

FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING "A PLAN FOR THE TECHNICAL TRAINING OF CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS"

Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth, Teachers College, Columbia University, sends the following:

TENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF PRACTICING PSYCHOLOGISTS

It is with pleasure that I accept the invitation of *The Journal of Applied Psychology* to participate in the symposium on qualifications for psychological experts. Since my own practical experience has been very largely in the so-called clinical field, I do not doubt that what I have to say will be conditioned to a great extent by that experience.

In the first place, there is distinction among the various fields in which psychologists serve, in spite of the fact that there is much overlapping among these fields. We have educational psychology, industrial psychology, clinical (medical) psychology, etc. Not only are these various fields to be distinguished, but upon reflection it becomes clear that they are at the present moment in different stages of development, both in regard to the preparation obtainable in the universities, and in regard to the actual demand for services to be rendered.

It is my impression that so-called clinical psychology is more advanced in many respects than are the others. Educational psychology, though well established, has devoted itself to teacher-training, rather than to the development of the expert educational psychologist; so that the latter (insofar as he can be differentiated from the clinical psychologist) is among the most recent innovations. Industrial psychology can hardly be said to be taught as yet, even in first rate university departments (Carnegie Institute for Technology being a notable exception). On the other hand, preparation for clinical psychology is now being offered in several of the large universities; the demand for psychologists in this field is steady and increasing; a national association of those already in the field has been formed; and some of the states have even set legal standards for the practice of clinical psychology.

This inequality of development in the various branches of applied psychology complicates the matter of certification

of individuals. Certification in the clinical field seems feasible and necessary at this time, whereas certification in the industrial field seems impracticable.

In the present state of affairs, it seems to me that the most workable plan is to certify institutions. Let there be a standing committee of a responsible body, such as The American Psychological Association, to prepare a list of departments of psychology, where prescribed training has been made available. This list should be published annually, and printed in the report of the A. P. A., and in the technical journals, and posted in departments of psychology. Then, for the immediate present, let the certified institutions certify individuals, by conferring upon qualified persons the prescribed diploma.

In this there would, of course, be nothing legally mandatory. Ultimately the legal certification of individuals must be brought about, but in my judgment this will not be practicable until the courses of study have been standardized, and have actually been offered for three or four years at the universities.

As to the various degrees of expertness, and the recognition of each by means of a suitable diploma, Dr. Geissler in his initial article on the subject, distinguished three possible levels of skill. It seems to me that but one level of fitness should be certified, namely the fitness of an individual who will be an expert psychologist, with all the knowledge necessary (so far as knowledge is available) for the direction and control of human behavior. This person should earn and receive a doctor's degree in psychology, and should be given a professional diploma as Psychologist.

Many will hold that the grade of attainment represented by the master's degree (a college course and one year of specialization beyond), should be distinguished and certified. At times it seems to me that this should be done, and that some such title as Assistant Psychologist should be conferred; yet the more closely I consider the question the more convincing seem to me the arguments against certifying an inferior grade of training. Will not such certification tend to create a supply of certified inferior and hence inexpensive service, the inferiority of which will be condoned in many quarters for the sake of the inexpensiveness? Will not the distinction between Psychologist and Assistant Psychologist be too vague to function, especially since one costs much more than the other? And will not the whole purpose of the attempt at standardization be thus frustrated? For, as I conceive it, the purpose of standardization is twofold, (a) to assure

the best possible quality of service to the public, and (b) to protect those who are able and willing to undertake thorough preparation against the competition of those who are unable or unwilling to undergo the same training. The accomplishment of the first purpose is inseparably bound up with the accomplishment of the second.

It may be argued that the doctor's degree in psychology is at present awarded largely on the basis of research, in our most completely equipped universities, and hence requires a higher type of intellectual capacity than is necessary for the average practitioner. To me it seems doubtful whether the average successful candidate for the doctor's degree in psychology has more intellectual ability than should be required of one who aspires to be trusted with the direction and control of human behavior. It is at least doubtful that the average ability of those who have won the doctorate in psychology during the decade just passed is higher than that of the graduates of good professional schools, such as schools of medicine and schools of engineering. As fast as really good prospects are established in applied psychology, really good people will come to qualify,—people who are fully capable of earning a doctor's degree. But prospects in applied psychology will not be good, so long as persons of mediocre qualifications occupy the field.

It has been suggested that the traditional divisions of academic training into that for the M. A. and that for the Ph. D. are not very fortunate for the present purposes. The Ph. D. is not in a strict sense a professional degree. There exists at present no degree to indicate the completion of a prescribed professional course in psychology, which does not involve intensive research, but which does involve practice in applications. It has occurred to me that perhaps the situation calls for a new departure, the "invention" of a new degree,—Doctor of Psychology,—which would involve six years of training, including college, with an additional apprenticeship year (instead of research). I think this suggestion is worth considering, as the old Ph. D. is scarcely appropriate to many of the modern uses it is made to serve. Sooner or later it ought to fall away from the sciences through sheer weight of its irrelevancy.

As I have often stated, I am convinced by personal experience and by the experience of colleagues in the field, that it will hardly be possible for applied psychologists to succeed (in clinical practice at any rate), without the doctor's degree. The reasons why this is so probably go back, in the last

analysis, to the fact that the doctor's degree has come to signify adequate skill in him who presumes to direct human welfare. Thus competing professions can and do play in many subtle ways upon the lack of a professional title, to the detriment of the psychologist's legitimate work and service. Furthermore, the general public is disinclined to accept the advice of one who lacks the title of doctor in his field. Thus the usefulness of the psychologist is materially impaired, in cases where he is not qualified with the doctor's degree. These are phases of social psychology which it is necessary to admit, in considering the matter of certification. To ignore them would be to betray ineptitude as an applied psychologist at the very outset. Either we can fall in with the social habit, or dedicate ourselves to a long and tedious process of reforming it.

This emphasis upon the importance of formal titles, certificates, degrees, etc., does not, I find, impress the academic psychologists, who have not personally experienced the limitations upon usefulness resulting from the lack of a "suitable" title out in the practical field. Thus they are inclined to urge that certification is a relatively insignificant matter, and scarcely worthy of dignified discussion. It seems to them that the only really important consideration is that the instruction shall be of first rate quality. To them it is important that the professional teacher of psychology should have the doctor's degree, but unimportant that the practical psychologist should have it. They feel, somehow, that it probably requires less training and ability actually to direct and control human behavior, than to teach how to direct and control it.

Here we see the difference in viewpoint between the pure scientist and the practitioner. This divergence is inevitable; and it is only to be expected that the majority of psychologists, whose interests are mainly in teaching and research, will not be much moved by the subject which we are here considering, *i e*, certificates for practitioners. The adequate solution of the problem is, nevertheless, essential to the progress of practical psychology.

Summary of Suggestions

1. Legal certification of individuals will ultimately be necessary, but for the immediate present is scarcely feasible, owing to the unstandardized condition of curricula, and the inequality of development in the various branches of applied psychology. Standardization of curricula must *precede* legal certification of individuals.

2. For the present, institutions should be certified. Lists of certified institutions should be published. These institutions should be charged, for the time being, with the certification of individuals, by conferring upon qualified persons the prescribed diploma.

3. Only one grade of professional qualifications should be recognized by formal certification: persons who earn the doctor's degree, specializing in psychology as prescribed, should receive a professional diploma carrying the title, Psychologist.

4. The suggestion is worth considering as to whether the situation does not call for an innovation,—the creation of a new professional degree, Doctor of Psychology.

Professor S. C. Kohs, of Reed College, writes as follows:

A WORD REGARDING PLANS FOR THE TRAINING OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

If psychological practice is to become a respectably established institution, then the question of preparation and licensing of psychological practitioners becomes a matter of extreme importance. If the issue is dodged now, psychology will have to face it in some aggravated form later on.

The American Medical Association has for years exercised careful scrutiny over medical education in this country. This supervision has meant immeasurable benefit to the medical profession and to society. Practically every state specifies clearly the grade of the college, as assigned by the American Medical Association, from which prospective physicians may be accepted. Recently a national examining board was established and two national examinations have thus far been held. But these conditions have been the result of years of active and bitterly opposed propaganda. It seems reasonable to expect that the practice of psychology will pass through a somewhat similar evolution. But the American Psychological Association, profiting by the experience of the medical organization, can attain the same influence in its field with a considerably smaller expenditure of effort if active measures are taken before quackery obtains a substantial foothold. There should be a standing committee of the American Psychological Association which should set standards of training for the various types and grades of applied psychology: clinical, educational and vocational, and which should act as a national examining board, granting degrees or licenses to properly qualified individuals. I think it would prove unwise to

delegate this power to individual college or university departments, as has been suggested.

A symposium on this subject at the present time is most opportune. When the war is over psychology, together with all our other sciences, will be called upon to contribute its maximum toward social reconstruction. It must stand ready to perform this task respectably and with credit