A PLAN FOR A DEMONSTRATION TEACHERS COLLEGE

Training of Creative Teachers

All sound educational reconstruction depends upon the development of a new race of teachers—teachers who, through their own creative efforts, are able to call forth in their students constructive creative leadership. The teachers college of the future has for its chief problem the selection and development of a generation of teachers very different from the typical teacher of today. This imperative need of a new type of teacher calls for radical modification of our present institutions for the training of teachers.

Purpose

Aware of this very urgent need, Teachers College, Columbia University, contemplates the establishment of a Demonstration and Experimental Teachers College in the fall of 1932. This new institution is deliberately intended to break a new way in teacher education and thus provide facilities for observation, experimentation, demonstration, and practice of college teaching in the field of professional education of teachers.

An endeavor will be made to discover and develop new methods in the field of teacher education. There is a definite intention of avoiding in this new undertaking duplication of present procedures. The curriculum will make no attempt to follow either traditional or radical patterns but will strike out with the consciousness of an urgent need of teachers to be developed and educated far beyond any of our present standards.

Curricula and Plan of Study

Defining the curriculum as the sum total of experiences through which a student passes, what then are the chief characteristics of the curriculum of the new Teachers College? The modifying forces and influences which are brought to bear upon the student and to which he reacts are the environment in which he lives, modern and ancient cultures which must be revealed to him, contact with an inspiring and cultured faculty, intimate acquaintance with children and child life, a fine appreciation of our racial heritage as found in libraries, books, and museums—all this with a plan of study and method which tend to develop the student through his own initiative and self-activity.
The curricula offered will be limited to those designed for the preparation of nursery school, elementary and secondary school teachers. The period of study will vary according to the ability of the individual student. The traditional point and credit system will be rejected, certification for teaching and graduation being based upon satisfactory examinations of both academic and professional character. In place of a quantitative requirement of hours there will be substituted a qualitative standard of attainment in terms of subjects and fields considered essential to professional education. In general, the work will vary from three to five years in residence followed by a probationary period in the field as a regularly employed member of the staff of a co-operating public school system but under the supervision of members of the staff of the college.

Faculty

The most important phase or characteristic of teachers college experience is the contact the student body has with a highly educated and broadly cultured staff. Nothing else is as important in the teachers college of the future as a group of outstanding individuals as members of the faculty who serve as spiritual and intellectual leaders to the young students in the college. The close, intimate association of student body with such a faculty is absolutely essential to the awakening of the young mind to its possibilities and in molding and shaping the individual and group character. While the contact of the student with modern life and library is extremely stimulating, the greatest educative factor in the teachers college is the contact of mind with mind, the conflict of the spirit of the teacher with the ripening enthusiasm of the student.

Selection of Students

"Many there have been, no doubt, exceptionally endowed in temperament and character, who, without any aid from culture, but only by a heaven-born light within their own souls, have been self-schooled in restraint and fortitude; I would even go so far as to say that natural gifts without education have more often attained to glory and virtue than education without natural gifts. Yet I do at the same time assert that when to a lofty and brilliant character is applied the moulding influence of abstract studies, the result is often inscrutably and unapproachably noble."—Cicero.

Fine courses and excellent faculty avail little without the proper type of student body. It is impossible to hope for fine, inspiring young teachers if the personnel of the student body is selected from those who are mediocre in talent and personality. The best training in the world will not make a fine teacher out of inferior human material. Mediocrity is today the curse of our teaching profession. It is also important for the students in the new college, that the student body itself be of a highly selected character. A student learns more from his fellows than from his teachers. The reactions of one student upon another in a very real sense is an important part of the curriculum. We might term this contact of student with student as educational living.

Rigid but sensible methods of elimination will be pursued in the selection of individuals who give promise of developing desirable leadership in the field of education. In order to secure young persons of proper qualifications, the co-operation of teachers and executives working with high school and young college students will be sought. The chief bases of selection will be sound scholarship, promise of growth in the field of education, and desirable personal qualities. These will be determined by selective entrance examinations, personal interviews, and statements from former instructors and others well acquainted with the prospective student. The student body will be chosen from a wide geographical area rather than restricted to a local area or section of the country.
Method of Study

While, as indicated, usual lectures will not be dispensed with in the new college, the greatest emphasis will be laid upon group association and group living among the students and between faculty and students. These groups must of necessity be small in order to provide that form of educative living essential to true education.

The principles of university study will be followed to allow each student to progress at a rate commensurate with his interests and abilities and to provide growth in resourcefulness and creative power. Essentially, the method will permit independent work on the part of the student in dealing with problems of individual and social living. The usual amount of classroom lecture and discussion will be reduced and supplemented by directed readings, practica and seminars for intensive study of certain problems and fields of study, general lectures of a survey character, field work including social welfare work, industrial employment, teaching, and traveling.

Education

Work in the field of education will be the central core of all curricula, the entire course being professionally treated. The study of education is conceived to be more than a consideration of the devices and techniques of teaching, or even of educational theory. As a social study Education includes a broad consideration of the principles and organization of educational endeavor and an intimate acquaintance with the fields of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and economics. It cross sections indeed every important phase of human activity. From this point of view Education is a composite science calling upon many other fields of knowledge for necessary materials.

Children and Child Life

Since the major professional problems of the future teacher have to do with the child, the central core of the curriculum will deal with child nature and development. The student will be thrown into intimate contact under guidance with children in the laboratory schools, and out of this long and varied experience and scientific research in the psychology and pedagogy of child life there will develop an understanding and appreciation of the problems concerned which will be the chief foundation of the teacher's professional endeavors.

Travel and Foreign Study

Another most essential phase of the curriculum of the new college is the study of contemporary civilizations and culture. Introduced under the heading of "Nation Study" or "Study of Culture," the student will be brought directly and indirectly to an appreciation of the psychology and modes of thinking and of living of modern civilization which will enable him to act as an interpreter to the youth who will come to his classes.

Recognizing the importance of international problems, provision will be made for bringing students of the college in contact with foreign countries by means of travel and study, or by means of exchange of students between this and foreign countries. It is contemplated that during his period of preparation for teaching each student shall spend at least one or two semesters, abroad. The expense for such study will not exceed the expense for a similar period of study in New York. Even if it is not possible for every student to study abroad, those students who are able to avail themselves of this opportunity, will be granted this privilege. The chief objective of foreign study will be to acquaint the student intimately with the culture of the foreign people, so that in his teaching activity he will be able to interpret to American children the spirit of the people with whom he has lived.

Situated in the metropolitan area of New York, the new college will endeavor to utilize to the utmost a study of the community as an environmental or cultural
An analysis of this area presents a tremendous range of opportunities for the stimulation and orientation of young students. The day is past in all schools when education takes place within four walls. The new schools of Europe, elementary and secondary, might be defined as extending as far as the children or young people can travel. Groups are constantly under way studying at first hand the rich environment, and carrying back to their laboratories the facts discovered and the impressions received for their consideration and discussion. So in the new college for teachers, the community in which the institution is located is much more important than are the buildings in which the class work is held.

A Period in Industry

In order to understand better modern life and conditions, each student will spend one or more semesters participating in some form of industry. This work will be under the guidance of the social science division of the college and will supplement the field courses in social welfare, industry, commerce, and the like. This phase of study may represent a period of work in a factory or cotton mill, on a farm, in an office, in a department store, or in a building trade. Its purposes are to develop an effective and functional appreciation and understanding of the economic and social order as related to the problems of living and working together.

Social Education

The teacher is in a very real sense a social worker. It seems necessary, therefore, that those intending to teach should come in close contact with the activities of society that have to do with the education of boys and girls outside of school, whether these activities be of corrective or preventive nature. The curricula of the college will provide not only courses in social economy, but will look forward to affording each student active preparation in some form of social work. This activity may take place either during the summer or during the regular academic year.

Social Life and Organization

It will be recognized that many of the essential qualities of educational leadership are best developed quite apart from active class instruction, coming from many and varied contacts and experiences. The social life of the students will accordingly be one of the most important factors in the training program and will be an integral part of the curriculum. Frequent social activities and directed trips of a cultural nature will be a regular part of the social life of the student.

Method of Organization

According to present plans the college will be opened in the fall of 1932 with a freshman class of approximately one hundred students and a junior class with the same number. All of these students will be without professional experience. The student personnel will be thus built up gradually until the enrollment is completed. The student body will be restricted to five hundred or less, depending upon circumstances. Admission will be competitive.

Thomas Alexander

This is the business of education—to know how to think, to appreciate and enjoy the best in art, literature and music, and to be tolerant, sympathetic, temperate human beings, understanding the world in which one lives.

Education is concerned with the growth of personality. It only succeeds when it instills an eagerness for the good things of life. Its job is feeding the fires of the spirit and lighting an unquenchable flame for truth and beauty.—Owen J. Roberts.

"No life is complete that does not respond to the thrill of the beauty of art."

—Joseph Wiseltier.