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Personnel Problems of the Teaching Staff

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PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING UNIT

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The writer wishes to make grateful acknowledgement to Mr. George W. Reeves for his constructive criticism in the writing of this thesis

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PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF

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PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most interesting and significant aspects of the development of the American public school has been the change in the functions and duties of the teacher. In the early colonial days the elementary or common school was usually a one-teacher school where the teacher was the superintendent, principal, supervisor, teacher, school nurse, and janitor. As the public school increased in size and complexity, there was a corresponding increase in differentiation of functions of the personnel of the school. Four general types of personnel have developed: administrative, supervisory, classroom teaching, and the new types including guidance director, visiting teacher, deans of girls and boys, special teachers, school librarian, school nurse, and research expert. All these groups require special preparation for their particular kind of work. Each field also makes its own specific requirements or demands with respect to the personal qualifications of those entering that field.¹

¹Frasier and Armentrout, AN INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION, 1933, p. 404.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this writing is to (1) show some of the problems that confront the teaching staff, and (2) to throw some light on the solution of the same.

METHOD OF SECURING INFORMATION:

The historical method was used in securing this information.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

There are two major phases of public school supervision of what the French call the material. The other is the supervision of the personnel. By materials is meant buildings, grounds, furniture, supplies, upkeep, maintenance and money.

By personnel, is meant what the word implies - the body of persons necessary to carry out the function of the institution. It includes all the employees. In education this embraces the superintendent, assistant or deputy superintendents, supervisors, directors, principals, assistant principals, clerks, teachers, janitors,

and engineers. Thus we may speak of the teaching staff, the personnel of the engineering staff.

Obviously, personnel supervision is vastly more important than material supervision. Personnel supervision involves human nature and human relationships.

Personnel work includes anything and everything that may add to the happiness and efficiency of workers. It attempts to improve the working conditions. By "working conditions" is meant "all those influences which surround the worker in his work and which affect him favorably or unfavorably in its performance."

Physical conditions include such things as air, ventilation, light, blackboards, drinking water, mid-day lunches, sanitation.

Mental conditions mean such things as worry, fatigue, wrong supervision, lack of incentives.

The conditions of living and of working are constantly improving. The luxuries of one generation tend to become necessities in the next.¹

¹Lewis, Ervin E., PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF, 1926, pp. 10-12.

Supervision is as old as the schools. In our own country, it was first a function of the minister and the school board. The school was simple; supervision was equally lacking in complexity. The authorities conceived that they had fulfilled their function to the utmost when they visited the school and submitted the pupils to an examination. Supervision was in those days inspection of work performed, and was of little value to the teacher or to the school.

The next step in supervision was taken when city schools were placed under the management of a single official, called the superintendent. He was not much more competent than the lay boards to perform the duties now embraced under the term "supervision." He often carried a heavy teaching load. Almost no supervisory technique had been built up. Such service as the new official rendered, therefore, was of the traditional type - inspection and examination.

The need came with the development of the modern complex educational organization. In the days of lay supervision the teacher was the whole school system. When the office of school superintendent originated, our largest cities had only eight or ten thousand inhabitants. There were practically no grades. There were no public

high schools, only a small portion of the population was in school. The curriculum was narrow.

In contrast, consider the city school system today. There are over two hundred and fifty cities whose population exceeds thirty thousand. In one-fourth of these cities the range of population is from one hundred thousand to six million. Over eleven million children attend the city schools. The special problems which have arisen are legion. They arise in connection with kindergartens, elementary departments, junior high schools, and senior high schools. Vocational education, civic education, and health education have lately come in to add to educational complexity.

American rural life has also been transformed. Its isolation is a thing of the past. Daily mail, telephones, radio, automobiles, and electric trains have brought the most remote areas into touch with the world centers. Consolidation and the county unit are bringing a new type of school into the country. Ten million children attend rural schools. The country shares with the city its need for up-to-date and efficient education. Thus we find that while fifty years ago there were only a score or so of supervisors in the land, and those only in the cities, now there are nine thousand city superintendents, three thousand county superintendents, six thousand supervisors and thirteen thousand principals - a total of thirty-one thousand supervisory officers.¹

¹Almack and Lang, PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION
pp. 135-136

Many new teachers are needed in the schools every year. There are two groups of interests at stake. First, there are the school authorities, whose duty it is to employ the best teachers they can secure. Second, there are the available teachers who naturally want to put their qualifications before the appointing authorities in as favorable a light as possible. The process which the school authorities follow in getting data on candidates in presenting their applications, and, finally the appointment of those that conform most closely to the school standards, constitute the problems which one faces in the selection of a teacher.

At one time in our history teachers were uniformly selected and elected by the school board, now in rural districts and in poorly managed city school systems, only, this method is followed. The method has nothing to commend it. In the first place the board members are seldom competent judges of a teacher's qualifications. They seldom know what the requirements should be.¹

The professional method of election demands cooperation between the superintendent of school and the school board. Nominations are made by the superintendent, and only after a careful searching out of the best talent he can find. The facts concerning the qualifications of each nominee are open to the inspection of the school board, and are a part of the official records

¹Almack and Lang, PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION
pp. 38-40

of the superintendent's office. Thus the basis of his endorsement is open to inspection at any time. This is the only method of selection that assures properly qualified teachers. It is the best method for the teachers themselves, since they may know that personal or political "pull" or other type of undesirable influence has not been responsible for their selection or defeat. It is decidedly to the interest of the teaching profession, and the only way in which it can be maintained, on an efficient and respectable basis.¹

During recent years there has arisen an increasing demand for more adequately prepared teachers. Despite the rapid increase in the number of persons who are legally qualified to teach, there is yet an undersupply of competent teachers on almost every level of school work. This condition is challenging teacher-training institutions to develop enriched programs of preparation. As a result, changes are being made both in the length of the training period and in the basic character of the work provided.

Growing recognition of the need of extending the period of preparation for teaching is causing a widespread trend toward a five year program for prospective teachers. It is felt that four years is scarcely long enough to provide the rich cultural background essential for successful teaching. The modern school merits a

¹Almack and Lang PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION
pp. 135-136.

type of leadership which cannot be afforded by an individual of narrow interests and meager acquaintance with the essential fields of human activity.¹

In colonial days teachers were paid in a variety of ways, chief among which were: bequests, emoluments including "boarding round," exemptions from civic services, and income from extra duties. These methods of payment were unsatisfactory and gradually gave place to the salary method now universally employed.

In cities during the past fifty years the idea of an automatic salary schedule has developed. The advantages of an automatic salary schedule are: (a) it is impersonal; (b) it cares for new teachers; (c) it secures better academic and professional preparation; (d) it makes a career possible; (e) it stimulates a teacher to do her best, and (f) it raises the social status of the profession.

Economic and educational problems arise in formulating a salary schedule that **must** be carefully considered. The economic problems pertain to the amount of money available for salaries and the best methods of distributing it.

The educational problems pertain to the best methods of fairly and justly rewarding and stimulating teachers to do their best and to continue at their best as long as possible.

¹Brink, William G., EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION. pp. 89-90

The new type of salary schedule is called a unit schedule and is based upon the amount of academic and professional training, the years of service, and the merit of the individual. This is the better type of salary schedules. The principles involved are: (1) the beginning wage; (2) the disregarding of grades taught; (3) the arrangement of increases to stimulate growth; (4) the amount of successful experience; (5) the recognition of a saving and a cultural wage; (6) the flexibility to provide for merit, and (7) the equality of sexes, where possible.¹

Teachers may draw some comfort from the fact that their business relations are few and infrequent. So much the more important it is that such as they have be dispatched efficiently. A knowledge of the simple elements of business procedure and management is absolutely necessary. With the modern worship of business, even when embodied in nothing more complicated than selling peanuts or cast iron, a reputation for business ability would help the status of the profession immensely.

Teachers should take care not to go to extremes on social matters. The frivolous habit of flitting from one gathering to another is wasteful and destructive to professional advancement, on the other hand isolation is to be avoided. Success is dependent upon the ability

¹Lewis, Ervin E., PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF, pp. 298-300

to meet people and work with people. The art of doing this well can best be acquired and maintained by practice. The forms of social activity in which one may indulge is often a perplexing problem to the teaching staff.¹

A woman teacher's marriage is equivalent to resignation in the majority of American school districts. Where there are no formal regulations the policy is often pursued of refusing to reappoint. Few school boards place married women on a par with the unmarried women; except when they are widowed, deserted, divorced, unencumbered with family duties, or need to make their own living.

Three reasons are usually given for this attitude. The first is the public bounty fallacy. Many laymen still hold that tax paid positions belong to the needy citizens. A married woman presumably has a means of support. The second reason is that it is the first business of a married woman to look after her home. The third reason is often given by superintendents. They argue that married women are home talent and are harder to handle as one often has to handle the whole family and sometimes many of the relatives and friends. It is expedient, therefore, to rule against all married women as a class rather than to deal with each case on its merits.²

¹Almack and Lang, PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION, pp. 302-304

²Lewis, Ervin E., PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF

CONCLUSION

Personnel problem-solving constitutes one of the major duties of school officers whether superintendent, supervisor or principal. Most of these problems should be settled in terms of fundamental principles and policies that experience has demonstrated to be sound and wise educational procedure. Educational administration in the past was based too much upon trial-and-error methods. Each administrator did what his experience told him to do. He was rightly called an "educational opportunist." Rarely are beginning superintendents equipped to do personnel work intelligently.

Many extra-classroom problems arise that need the cooperation of the teachers and superintendents. The beginning teacher has little chance of getting a large view of education. Science should guide experience whenever and wherever it is possible to use it as a guide. Science is demonstrated truth. Surely, in seventy-five years of state, county and city school administration a few scientific principles have been discovered that may be applied in the solution of present-day problems in public education. While no two problems are, or can be exactly alike, yet it should seem that the truth of certain principles might be demonstrated in the solution of personnel problems in education as surely as other truths are demonstrated in the laboratory. School officers as personnel managers are concerned with all the

problems which affect the personal and social welfare of the teacher both as an individual and as a teacher.

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