

REDIRECTING TEACHER EDUCATION

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eliminating poverty, in promoting orderly and intelligent readjustment of the political and economic systems to meet new social conditions. Both the above groups unite in the view that the key to the type of educational reconstruction in which they are interested is the quality of the preparation received by teachers. If a more enlightened education may be sponsored in the teachers colleges, there is hope that schools and communities will be able to move forward intelligently; without improved teacher education, all other changes are likely to be abortive.

The institutions educating teachers have not, on the whole, been resistive to innovations. If anything, perhaps they have been too ready to respond to a new wave of suggestion, a new impulse to adjust to changes in objective conditions. What has been singularly lacking is a consideration of changes in relation to a unified outlook upon the system of education as a whole. Too little attention has been given to reforms that would reinforce one another in developing a basic trend toward a constructive general result. Too infrequently have faculties and administrative officers reviewed the situation in teacher education as a whole and introduced practical readjustments grounded in an analysis of contemporary American culture and society and a consideration of the kind of education needed therein.

This volume seeks to open up thought and suggest procedures in teacher education to that end. It makes observations as to objectives and processes in the selection and preparation of educational workers with the hope that educational agencies, responding to the needs and possibilities of modern society, may be better able to achieve the democratic aim of maximum development for every person. The endeavor is toward a "re-vision" of the education of teachers that might be achieved if the persons responsible for this type of educa-

tion should build upon these discussions a vigorous cooperative attack upon the problem of educating better individuals in a better society.

This volume is the outgrowth of a study of the program of Teachers College, Columbia University, made by the authors at the request of Dean William F. Russell, for faculty consideration. In the course of that study, colleagues on the faculty of Teachers College shared liberally in interviews, in conferences, and by letter the results of their thinking. Criticisms and suggestions with respect to the education of teachers, published in books, in professional journals, and in popular magazines widely read by thoughtful laymen, were reviewed. Counsel was also sought from several groups outside the field of teacher education, from psychiatrists, from leaders in progressive schools, and from interpreters of modern social trends. Thus, while full responsibility is assumed by the authors, their indebtedness to others too numerous to name is considerable.

The result of the study has led to certain recommendations which may seem unconventional. Yet some of the most radical proposals really are, as one colleague remarked, at least as old as Mark Hopkins, Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Comenius, or Socrates. As a whole, however, it must be apparent that the conception of teacher education here developed, with its emphasis on rigorous attention to the guidance of individuals and on participation in actual professional and community life, contrasts markedly with the conception commonly associated with professional practice in this field.

for facilitating the emergence of the Good Life in our society.

But for some reason the problem is perennial. Tremendous effort and resources have been expended in its solution. We have erected a system of higher educational institutions numbering, in 1935, some 2,074 schools, colleges, and universities. Latest available estimates indicate an annual expenditure of approximately a half billion dollars in the work of these institutions. About one-ninth of the institutions are designated as teachers colleges or normal schools, expending also about one-ninth of the annual funds available for the system of higher education as a whole. Many of the graduates of liberal arts colleges and universities actually serve in some capacity in the field of education. More than one hundred thousand students were graduated from institutions of higher education in 1931, hoping to find places in the ranks of over a million educational workers in the nation. Despite the fact that the National Survey of the Education of Teachers² revealed that some thirty thousand of these newly prepared recruits to the profession could not be immediately employed, and thus represented temporarily an oversupply, the same survey stressed vigorously the inadequacy of existing standards of preparation. We have no dearth of individuals willing and anxious to enter the teaching profession, but the best available opinion from many sources indicates that many of those being admitted are, as a whole, not entirely competent to deal with the major responsibilities and needs of education in the present day.

Historically, there has been a steady increase in the amount of time spent by teachers in preparation. New courses and further years of study have been added from time to time. In the year 1900, the total number of Master's degrees granted in the United States was only 1,744, whereas by 1934 the num-

² E. S. Evenden, *Summary and Interpretation*, National Survey of the Education of Teachers, Vol. VI, pp. 223-24, U. S. Office of Education, 1933.

ber had increased to 17,288. The number of Ph.D. degrees granted increased from 164 in 1890 to 2,620 in the year 1934. Still holding to the pattern of adding more time in training, a few institutions on the graduate level have served an increasing number of post-doctoral students, and there is some discussion of the need of a still more advanced degree.

A question may well be raised as to this direction of growth. Are added years of the kind of training which we are now giving economically or educationally well justified?

Since professional interests and objectives of students typically do not take definite form until the students are well along in the period of their secondary education, and since direct professional education, therefore, does not usually begin until after high school graduation, the problem of improving teacher personnel has two main parts. There is the question of better selection of prospective educational workers, chiefly during and immediately following the secondary school period; and there is the question of improving the quality of the first professional preparation of those selected. These questions must be dealt with simultaneously. The continued importance of both questions throughout more than a generation of the operation of a system of institutions designed to provide the best possible personnel for American education suggests the imperative need for a re-thinking of the basic objectives of these institutions. This would pave the way for the reorganization of requirements and methods, for the pruning of dead wood from traditional practices, and for greater confidence than is now possible that every professional graduate would achieve, as an educator, the standards envisioned for him.

We certainly need, and in the future shall probably demand, many more teachers than we now have. This depends, in large degree, upon the role education is to play in American life. It depends upon how education is conceived in relation

to individual development and social life. If the ideal of democracy is to continue to be a formative influence in political, economic, and other areas of cultural activity and change in this country, certainly more and more emphasis will be laid upon the educational character of our social institutions. The family, the press, community organizations, political parties, and many other social institutions, not only will call increasingly for educational activities and resources to support them, but also will be considered as educational agencies in their very nature. The school is but a small part of the conscious educational endeavor. Such a reconstructed outlook upon the place of education in society, however, calls not only for more persons with educational preparation, but necessarily for a much higher quality of educational preparation than our teacher-education institutions are now giving. If each individual child is to be understood, loved, and guided in a series of achievements nicely graded to his particular needs and capabilities, we shall need not only many more teachers, but teachers who are educated to a level of insight, emotional adjustment, and teaching skill only rarely encountered in the classroom of today.

The opportunity for our teacher-education institutions is great, when considered from either the individual or the social side, and the task of reconstruction of their objectives and methods is a fundamental one.

justment; and (c) social changes which will be conducive to greater security and less frustration, strain, and distortion of personality.

WORK. The teachers college should contribute toward: (a) a better understanding and mastery of techniques in the teaching profession; (b) the ability of graduates to guide their pupils toward work which is personally satisfying and socially useful; and (c) a modification of our economic order that will put to work more of our human and material resources.

KNOWLEDGE. The teachers college should further the pursuit of knowledge, not only for its instrumental value in connection with other objectives, but also for its intrinsic contribution toward understanding.

Students should develop both breadth and depth of intellectual interest, persistence in wrestling with problems, and constant awareness of interrelationships of ideas. The teachers college should promote the search for truth by its staff and students, and should enable them, as teachers, to raise the level of intellectual interest among their pupils. It should foster those changes in society which will extend research and which will also utilize scientific knowledge more fully for the welfare of all our people.

ARTISTIC VALUES. The teachers college should contribute toward: (a) greater appreciation of the arts, more creative skill in the arts, and more artistic living on the part of its staff, its students, and the pupils in the schools; (b) changes in our culture and our social institutions which will facilitate the creation and enjoyment of beauty.

RECREATION. The teachers college should contribute (a) toward the enjoyment of life by its students, (b) toward their ability and inclination to make life happier for their future pupils, and (c) toward a society in which leisure brings greater satisfaction to all.

INTEGRITY. The teachers college should develop in its students and staff a high degree of integrity. They should speak, write, teach, and act as free and responsible persons. Our procedures should strike off shackles, emancipate, set people on their own feet, encourage declarations of independence, reward initiative, and, at the same time, develop in individuals readiness to accept the full consequences of their actions. We should strive to modify society in such ways as to reduce intimidation, hypocrisy, helplessness, dependence, and blind conformity.

COOPERATION. The teachers college should exemplify genuine cooperation of many different workers toward common ends; it should prepare its students to develop the potentialities of their future associates and pupils for cooperation in school and in the community.

GROWTH. The teachers college should contribute toward continuous growth and flexibility of adjustment to changing personal and social needs on the part of its staff and student body; its graduates should deserve to lead, and should be able to help society overcome some of the lags and rigidities which now retard social progress. Harold J. Laski speaks in this connection of

the critical temper, by which I mean that intensity of conviction is always accompanied by openness of mind.¹

There are many other, more specific, objectives which teachers college faculties should hold for themselves and their students, because they contribute as means to some of the above ends. Among them, the following may be emphasized:

- a. A social frame of reference, growing out of extensive, careful, and active study of our society and the forces which move within it.

¹ "The Elite in a Democratic Society," *Harpers*, Vol. 167, pp. 456-464, 1933.

- b. Thorough understanding of the growth and development of individuals.
- c. Mastery of a field of subject matter (not necessarily defined according to the conventional divisions).
- d. Skill in relationships with other people; techniques adequate for good adjustment in social situations.
- e. A high degree of skill in reading, writing, and speaking.
- f. Skill in discovering and using the resources of a community: organizations, institutions, traditions, personalities, etc.
- g. Skill in using libraries, references, bibliographies, indices and other sources of additional information.
- h. Capacity to interpret and to criticize research; ability to contribute some research.

If these objectives can be accepted, we are ready to inquire how well they are being achieved. Some students attain so satisfactory a standard in these various objectives that we are encouraged to believe that the goals are not Utopian. Yet in most cases the students who eventually meet these standards give evidence of some degree of competence in these respects when they come to the teachers college. Certainly one important aid to the better achievement of our objectives must be wiser selection of students.

down by ninety per cent . . . It would be interesting and possibly useful to set up two amply endowed small institutions, a school and an undergraduate college, the school's attendance limited, say, to sixty, and the college's to two hundred. . . . Neither institution should take any account whatever of bogus democratic doctrine, the idolatry of mass, vocationalism, or the pretended rights of ineducable persons. If such persons presented themselves they should be turned away, and if anyone got in and afterward was found for any reason or to any degree ineducable he should be forthwith bounced out.¹

Abraham Flexner would maintain a similar policy of rigorous selection in his ideal graduate and professional school.

"No need to worry about democracy," he assures us. "Universities will be democratic if their professorships are filled and students are admitted on the basis of intellectual capacity."²

Alexis Carrel in *Man the Unknown* outdoes Plato in his faith in the capacity of selected scholars to govern. A somewhat new note is sounded in America, the land of opportunity, when William Wistar Comfort writes:

We cannot afford the sentimental heresy of salvaging the incompetent.³

The emphasis of contemporary Italian, German, and some Spanish writers upon the desirability of a society run by the elite has found considerable response in the United States. Actual experience in Fascist countries suggests, however, the need to consider carefully how the elite are to be selected and in whose interests they are to function.

Teachers colleges have additional reasons for undertaking more careful selection. The professionally trained educators of this country seldom enjoy the degree of public respect and

¹ "American Education," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 147, pp. 588-597, 1931.

² "Failings of Our Graduate Schools," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 149, pp. 441-452, 1933.

³ "Competition in Education," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 147, pp. 233-236, 1931.

esteem that might be expected for a group who have spent so much time in preparation. Most teachers college faculty members recognize that at present there are too many in their classes who do not belong there for one or more of a number of reasons: inferior mentality, poor cultural background, low condition of health, record of professional failure in the field, maladjusted personality, or character deficiencies exhibited in cheating for grades and in the theft or mutilation of library materials. Too many such students experience little difficulty at present in attaining Bachelor's and even Master's degrees, and going out into some job, with the apparent backing of the institution in which they have studied.

Contrast such persons with the standard set above by our objectives. We want to develop educational leaders who are possessed of good health, sane balance of personality, mastery of the techniques of their profession, breadth and depth of intellectual interest, artistic appreciations and skill, recreational interests, personal integrity, habits of cooperation, and a capacity for continuous growth. We want leaders who not only possess these personal attributes but are able to contribute toward a society that is healthier, happier, more efficient in using its resources, more liberating for individuals, more co-operative, and better able to adjust to changing conditions. We shall not be able to go far toward such objectives unless we can begin with promising persons.

It is not easy to make wise selection. While virtually everyone seems to favor a higher standard of selection, there is much vagueness and uncertainty about how judgments could best be made. The serious limitations of existing record blanks and objective tests is readily apparent, in relation to our objectives. The various schools and colleges which have programs of selection in operation have felt more confident of their ability to select for good academic work than of their

ability to select good teaching personalities. The more we consider selection, the more evident is the difficulty of measuring the qualities in which we are most interested.

FACTORS IN SELECTION OF TEACHERS

It must be remembered that some selection, both intentional and unintentional, is now taking place. Requirements for admission to the teachers college often discourage students whose previous academic records are not very satisfactory. The cost of living away from home discourages others, including some whom the most exacting would be glad to have in his classes. The depression years have tended to localize the student bodies of many institutions that previously drew students from widely distributed geographical areas.

A number of writers, fewer perhaps than was the case ten years ago, are concerned over the relatively high proportion of women engaging in teaching. It is generally agreed that it would be desirable to increase the number of men active in elementary and secondary schools. This is dependent in part upon more adequate salary schedules, although it seems likely that financial differences are not the main factors leading able young men to choose occupations other than teaching. A proper presentation of the work of the educator as statesman might greatly increase the respect accorded teaching by men students in leading liberal arts colleges.

In opposition to the demand of some school boards that women teachers should be unmarried, the present writers find themselves in accord with those social critics who would administer selective processes in such a way as to increase opportunities in education for both men and women with complete and normal family experiences. This point of view has been pleasantly expressed as follows: