

THE
Effective and the Ineffective
COLLEGE TEACHER

A study made for the National Personnel Service, Inc.

By
ANNA Y. REED

In Collaboration with

FRANK P. MAGUIRE WILLIAM A. THOMSON
HARRIETT VAN DER VATE



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REED-COLLEGE TEACHER

W. P. 1

MADE IN U.S.A.

FOREWORD

The investigation reported on in this volume was inspired by Marshall S. Brown, Dean of the Faculties of New York University and, at the time of its inception, a member of the Commission on the Enlistment and Training of College Teachers appointed January 1, 1927, by the Association of American Colleges.

Anna Y. Reed, Educational Director for the National Personnel Service and Chairman of the Department of Personnel Administration, School of Education, New York University, has directed the investigation and written the final report. Frank P. Maguire, Dean of Men, State Teachers College, East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, prepared the first schedule and collected the information on the topics included therein. William A. Thomson, Research Assistant for the National Personnel Service and Instructor in Psychology, New York University, prepared the second schedule. He has shared with Harriett van der Vate, also Research Assistant for the National Personnel Service, supervision of the clerical and statistical work involved. Both have assisted in the interpretation and organization of the material and in the editorial work.

Subsidies for the conduct of the study have been received from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the National Personnel Service, Inc.

The Secretary and the Associate Secretary of the Association of American Colleges have been more than generous in advice and suggestions. Albert Britt, President of Knox College, Chairman of the Commission on Enlistment and Training of College Teachers, Association of American Colleges, Homer L. Dodge of the University of Oklahoma, Field Director for the Committee on College and University Teaching, American Association of University Professors, and a number of personal friends, who were unofficially interested in the project, have made valuable suggestions which materially improved the final set-up of the schedules or the interpretation and presentation of results.

The final manuscript has been read in whole or in part by the following: Dr. Robert L. Kelly, Secretary of the Association of American Colleges, President Albert Britt of Knox College, Dr. Frank E. Spaulding of Yale University, Dr. Albert B. Meredith of New York University, Dr. Morris Krugman, Chief Psychologist, Bureau of Child Guidance, New York City, Mrs. Howard W. Vernon, National Personnel Service, Dr. Don H. Taylor, Director of Industrial Relations, Employing Printers Association, New York City, Dean Paul Klapper of the College of the City of New York, and Dr. W. S. Learned of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

TO
OUR FAITHFUL COLLABORATORS,
THE PRESIDENTS AND DEANS OF AMERICAN COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES OF THESE UNITED STATES.

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
CHAPTER I The Purpose, Methods, and Summary of the Study . . .	1
Methods of Investigation	1
Review of Literature	7
Summary of Findings	17
The Representative College Administrator and His Faculty Inventory	18
The Representative Effective and the Representative Ineffective Arts College Teacher	27
The Representative Effective and the Representative Ineffective Teachers College Teacher	32
Trends, Suggestions, and Problems	36

PART II

CHAPTER II The Selection of Teachers and the Evaluation of Teaching Efficiency	44
Topic I. Major Qualifications Most Generally Sought When Selecting Faculty Members	45
Topic II. Evaluation of Teaching Efficiency After Induction	56
Topic III. Sources of Information for Evaluating Teaching Efficiency	64
CHAPTER III Rusty, Ineffective, or Undesirable College Teachers . . .	71
Topic IV. Which Type of Person Gives You the Most Concern with Teaching Efficiency?	71
Topic XVII. Probable Causal Factors of Rustiness in Teaching	73
Topic V. Probable Causal Factors of Inefficiency in Teaching	77
Topic XVIII. Questions on Rustiness	84
Summary	94
CHAPTER IV Methods and Devices for Improvement of Instruction in Colleges and Universities	100
Topic VI. Approximately What Proportion of the College Dean's Time is Devoted to Improving Instruction? President's? Other Administrative Officer's? . . .	100

	PAGE
CHAPTER IV	
Topic XI. What is the Estimated Per Cent of Faculty Meeting Time Devoted Primarily to Improvement of Instruction?	103
Topic VII. Administrative Devices and Methods for Improvement of Instruction	106
Topic VIII. From the Devices and Methods Listed in VII Indicate the Five Most Helpful for Experienced Teachers and for Inexperienced Teachers	149
Topic XIII. What Single Factor Do You Think Has Been Most Effective (1) In turning your fairly good teachers into better teachers? (2) In maintaining your superior teachers at the same high level?	157
Summary	159
CHAPTER V	
Methods and Devices for the Improvement of Instruction <i>Continued</i>	164
Topic IX. When Graduate Study, Travel, Research, or Other Specific Requirements are Made by the Administration, What is the Major Objective?	165
Topic X. What is the Estimated Total Yearly Expense for Attendance of Your Representatives at Educational Meetings? Who Goes?	167
Topic XII. What Concrete Procedure, Available for the Guidance of Other Colleges, Has Your Institution Established for In-Service Education During the Last Five Years?	170
Topic XIV. Do You Find Young Instructors Who Have Taken Professional Courses More Efficient Teachers Than Those Who Have Not?	173
Summary	179

PART III

CHAPTER VI	
Objective Data on Participating Institutions, Their Faculties, and the Groups of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	182
Comparisons on the Basis of Student Enrollment and Faculty Size	187
Comparisons on the Basis of Faculty Rank	200
Comparisons on the Basis of Highest Degrees Held	207
Effective and Ineffective Teachers Holding Various Academic Degrees	210
Distribution of Full Professors According to Highest Degrees Held	213
Summary	214

Contents

ix

PAGE

CHAPTER VII	Objective Data on Participating Institutions, Their Faculties, and the Groups of Effective and Ineffective Teachers (<i>Continued</i>)	217
	Institutions Conferring Various Degrees	217
	Effective and Ineffective Teachers Receiving One or More Degrees from the Same Institution	221
	Faculty Inbreeding Among Effective and Ineffective Teachers	223
	Ages at Which Effective and Ineffective Teachers Secured Degrees	227
	Lapse of Time Between Receipt of Degrees	229
	Ages of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	232
	Departmental Relationships of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	235
	Teaching Fields of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	242
	Relation Between Teaching Field and Degree Majors	246
	Experience of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	249
	Additional Experience and Education of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	253
	Graduate Work Not Included in Degree Programs	254
	Effective and Ineffective Teachers Mentioned in Biographical Directories	255
	Summary	257
CHAPTER VIII	Personal Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	261
	Administrative Statements Characterizing Effective and Ineffective Teachers	265
	Sources of Information Useful to Administrators in Arriving at Conclusions Regarding Effective and Ineffective Teachers	289
	Summary	300

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	First Schedule	303
	Second Schedule	311
APPENDIX B	List of Co-operating Arts Colleges	315
	List of Co-operating Teachers Colleges	324
APPENDIX C	Suggested Methods for Preventing Good Teachers from Developing into Rusty Teachers	328
APPENDIX D	Suggested Methods for the Rehabilitation of Rusty Teachers	333
BIBLIOGRAPHY		337
INDEX		341

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Major Qualifications Most Generally Sought by 291 Arts and 115 Teachers College Administrators when Selecting Faculty Members . . .	46
2. Characteristics for Rating Teaching Efficiency as Evaluated by 291 Arts and 115 Teachers College Administrators	58
3. Sources of Information for Evaluating Teaching Efficiency as Rated by 291 Arts College and 115 Teachers College Administrators	66-67
4. Probable Causal Factors of Rustiness in Teaching Efficiency as Reported by 76 Arts and 47 Teachers College Administrators	74
5. Probable Causal Factors of Inefficiency in Teaching as Evaluated by 291 Arts and 115 Teachers College Administrators	76
6. Per Cent of Faculties Reported as Rusty by Administrators	85
7. Classification of Suggested Methods for Preventing Good Teachers from Developing into Rusty Teachers	92
8. Classification of Suggested Methods for the Rehabilitation of Rusty Teachers	94
9. Estimated Per Cent of Time Given to Improvement of Instruction by Certain Administrative Officers	101
10. Estimated Per Cent of Faculty Meeting Time Devoted to Improvement of Instruction	103
11. Evaluation and Use of Methods for the Improvement of Instruction Related to Faculty Meetings	104
12. Tabulation of Replies on Methods and Devices for Improvement of Instruction by 291 Arts College Administrators	107
12A. Tabulation of Replies on Methods and Devices for Improvement of Instruction by 115 Teachers College Administrators	120
13. Numbers of Participants Reporting on Methods and Devices for the Improvement of Instruction, with Weighted Values and Ranks . . .	134
14. Administrative Devices and Methods for Improvement of Instruction .	150
15. Effective Factors in Improving Fair Teachers and Maintaining Superior Teachers	158
16. Objectives of Graduate Study, Travel, Research, or Other Specific Requirements Made by the Administration	166
17. Estimated Yearly Expense for Attendance of Representatives at Educational Meetings	169
18. Faculty Members Attending Educational Meetings as Reported by 224 Arts and 89 Teachers College Administrators	170
19. Concrete Procedures Established for In-Service Education During the Last Five Years as Reported for 159 Arts and 66 Teachers Colleges .	172
20. Replies of Administrators on Whether or Not Young Instructors Who Have Taken Professional Courses Are More Efficient than Those Who Have Not	175

List of Tables

TABLE	PAGE
21. Length of Time Administrators Have Been Associated with Present Institutions	184
22. Length of Time Effective and Ineffective Teachers Have Been Connected with Present Institutions	185
23. Distribution of Colleges in U. S. and Participating Colleges on the Basis of Student Enrollment	188
24. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Arts College Teachers by Student Enrollment, Sex, and Rank	190
24A. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Teachers College Teachers by Student Enrollment, Sex, and Rank	192
25. Distribution of Colleges in U. S. and Participating Colleges by Size of Faculty	194
26. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Arts College Teachers by Faculty Size, Sex, and Rank	196
26A. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Teachers College Teachers by Faculty Size, Sex, and Rank	198
27. Distribution by Faculty Rank of American Council Group, Participating Groups, and Segregated Groups	202
28. Distribution of Total Faculty, of Effective and Ineffective Teachers According to Highest Degrees Held	206
29. Number and Per Cent of Effective and Ineffective Teachers Holding Doctor's Degrees	210
30. Number and Per Cent of Effective and Ineffective Teachers Holding Master's Degrees	211
31. Number and Per Cent of Effective and Ineffective Teachers Holding Bachelor's Degrees	212
32. Distribution of Full Professors According to Highest Degrees Held	213
33. Colleges and Universities which Conferred Degrees upon Five or More Effective Teachers	218
34. Number and Per Cent of Teachers Receiving One or More Degrees from the Same Institution	222
35. Number and Per Cent of Teachers Who Received All, Part, or None of Their Degrees at Institutions Where Employed	224
36. Mean and Median Age of Effective and Ineffective Teachers at Receipt of Degrees	228
37. Mean and Median Years Elapsing between Receipt of Degrees by Effective and Ineffective Teachers	230
38. Age of Effective and Ineffective Teachers	232
39. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Faculty Members According to Size of Department	236
39A. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Faculty Members According to Size of Department and Rank. Arts College Faculty Members	238
39B. Distribution of Effective and Ineffective Faculty Members According to Size of Department and Rank. Teachers College Faculty Members	240
40. Number and Per Cent of Effective and Ineffective Teachers Holding Administrative Positions	242

List of Tables

xiii

TABLE	PAGE
41. Number and Per Cent of Arts College Teachers in Various Teaching Fields	243
42. Number and Per Cent of Teachers College Teachers in Various Teaching Fields	245
43. Number and Per Cent of Teachers Teaching Same Subject as Degree Major or One Closely Related to It	246
44. Number, Per Cent, and Average Length of Time Effective and Ineffective Teachers Have Been in College Teaching Field	248
45. Number, Per Cent, and Average Length of Time Effective and Ineffective Teachers Have Had School Experience Below College Level	250
46. Number and Per Cent of Effective and Ineffective Teachers Appearing in Three Biographical Publications	257
47. Classification of Statements Characterizing 237 Effective Arts College Teachers	266
48. Classification of Statements Characterizing 133 Effective Teachers College Teachers	272
49. Characteristics of 237 Effective Arts and 133 Effective Teachers College Teachers	277
50. Classification of Statements Characterizing 145 Ineffective Arts College Teachers	278
51. Classification of Statements Characterizing 95 Ineffective Teachers College Teachers	283
52. Characteristics of 145 Ineffective Arts and 95 Ineffective Teachers College Teachers	288
53. Classification of Statements Indicative of Specific Acts or Services which Attracted Administrative Attention to 255 Effective Arts College Teachers	290
54. Classification of Statements Indicative of Specific Acts or Services which Attracted Administrative Attention to 140 Effective Teachers College Teachers	294
55. Activities of 255 Effective Arts and 140 Effective Teachers College Teachers	299

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE, METHODS, AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study was to secure, through administrative eyes, a picture of the typical effective and the typical ineffective college teacher as each practices his profession in the collegiate institutions of today; to ascertain what collegiate officials considered most desirable qualifications when selecting new faculty members; to know what characteristics were stressed when evaluating previous selections; to learn what sort of characteristics were thought to contribute most to effectiveness and ineffectiveness of teaching; to question the methods and devices which were in vogue for improvement and upkeep of faculties. And finally to give each administrator an opportunity to supplement his abstract contribution to the study by selecting one or more specific teachers whom he considered either effective or ineffective and to mention the specific characteristics which justified his selection.

Objective data, when available, were expected to lend substance to the picture drawn from the opinions and practices of administrative officers.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Two methods of securing the opinions and practices of college administrators were available: the written inquiry or questionnaire and the personal interview or conference. The personal interview was discarded not only because of the time and expense involved but because it was felt that a large number of opinions secured by a carefully prepared and written inquiry would be more significant than a smaller number secured by informal and possibly less carefully prepared interviews. In the last analysis, the validity of the findings would be judged by the fact that opinions had provided the larger

part of the basic data irrespective of the method whereby these were collected. However, no apology for and no defense of, the use of the questionnaire is offered. Presumably the results will appeal only to those whose own training and experience have long since qualified them to judge of its uses and abuses in general and its feasibility for the immediate purpose.

Two questionnaires, mailed in two consecutive years, were determined upon. The first would seek background data comprising, in the main, administrative opinion regarding the selection, evaluation, and improvement of college teachers. The second would serve as a rough check on returns from the first, would seek supplementary material, and, if response to the first inquiry warranted, would press for concrete data relative to specific instructors designated as outstandingly effective or outstandingly ineffective. The administrative viewpoint only would be sought, and the character of the inquiry would be such that it would require the personal attention of the president or the dean.

Terminologies proved to be exceedingly troublesome. What is the scope of "instruction"? Is it synonymous with "teaching"? Should it be limited to classroom teaching or should it include a number of well-known marginal factors? What is "good teaching" and by what criteria may it be differentiated from "poor teaching"? What is "scholarship," "personality," and the like? Challenge on almost every terminology suggested for use in the questionnaire was recognized as possible. Debate on the meaning of each characteristic or trait might have been endlessly protracted. However, it was believed that the intended connotation of each terminology would be obvious from the context.

A. THE FIRST SCHEDULE

Fourteen topics, each with some definite and thought-through part to play in the *ensemble*, comprised the first schedule as mailed. Topics which did not give promise of serving one or more of the following purposes were eliminated: (1) to supplement the findings of previous studies; (2) to afford a check on the reliability of opinions expressed under other topics, i.e., would they stand the test of a second approach from a different angle? and (3) to open the way for one or more additional studies provided results warranted.

The purpose which each topic included in the schedule was expected to serve, has been indicated under presentation of returns on

that topic. The schedule is found in Appendix A. A very brief explanation is offered at this point in order to assist the reader in securing an overview of the entire study.

Topic I asked administrators for a composite pre-employment picture of the type of individual they usually sought when making additions to their corps. Topic II asked for a post-employment picture which would help to differentiate the successful from the unsuccessful teacher, while topic III sought an X-ray of the administrative mind in the process of making such differentiations.

Topic IV was a "feeler" for a type of information which seems to have been neglected in previous studies. A number of assumptions that inexperienced teachers habitually trouble instructional waters had been found. Also, a number of suggestions that supervision be provided for inexperienced teachers had been noted.¹ No studies of the relative inefficiencies of experienced and inexperienced instructors had been found. The topic seemed within the scope of the undertaking. It was obviously an unexplored field and replies might point the way toward a new line of attack on instructional problems.

Topic V was a logical next step. It was designed to secure administrative opinion regarding causal factors of failure when young instructors did not attain success or when experienced instructors became inefficient.

Topics VI and XI were leading questions regarding supervision of instruction as an administrative responsibility and the extent to which faculty meetings were given over to discussion of methods of improving instruction. Returns were to be checked against returns on items 18, 19, 21, 22, and 25 of topic VII.

Topic VII was the heart of the study. It comprised a list of forty (sixty-three including subheads) possible methods and devices for the improvement of instruction with an invitation to administrators to add other desirable methods. The list was so arranged that participants could indicate by symbol whether or not the method was in use and the value placed upon it—"essential," "desirable," indifferent," "little value" or "no value." Topic VIII, using the same basic methods and devices, asked for selection of the five most helpful methods for improving the instruction of experienced and inexperienced

¹ Randall, Otis E., "The Enlistment and Training of College Teachers," *Association of American Colleges Bulletin*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (April, 1927), pp. 126-143.

Wilkins, Ernest H., "Report of the Commission on Enlistment and Training of College Teachers," *Association of American Colleges Bulletin*, Vol. XV, No. 1 (March, 1929), pp. 40-45.

enced instructors. Topics IX, X, XII, XIII, and XIV were introduced to serve as checks on the opinions expressed under topic VII.

The request for names of outstanding teachers which concluded the schedule was a second "feeler." Would administrative officers respond to this request? If they should show an inclination to consider "good teaching" in a more concrete fashion and furnish sufficient names to permit further research on an individual basis, a tentative follow-up program was held in reserve.

B. DISSEMINATION OF THE SCHEDULE

Eight hundred six institutions were offered an opportunity to participate in the study, 791 institutions received questionnaires, and 416, or 52.59 per cent, made returns.

The first invitations were extended to the 458 members of the Association of American Colleges. They were sent out in accordance with the recently established policy of that Association relative to soliciting questionnaire co-operation among its members.¹ A letter familiarized the presidents with the purpose of the study and the character of assistance sought. A reply blank was enclosed. Two hundred ninety-five institutions returned the reply blank. One hundred ninety-seven offered co-operation, 50 were uncertain and 48 refused to participate. In April, 1932, schedules in duplicate were mailed to 280 of the 295² who had replied, as well as to the 163 who had made no response. One hundred ninety-one of the former and 56 of the latter returned completely filled out schedules, making a total of 247 participants from the membership of the Association of American Colleges.

This exceptional response created a desire to broaden the quantitative scope of the study and to include a group of teachers college administrators, whose opinions in comparison with those of arts college administrators might add value to the study. One copy of the schedule accompanied by a letter of transmittal, but not preceded by the letter soliciting co-operation, was sent to each of the 168 colleges and universities found in the Educational Directory for 1930 which were not members of the Association of American Colleges, and to 180 institutions comprised in the 1931 membership list of the Ameri-

¹ Kelly, Robert L., "Questionable Questionnaires," *Association of American Colleges Bulletin*, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (May, 1931), p. 291.

² The tenor of refusal indicated that the other fifteen would not be interested.

can Association of Teachers Colleges. Fifty-three of the former and 116 of the latter completed the schedule.¹

Nine arts colleges and one teachers college returned schedules too late for the data to be included in the tabulations. Therefore the study comprises returns from 406 institutions: 291 arts colleges and universities, of which 240 are members of the Association of American Colleges, and 115 teachers colleges and normal schools, all of which are members of the American Association of Teachers Colleges.² Forty-eight states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii are represented.

Schedules were signed as follows: of the 291 arts colleges and universities, 142 by the president, vice-president, or chancellor; 103 by deans of the college, of arts, of the faculty, of instruction, of education, of university administration, and one by a dean of the graduate school; 46 by other administrative officers including assistant to the president, provost, director of studies, director of instruction, registrars, director of administrative records, and one rear admiral of the United States Navy. Seventy-three of the 115 teachers college schedules were signed by the president, principal, or vice-principal; 29 by deans of various types, and 13 by registrars, and supervisors of instruction or training.

C. THE SECOND SCHEDULE

The second schedule was mailed in April, 1933, to all who had responded to the request for names of outstandingly good teachers, 244 arts and 101 teachers college administrators. It comprised four topics and was accompanied by a summary of the returns on the first schedule with full information as to the objectives of the second inquiry. For convenience, the four topics of the second schedule have been added to the fourteen topics of the first schedule and appear in Appendix A as topics XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII. Topic XV sought specific information on individual, outstanding faculty members. Topic XVI was concerned with the same sort of information for "rusty" teachers. The education and experience sheet was filled out for each individual in both groups. Under topic XV the names of individuals given in the first schedule were typed in. This was regarded as a necessary precaution because much background infor-

¹ Fifty-three and ninety-three one-hundredths per cent of the 458 members of the Association of American Colleges, which was the only group receiving letters of approach, participated, while 48.56 per cent of the 348 institutions to which questionnaires were mailed "cold," participated.

² Appendix B.

mation had already been secured on each of these names from catalogues and other sources, and any change in names not known to the tabulators would result in inaccuracies and confusion. However, since approximately one year had elapsed since administrators had made these selections, it was felt that they should have perfect freedom to change the names if they wished. In five cases names were erased and others substituted. Death had claimed several. A few teachers had resigned, and a few blanks were not completely filled out and were discarded. No names were used under topic XVI. Individuals were designated as 1, 2, and 3.

Topic XVII afforded one more opportunity to express administrative opinion on the causes of "rustiness." Topic XVIII sought information on the proportion of effective and ineffective teachers comprised in individual teaching corps. It also sought such light as administrators might be able and willing to give on a number of provocative questions which had resulted from replies to the first inquiry.

Under topic XV, 227 arts college administrators named 680 exceptionally good teachers, 550 men and 130 women; 99 teachers college administrators named 289, 183 men and 106 women.

Under topic XVI, 46 arts colleges mentioned 123 "rusty" teachers, 101 men and 22 women; 30 teachers colleges mentioned 85, 59 men and 26 women.

D. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Returns on the study have been organized and presented in such fashion that the abstract and concrete pictures afforded by the data might stand out in contrast or in agreement, as the case might be. Topics from either schedule have been reported on in the logical order for accomplishing this objective rather than in schedule order.

The statistically-minded reader may challenge neglect of certain well-known statistical procedures frequently applied to similar data. It was felt that the study was essentially an empirical investigation, that the type of data upon which it was based was not sufficiently objective to justify refined statistical procedures, and that the application of such procedures would tend to obscure the fact that the value of the results depends upon the fact that the opinions secured are authoritative rather than upon proof that the data are statistically reliable.

Part I of the report comprises a statement of the purpose and methods of the study, a review of previous studies related to the

general theme, and a general summary of the findings with conclusions and recommendations. Part II pictures college administrators *en masse* dealing with faculty families *en masse*. Part III pictures individual college administrators comparing the education, experience, and personality characteristics of those members of their individual faculties whom they rate effective with the qualities of those whom they consider ineffective.

Over and above the data presented herein, the type of material from which the report has been made permits a most fascinating panorama, or series of institutional pictures. These institutional pictures or "cases" have great additional value. However, the material could not be used for such a purpose without violating the confidence of the administrative officers. In no case has there been to date, nor will there be in the future, the slightest betrayal of this confidence. Could this personal material be read by every person interested in college problems, whether as friend or foe, it would increase respect for, and confidence in, our college presidents an hundredfold.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Current literature records an ever increasing volume of illuminating and challenging comments on the status and character of collegiate education. Some of these comments come from within the colleges and are voiced by those who are responsible for leadership in the field of higher education. Others come from the pen of observant and sharp-tongued critics who have little personal interest in, and no personal responsibility for, the educational readjustments demanded by our rapidly changing social and economic life. The literature of the acceptance of the challenge is even more voluminous than is that of the challenge itself. The movement from within the colleges for the study and improvement of college education antedates the voluminous and challenging criticisms from without. It is no part of the purpose of this study to review the history of the movement or to recite its accomplishments, but merely to cite such steps therein as may furnish a setting for the present study or throw light on its findings.

Approximately one thousand pieces of literature, including books, magazine articles, pamphlets, committee and survey reports, presidents' annual reports, and the like, have been reviewed prior to or during the progress of the present study. Three special bibliographies have been of assistance. They are listed in the bibliography accompanying this volume. First in point of time and pertinence is the