

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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## AN ADEQUATE PERIOD OF EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

THE length of period of training which should be required for all Virginia teachers is not a matter which can now be settled by reference to scientific investigation. Dr. E. S. Evenden, who is in charge of the National Survey of the Education of Teachers, anticipates that when that survey is completed and published it will contain a significant body of data which should be useful, if not decisive, in settling this issue. A selected bibliography of 1297 articles and books has just come from the press and represents Volume I of the survey report.

Lacking such data, it has seemed wise to set up as a desirable standard a four-year period of training. At the rate Virginia has been raising requirements for certification in the past two decades, it would appear feasible now to agree upon an early date when all entering teachers should have this requirement. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction and his immediate predecessor have both been hopeful of setting up as a requirement for all teachers one certificate—the Collegiate Professional. If this certificate could not be realized by all at the outset, those who stop short of the goal would be given provisional and temporary certificates. If such a step were taken, undoubtedly a large amount of discretionary power in the handling of certification would need to be left to the individual who is responsible for awarding certificates.

From the Research Bulletin of the N. E. A., November, 1931, entitled *Teacher Supply and Demand*, we read as follows:

"1. There tends to be an oversupply of persons with licenses to teach, but a limited supply of persons with a high level of pro-

fessional training. . . . 2. In a period of an oversupply of teachers, the certification and professional training requirements should be raised. The theoretic purposes of raising the requirements are: (1) to keep out those who refuse to meet higher standards; (2) to force those holding temporary certificates to obtain higher licenses; (3) to diminish the number of new graduates until the profession can absorb the oversupply."

Dr. Benjamin Frazier, Senior Specialist in Teacher Training of the U. S. Office of Education, makes the statement: "In so far as current practice is concerned, the trend is unquestionably to extend preparation to the four-year level and beyond. Rising certification requirements in practically every state afford evidence to this effect." Only recently Maryland and Pennsylvania have both set up the requirements for elementary teachers to three years and have remade their teacher training curricula to that end. The State of California requires four years of training of all teachers and has, like other states, a considerable group of unemployed teachers.

### I. *History of Certification in Virginia*

Twenty years ago Virginia had more than a score of different forms of certificates. The Third Grade certificate was eliminated early. By 1924 the Second Grade certificate was eliminated, by 1926 the First Grade, by 1929 the two-year Special for high school teaching. In 1931 the one-year Elementary Professional certificate was eliminated in so far as incoming teachers were concerned. This represents a steady march ahead with no step backward; for high school teaching the four-year standard has been required since 1929 for entering teachers, while practice throughout the state is rapidly making the two-year or



Normal Professional certificate the minimum for elementary teaching. Indeed, at the present time many local superintendents insist upon securing four-year graduates for the elementary schools.

In response to a questionnaire sent by the writer to state superintendents of public instruction throughout the United States, there is almost unanimous agreement that if a four-year certification requirement were set up it would relieve unemployment. The state superintendents also hold that such certification should include professional work.

## II. *Professional Demands Being Made Upon Virginia Teachers*

The school year of 1932-33 finds Virginia engaged in the most significant educational task ever undertaken; namely, the complete revision of the elementary and secondary curricula. It has already been discovered that many of the less well-trained teachers are totally unprepared for this task, and it is already recognized that when new materials are put in the hands of the teachers of the state they will have to include traditional set-ups as well as forward looking set-ups of courses of study to take care of the large group of relatively untrained teachers.

Among the teacher activities noted by Charters and Waples in the *Commonwealth Teacher Training Study* as having highest values are the following: selecting objectives; investigating difficulties; determining traits to be taught; adapting procedures to individual differences; teaching pupils to develop useful interests and worthy motives; counselling; advising; and leading student groups. Had this study been prepared in 1932 instead of 1929, the ability to create and direct "units of instruction" would almost certainly have been included. This view of the teacher's work places a premium upon longer and better training.

Furthermore, the elementary teacher today finds that her special helpers are be-

ing lopped off, that is, the special teachers in art, music, home economics, and physical education. She must teach an integrated program including all of these fields as well as the more orthodox ones of arithmetic, language, natural science, social science, and so forth. The mastery of this wide range of subject matter must be accompanied by a similar mastery of educational psychology, the functions of modern education, and the technique of teaching, and can scarcely be accomplished in two or even three years.

## III. *Teacher Supply and Demand*

In 1925 there were still too few teachers available although the war-time shortage was being pretty well taken up in certain fields. By 1931 most states reported too many teachers in most fields.<sup>1</sup>

In 1929, of 93,334 teachers who completed teacher training courses, there was an evident need for 69,181, or about seventy-five per cent. After the effects of the depression became more pronounced, special teachers were in many cases not re-employed or were given grade teaching positions. In Massachusetts, for example, for the year 1932-33, 219 special teachers were eliminated, while 393 others were not re-employed due to consolidation of schools, increased size of classes, and so forth. In this connection a table on the next page proves suggestive:<sup>2</sup>

Conclusions which are readily drawn from this table are the decreased enrolment in the first grade requiring fewer teachers at that level, the general stabilization of the teaching force, and the very rapid development of training at the four-year level.

In Virginia the employment problem was not at all acute until 1931 and at the present writing the teachers colleges of the state

<sup>1</sup>Research Bulletin of the N. E. A., *Teacher Supply and Demand*, 1931.

<sup>2</sup>Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1929-30, Chapters V and XIV.



## A DECADE OF PROGRESS IN TEACHER TRAINING

	1920	1930
Number of teachers colleges.....	45	140
Bachelor's degrees given by teachers colleges.....	1,296	11,073
Master's and doctor's degrees given by teachers colleges.....		440
Non-degree teachers college graduates.....	21,012	49,227
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	1920	1930
Average salary public school teachers.....\$	871	\$ 1,364
Number public school teachers.....	812,524	App. 1,000,000
High school teachers .....	97,654	182,637
Number in training in teachers colleges .....	135,435	274,348
First grade enrolment .....	4,323,170	4,171,037

report placement of more than eighty per cent of their graduates for the year 1932. The relative amount of unemployment therefore of newly trained teachers in Virginia is very low compared with that in other fields. However, data from the office of the Virginia State Director of Certification would indicate that for the year 1931-32 the total number of Collegiate Professional and Collegiate certificates granted to white teachers apparently exceeded the number of positions opening up. This would indicate that for Virginia, even though our teacher supply is not as excessive as elsewhere, the raising of certification requirements would largely solve this problem.

From the answers to questionnaires from state superintendents of public instruction, it appears that there is a great deal more unemployment in some of the other states than in Virginia. New Jersey puts it as low as six per cent; Wisconsin, fifty per cent; Michigan, seventy-five per cent of 1932 graduates. In Michigan, as elsewhere where unemployment is excessive, there is an apparent surplus of inadequately trained teachers. Michigan is turning out a large number from her high school training centers giving one year of instruction beyond high school graduation. Virginia is fortunate in having abandoned these training centers several years ago and is also fortunate that it is not like Iowa and other states in requiring state legislation before a new and higher standard can be set up.

IV. *Remuneration of Teachers*

Comparisons of salaries in Virginia shows that whereas two-year Normal Professional graduates typically received on graduation in 1925 an average of \$900, and four-year graduates an average of \$1100, by 1932 these figures were reduced by approximately twenty-five to thirty per cent. In this reduction the two-year graduate has the advantage of the four-year graduate. State superintendents of public instruction from other states report that frequently two-year graduates are employed because they are cheaper and no doubt that tendency operates in Virginia in some localities.

It seems therefore to be clear that, while all beginning teachers may expect considerably less salary than a few years ago, and that four-year graduates suffer a somewhat larger reduction, the means to improvement of salaries lies in the direction of the elimination of lower certificates because as long as these exist salaries will be pulled down because of them. Division superintendents in Virginia, wherever they can do so, are asking for strong four-year graduates in rural schools. With the state putting as relatively small amounts as it is into the training of the individual teacher, it would seem desirable to encourage such a tendency by raising the certification requirement of all beginning teachers to four years.

V. *Development of Public Sentiment*

It will be argued by some at a time when teachers' salaries are being cut, schools are being reduced in length of term, consolida-



tion of schools is going on, that this is no time for the elevation of certification requirements. However, if public sentiment is not built up in favor of the trained and qualified teacher, it will almost undoubtedly be built in the direction of the cheap and untrained teacher. A recent deplorable tendency, for example, is the insistence that superintendents and boards of education employ local teachers regardless of whether their qualifications are suitable and whether much better teachers are available.

In Virginia it could scarcely be said we had a particularly strong sentiment for good roads at the time of the great World War. With the aid of Federal money and by tapping new sources of income, Virginians were given a taste of good roads and good road sentiment developed very rapidly. As long as there was no competition in the low-priced car market, Virginians, as well as other Americans, continued to buy too expensive cars, but when a number of low-priced cars became available, sentiment for the low-priced cars soon developed. Long experience with handling the placement of teachers indicates that, when a well-trained, superior teacher is placed in a community, public sentiment is built up for well-trained teachers. The best way, therefore, to build up public sentiment for well-trained teachers is to furnish them to the communities of the state.

A check as to how the juniors at the Harrisonburg State Teachers College view the problem of an adequate period of teacher training revealed their unanimous belief that four years should be required. Among the more significant answers as to why they advocated the four-year period were the following: demands on teachers are becoming greater; the surplus of teachers demands that only the best equipped be allowed to teach; a longer period is needed to get subject matter background; by having four years of training the standards of the profession will be raised; the teacher's social

life is more settled after four years in college; such teachers will have better attitudes and the necessary maturity.

In summary, therefore, it would seem that the State of Virginia should set up at the earliest feasible date, a requirement of four years of training for all of its teachers: first, because such a step is in line with the rapid and continuous rise of certification requirements in Virginia and elsewhere in the past twenty years; second, because the demands upon teachers in Virginia, particularly in the light of the curriculum revision program now being undertaken are such that a two-year period cannot give adequate training; third, because unemployment among teachers in Virginia can best be remedied by increasing certification requirements; fourth, because the remuneration of teachers will always suffer as long as there are cheap and relatively untrained teachers to be had; fifth, because public sentiment can best be built up through providing good teachers just as sentiment for good roads has been built up by providing good roads.

W. J. GIFFORD

#### AN OFFENSIVE FOR EDUCATION

I have been amazed and confounded that during the depression, when salaries have been threatened and in many instances school terms have been shortened and even schools have been closed, there has been so little aggressive action by educators. That the best defense is an offense was never more true. The protest, apparently selfish and usually without success, that the salaries of teachers should not be cut, has little weight with men who themselves have reduced wages or none or who have seen their savings diminish and all but disappear in whatever form they were thought secure. Make the protest, if you will, but accompany it by the larger argument for the preservation of education.—PROFESSOR T. H. BRIGGS, in *School and Society*.