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THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN COLLEGES FOR WOMEN

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A department of education should, to a certain extent, be adapted to its academic environment. In the colleges for women the conditions are different from those found in the state universities and the teachers' colleges; distinctly cultural aims receive greater emphasis. Moreover, only about one-third to one-half of our students expect to enter upon definite salaried occupations or professions.

Because of these and other conditions, it would be inexpedient, even if it were desirable, for those of us who teach education in colleges for women to attempt a differentiation of undergraduate introductory courses on the basis of the vocational or non-vocational aims of our students. I believe that such a differentiation (in the first year's work in the department) would be undesirable, even if it were expedient. The prospective teacher, the prospective home-maker, the prospective social worker, may profit equally from the same first course in education, just as the future journalist, physician, and engineer, from the same freshman course in English. Differentiation properly comes later, in advanced courses.

That the two courses most commonly given as the first courses in the department of education (History of Education and Principles of Education) should be given in the same manner and in the same classes to professional and non-professional students (in colleges for women), is a point that needs to be emphasized. Much of the discredit that has attached to our departments of pedagogy has been due to the fact that we have addressed ourselves too exclusively to teachers. Education is a public institution and as such is worthy of study by all college students. Let us catch in the net of our introductory courses as many non-professional students as possible, for of such is the future school committee.

A good deal of diversity of opinion still exists among us as to the *aims* of the first two courses in education. I believe that, in the first place, the informational aspect of the subject should receive due emphasis. Information-courses are, it is true, at a discount in collegiate circles just now, but surely a reasonable amount of extensive work is necessary in order

that the student may get any kind of orientation for his future intensive courses. A clear, orderly, and systematic presentation of the great educational systems and theories is desirable for first-year students in the department of education.

Closely allied to this informational aim of our introductory courses is a second and equally fundamental one. Courses in education should exemplify a good method. Such method will vary with the course, it will vary with the equipment of the instructor, it will vary with the previous academic history of the class, but it is important that we should give in our departments really good teaching. I should not wish to be understood as undervaluing the subsequent presentation of the subject of general method or of special methods in a separate course; I am speaking now merely of the first year's work in the department.

A third of these more general aims of introductory courses may be characterized as inspirational. One of the great utilities of the study of the History of Education is that, through this subject, prospective teachers gain a feeling of professional pride, an *esprit de corps*, akin to that which is recognized as a powerful stimulus to good work in other professions. In these days of research work and critical scholarship, we college teachers are prone to relegate enthusiasms and ideals to the lumberheaps of our academic attics, forgetting the very great importance, to most young people, of just such subjective factors.

To what extent should the first year's course in education be professional, in the sense in which the term professional is commonly used? As institutions of higher learning, colleges very properly demand that courses in the department of education shall not be inferior to courses in other departments, judged from the standpoint of scholarship. The superintendents and principals of schools rightly ask that our students shall "make good" in the schoolroom. Both of these demands are reasonable. There should be, and I believe there is, no antagonism between knowledge and efficiency. The introductory course in the History of Education, for instance, may have both cultural and practical value, if presented from such a standpoint as that which was described by Dr. Suzallo in a recent paper: "A selective, interpretative, and fully unified treatment of educational experience in its various aspects and relations, used as an aid in the formulation of a theory for the control of the present practice which is to be viewed as the latest stage in our educational evolution."¹

Introductory courses in the principles and the history of

¹ Proc. Soc. College Teachers of Educ., 1908, p. 54.

education should, it goes without saying, have constant reference to actual schoolroom conditions. The study of children and observation of schoolroom methods and practices should form an important part of the student's work. So far as my knowledge extends, departments of education in colleges for women have been most cordially given by superintendents and principals ample facilities for studying school work under natural conditions.

Among the problems most difficult of solution in college departments of education is that of the place which should be assigned to practice teaching. It may be seriously questioned whether students get any permanent good from what may be called "sporadic" practice teaching; and the exigencies of undergraduate schedules seem to preclude the possibility of anything else. The ideal solution of the problem seems to consist in the addition of a year of graduate professional work, of which the regular systematic teaching of a class for a semester shall constitute a part.

Most of our professional students desire to go into secondary school teaching on leaving college. While it is desirable that the fundamental importance of elementary school work should be brought to their attention, and while it is to be hoped that eventually many of our best graduates will be drawn into the elementary schools, it must be remembered that the body of college graduates is still a comparatively small one, that secondary schools need pedagogically trained teachers, and that the field of elementary education is already largely occupied by the normal schools. Hence, largely as a matter of expediency, and without any thought of assigning any superior importance to one set of schools over the other, it may be better that colleges for women should make a special effort to send out properly equipped teachers for secondary schools,—for a few years, at least.

I should like to outline a course in secondary education, which might profitably occupy the greater part of a year of graduate professional work in colleges for women.¹

1. A study of the development of secondary education, with special reference to the development of the American High School.
2. A study of the fundamental principles underlying the education of adolescents. Physiological and psychological considerations should receive due emphasis, and there should be a careful study of the hygiene of instruction.
3. A study of the organization and curriculum of two typical high schools; one a city high school, the other a village school.

¹This course is being given at Wellesley College (1909-10).

4. Each member of the class should make a study of the special methods of teaching one high school subject or group of subjects. This will include: (1). A study of recent educational reports and the best books relating to the teaching of this subject or group of subjects. (2). Observation of the work of skilled high school teachers of the subject. (3). Instruction in good methods of arranging and ordering the material in the subject. This part of the course should be given by an instructor qualified both by scholarship and by secondary school experience to give such instruction.

5. Practice teaching. Each member of the class should be required to teach a class for a semester in her chosen subject. This should be done under the joint supervision of the department of education and the principal of the high school.

These seem to me to be among the legitimate aims of departments of education. It goes without saying that we should make it perfectly clear to our students that we hold out absolutely no hope to the mediocre, the indolent, the careless, or to those of unsuitable personality, that by our courses they may, in some alchemic manner, be changed into good teachers. There are other limitations that we must admit: we are, as it were, but middlemen between the producer and the consumer; between the pure psychologist and biologist on the one hand, and the schools on the other. Yet our field is none the less useful and none the less definite.

To summarize:

The work of at least the first year in departments of education should be given to professional and non-professional students in the same classes.

Work in observation of children and of schools should form a part of the introductory courses in education.

Informational, cultural, and inspirational aims should not be neglected.

More narrowly technical courses can be given to best advantage to graduate students. College graduates should be encouraged to give a year to systematic and professional preparation for high school teaching.

Our departments should include a sufficiently large teaching staff to make possible to instructors a personal knowledge of the capacities and aims of their students.