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TRAINING PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS IN CURRI- CULUM MAKING

The Place of the Subject Matter Specialist

WITHIN that eternal triangle composed of the subject matter specialist, child specialist, and educational theorist found in the faculties of all teacher training institutions the subject matter teacher is the *exemplar* rather than the expounder of the principles of curriculum building. In this relationship he bears the most strategic position of any member of the faculty, for in spite of some of our educational ideas students are still prone to teach as they were taught rather than as they were told to teach. The professor in charge of subject matter courses by the challenge of his position as a teacher in a teacher training institution must be a good teacher. As a good teacher he should represent the consummation of all that is best in the theory and practice of education. He no longer vaguely quotes the theory of a Bobbit, Bonser, Charters, Bagley, and some other, but from these and his own educational experience he has deduced principles to control his educational behavior. *It is his prerogative to show in the practical handling of subject matter in a classroom or learning situation all that is best in educational theory.*

In his application of the principles of curriculum building the theorist in this field would judge him by three criteria.

First: Does he have an educational philosophy which recognizes his function in the larger scheme of educational development; which defines for him the scope and opportunity of the school, particularly that area which he serves; which controls for him his ideals, purposes and acts in carry-

ing out his educational principles? It is assumed that this philosophy has been written out, evaluated, and has become an integral part of the individual himself.

Second: Does he have a set of educational principles or controls which are the outgrowth of his educational philosophy and are based on sound principles of psychology by which he can justify the steps he takes in his educational procedure?

Third: Is his knowledge of the subject matter area which he teaches so complete that he is flexible enough to dare to depart from the sequence of the textbook, or from the chronological order of events to organize the facts of knowledge into a more teachable arrangement for presentation to the particular group of students before him?

The practical development of the implications of these criteria for the prospective teacher constitute the three major aspects of a course in curriculum construction. Therefore, if the subject matter teacher is equipped with these concepts and exemplifies them in his educational practice he is furnishing by precept rather than by word of mouth a major course in curriculum construction. His students depart from their experience with him recognizing the control of a definite philosophy of education with the ability to adapt controlling principles to various situations and with such a fund of knowledge that they have no fear in their heart of an unanswerable question or of a new method of instruction.

It must be recognized, however, that the educational philosophy, and, to a certain extent, the educational principles will be as variable in any given institution as are the subject-matter fields taught by the professors in the institution. This condition may result in confusion in the minds of the students unless some integrating agency such

as the child specialist in connection with the training school work or a practical-minded educational theorist leads the prospective teacher to bring together, to analyze, and to develop into a unified whole a philosophy of education which will best function on the level in which the prospective teacher, now student, is to serve. In view of this latter necessity it is essential that the subject matter teacher be conscious of the varying points of view in educational philosophy held by his colleagues and he must submit his philosophy along with the others to the unifying process.

Assuming then that the primary function of the subject matter specialist is to exemplify by good teaching his concept of curriculum construction along with other educational theories, what definitely can be expected in terms of training for curriculum making in the sum total of the educational experience of the prospective elementary school teacher from her contacts with the various subject matter fields?

First: She should recognize that every good teacher has a philosophy of education. She should be challenged to discover and state for herself what she believes to be the philosophy underlying the practices of her various professors. This may be given as an assignment by her professor in education or by a coordinating officer, such as the Director of Training, or some critic supervisor. As her own experience increases through her activities in the training school, her handling as a teacher of the content of the subject matter courses which she has previously had as a student and with the recognition of the controls used by her professors in that subject, she can begin to evolve her own concepts for an educational philosophy, the first step in curriculum construction.

Second: She should have had set for her certain standards for the evaluation of subject content in terms of knowledge (facts) and teaching method. It is prob-

ably in this area of teaching that the subject matter teacher has the largest opportunity for training the student in curriculum development. A student will appreciate more keenly the value of an inexhaustible supply of facts in the organization of subject matter around a central theme (popularly called units) if she has studied the subject by such an enriched method. She may be able to appreciate the need for the collection of life-like illustrative material if in her own learning of the subject this sort of material has made it easier for her to understand. She may be able to labor longer in the preparation of objective examinations and in the interpretation of achievement tests in order to propose remedial educational procedures if she herself has been so treated as a student. Thus she learns through the experience of being well taught the fundamentals of the organization of curriculum materials in terms of a definite goal.

Third: She learns that the curriculum in all of its implications is dependent upon the ability of the teacher to teach its content effectively. In the recent book "Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching" by Brueckner and Melby (p. 258), the authors quote the levels for teaching reading as suggested by Gray. An analysis of the fundamental differences among the various levels proposed by Dr. Gray are indicative of the changes in the quality levels of teaching any other subject. The first level, for instance, deals entirely with the skill and mechanics of reading. The major objective is to develop skill. The second level adds to the skill a simple use of reading as a tool in gaining other work material. The third level provides for individual differences. The fourth level begins the lifting of reading as a subject into the realm of life experience by correlating it with the work of various subjects. The fifth, sixth, and seventh levels continue an enrichment of materials leading to the development of reading for recreation and for the sake of gain-

ing knowledge in various other fields. On the eighth and last level we find that highest pinnacle of educational procedure: "The basis of the organization of the subject matter in the belief that problems, topics, and subject matter of all kinds should be within the interest of students." The quality of teaching by a college teacher of science, history, mathematics, English, or any other field can be graded in much the same way as Dr. Gray proposes for the teaching of reading.

The history teacher who devotes his time entirely to the dates and meager facts of history as given page after page in the textbook naturally is on the first level. As he progresses into the enrichment of his course by the use of supplementary material, when he dares to jump from the American Revolution to the French Revolution in order to establish some concept of democratic government and thus dares to omit for the time being the chronological listing of inventions, personalities, and unrelated historical events which may have occurred between the great revolutions, he has reached a higher level. When he reaches that point where he can open a history lesson with current events heralded in the headlines of the morning paper and trace the historical significance of these to the remote past, thus tying the present to the past so that the student interprets the present and appreciates the contributions of the past, he has then become the master teacher and worthy of imitation.

Summary

1. The subject matter teacher makes his contribution to the training of the prospective teacher for curriculum making by being a *good teacher* himself, able to exemplify his own principles of education, to organize the content of his subject and teach by those methods of presentation which result in the maximum-permanent learning on the part of his students.

2. It is assumed in this discussion that the ability to make a curriculum is a growth of the elements which are accumulated from a rich educational experience rather than from an isolated course in curriculum construction. It is the duty, therefore, of all agencies in a teacher training institution to make a definite contribution toward this end.
3. At Radford we definitely expect the subject-matter specialist to have a:
 - (a) workable educational philosophy which the student can recognize.
 - (b) an ability to teach his subject, so that the student has, at least, a control of the basic concepts of the field.
 - (c) an ability to integrate the work of his classroom with the various levels on which his subject may be later applied through student assignments, training-school experiences, and enriched individual guidance of students.
 - (d) a willingness to work with such co-ordinating leader as may be able to unify and direct the more definite application of his course to the larger problems of curriculum construction for the elementary field.

M'LEDGE MOFFETT

THE FIRST OBLIGATION

However the national economy may vary or whatever fiscal adjustments may be made, the very first obligation upon the national resources is the undiminished financial support of the public schools. We cannot afford to lose any ground in education. That is neither economy nor good government.—*Herbert Hoover*.

BLAME THE DEPRESSION

Dad: "Son, why are your grades so low this term?"

Son: "Well, Dad, you know everything is marked down after the holidays."

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THE EDUCATION OF TOMORROW

TOMORROW is a flexible word. Some one has pointed out that two hundred years ago, or even two years ago, is as much the past as is two thousand years ago. I therefore hope that we may think of the education of tomorrow as being frequently exemplified in the best practices of the experimental and forward-looking schools of today—indeed as being capable of illustration in some part, large or small, in any good school system. I wish it also to be clear at the outset that I come to you in no spirit of destructive criticism of the work of the schools in Harrisonburg and the State of Virginia. I want rather to offer a definite challenge to you, as business and professional men, for assistance in bringing to pass needed changes in attitudes and points of view that must precede any really significant attempt to prevent our schools from becoming ultra-conservative and formal in an age of which the most prominent trait is change, and in which marked progress has been made in so many lines.

Two Pictures

I greatly wish I were an artist and could paint for you two contrasting pictures of our contemporary life. As it is, I shall try to call them to mind by asking you to follow in your imagination my brief descriptions.

The first picture I would call "progress." It would show the giant skyscrapers of the giant city. It would show the conquest of the air by airplane and dirigible. It would show the ever-present automobile—of which there are now over twenty-six million in the United States. It would show the vast network of lines of telegraph and telephone—the latter to be found at more than twenty million American homes. In it you would see the radio, now a blessing in twelve million American homes. It would show the marvels of modern lighting, the

great gift of Edison. It would show the vast factories in which millions toil to turn out products for a waiting world. It would also show throngs of pleasure seekers at the beaches of Florida and other watering places; millions more on their way to and from the movies; and still other millions finding ways and means to recreation not dreamed of by our fathers.

On the more ideal side it would show signs of the spirit of tolerance toward those of other color, race, and religion. It would illustrate good sportsmanship in the things that make for a finer social life. It would portray the results of magnificent philanthropies. It would give evidence of enthusiastic living and virile activity in a world fuller of opportunity for the common man than any world of the past.

The second and contrasting picture I would call "defeat." It would show thousands waiting in bread lines, in the shadow of the great cities' great commercial and financial institutions. It would show the vast army of unemployed, estimated at from three to seven million. It would show not only China's but America's crying, hungry women and babes. It would show men fearful of the future, because the "machine" towers over them and takes their jobs and their sustenance.

This picture would also show the jazz mode of thought and energy. It would show lawlessness and open defiance of the law. It would portray jealousy and selfishness and utter disregard of the principle that "I am my brother's keeper." It would show over-filled jails and crowded court dockets. It would show the dangers of violence, of racketeering, of the mob in action, trying to secure the wealth of America's favored three per cent and to distribute it wrecklessly to waiting hordes.

Some of us are inclined to see but one of these two pictures, while others of us constantly try to see both and to assess both in terms of future generations—generations