the service of scholarship was to be sustained the scholars must more sharply define the responsibility of the normal school with reference to the relation of "liberal culture" to the work of the teacher. Edward Everett in 1839 did this in terms that have lost no significance with the passing of time:

"The great mistake in monitorial instruction is that it supposes that the moment the bare knowledge of a fact in its naked form is attained, it qualifies a person to teach it to others. The teacher must know things in a masterly way, curiously, nicely, and in their reasons. . . . The teacher must see the truth under all its aspects, with its antecedents and consequents, or he can not present it in just that shape in which the young can apprehend it. He must, as he holds the diamond to the sun, turn its facets round and round till the pupil catches its luster. . . . The first object of instruction in a normal school is, as far as possible, to go over the circle of the branches required to be taught and see that the future teacher is minutely and thoroughly versed in them . . ."¹

Even at the date of this address, however, it was necessary to recognize the place of "the art of teaching." Everett, in the same address, did it in the following words:

"The second part of instruction in a Normal School is the art of teaching. To know the matter to be taught, and to know it thoroughly, are of themselves, though essential, not all that is required. There is a peculiar art of teaching. The details of this branch are inexhaustible. . . . One thing is certain, that though there can be no difference in the average capacity of equal numbers of children in two schools in the same community, there is often a vast difference in the average scholarship after the same amount of schooling: To what can the difference be ascribed but to different degrees of skill on the part of teachers? . . . But this is a topic in which my limits do not permit me to engage . . ."

Many school men felt similar "limits," and the momentum of the liberal arts tradition carried normal school practice with it down the well-worn grooves of established school procedure. It could not have been otherwise; but the way was not smooth. A widespread and wholesome dissatisfaction with existing educational practices in the common schools had produced numerous canny analyses of "defects in our education," and the original

¹ Edward Everett, 1839, Quoted by Barnard, op. cit., p. 154. Cf. B. H. Bode, *Fundamentals of Education*, 1920, Chapter I.

thrust of *Intellectual Philosophy* was clearly supplemented in the 'twenties by the first fresh urge of Pestalozzianism.¹ The effects were bewildering in the extreme. The extravagant expectations entertained of the Lancasterian system and of the Infant Schools are only the most familiar illustrations of a leaven working in American education. The "confident amateur" was never more in evidence,² and the service of conservative leadership never more distinguished. The conclusion reached was that "method" is wholly individual; that to each there is his own effective way of teaching.³ Tenaciously these leaders of reform held to the values of scholarship.

The increasing aggressions of "method" could force concessions and restatements, but never a retreat. After a quarter of a century Samuel Bates reaffirmed for his group the faith of Everett and indicated the dangers of the new movement:

"It is . . . important that . . . the powers to be educated, and fit subjects to be taught . . . be carefully considered. But of even greater importance is it that the instruction be given by a liberal-minded and well-instructed teacher. It is not enough that the proper studies be assigned to the proper periods of development. It is the teacher who is to put life and vitality into the system; and the education which results will be liberal in proportion as he is liberal . . ."⁴

Utterances of similar import are abundant throughout the debates upon the content of the normal school curriculum in this period; and the less hospitable attitude that "the best and only necessary equipment of the teacher is scholarship"⁵ persisted over a temporary decline in the 'eighties when the promising recrudescence of Stowe's theory⁶ of the professional treatment

¹ If not earlier still by Neef.

² See American Institute of Instruction: 1832, Francis Gray, Introductory Discourse, p. 5; 1831, James Walker, Introductory Discourse, p. 5; 1834, Caleb Cushing, Introductory Discourse, p. 27; Hubbard Winslow, Innovations in Education, p. 170; 1838, Thomas D. James, Model Schools, p. 77; 1857, Daniel Mansfield, Some Erroneous Opinions Upon Education, pp. 23-52, *et al.*

³ See, e.g., American Institute of Instruction: 1830, Warren Colburn, The Teaching of Arithmetic, p. 283f, and 1831, James Walker, Introductory Discourse.

⁴ Proceedings of the National Teachers' Association, 1864, Samuel Bates, *Liberal Education*, p. 155f.

⁵ Proceedings, N.E.A., 1873, p. 190. Quoted by President H. B. Buckingham.

⁶ See Chapter II.