

Accreditation of Teacher Education: A Statement

George W. Denemark is Dean, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

PEOPLE are important to the educational enterprise at every level. Education from nursery school through graduate school depends for its quality on the intellect, the commitment, the sensitivity, and the imagination of those who teach and those who learn. The quality of education depends, too, upon those who administer and supervise programs. And of course, it depends importantly upon those in all walks of life who support education generously or minimally through their interest and their funds.

People are important to education as individuals. They are important also as members of groups. And their importance in either case may be for good or for ill, depending upon their understanding and their values.

Much of the recent controversy regarding the accreditation of teacher education has centered around the importance of people—various people, some viewed as individuals, others as members of groups. A point made by several of the particularly vocal critics of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is that the quality of teacher education is, in the last analysis, dependent upon the calibre of the student body and faculty of each institution. The validity of such a position cannot be denied.

Yet the issue is seriously oversimplified if the importance of broad professional involvement is not recognized as well. Certainly college instructors should be answerable to colleagues on their own campus for the curricular decisions and evaluative judgments they make. But they should be responsible as well to their colleagues in other institutions and to their associates in all levels of the broad profession of teaching. The latter is especially necessary when the de-

cisions involved relate to the preparation of teachers who will serve at other levels of the educational system. The practicing profession should have much to say regarding the nature and standards of programs designed to prepare new members entering its ranks—not in place of college faculty members but rather in close cooperation with them.

Full Involvement

Such involvement of the practicing profession takes time and considerably complicates the decision-making process. Yet this participation can provide vitally important protection of the teacher preparation program from the consequences of an ebb and flow of legislative or college administrative enthusiasm. Indeed, the impact of a change in administrative leadership in an institution upon its program of teacher preparation may be considerable. Who is president of the college or dean of the school of education may have a profound effect upon many contributing elements to the quality of its programs. Allocation of budget, appointment of new faculty, promotion and salary recognition of existing staff, final approval of curricula—all represent points at which administrative officers may enhance or restrict the development of quality programs of teacher preparation.

It is unlikely and probably undesirable that every college president or education dean will possess the same values as his predecessor or as his counterparts in other colleges and universities. Each will, and undoubtedly should, have his priorities. Each will have in mind those aspects of program which he deems most critical or strategic to the strength and status of his own institution. However, the concentration of such basic judgments in the

hands of a single college administrator when that institution may provide a major segment of the new teachers needed by the schools of the state does not appear to be a responsible way in which to chart the directions of education in that state.

Every college should be subject to periodic assessments of its effectiveness in preparing teachers by a national accrediting body composed of representatives of sister institutions, of the organized profession, and of the state agencies charged with legal responsibility for the licensing of teachers in each state. This is not a new idea but it is one of crucial importance to American education—one which is being threatened seriously today.

Some current critics of national accreditation through NCATE charge that it is dominated by the National Education Association and hold that quality in teacher education depends upon our casting off the "chains of monolithic bureaucracy" or of "the Establishment." Such action, they claim, will free institutions to determine the criteria for judging the effectiveness of their own programs of teacher preparation.

While it is true that institutions participating in a system of national accreditation are subject to evaluations made by scholars and professionals outside their own faculty and are, thus, in this sense less free to act, it is equally true that their freedom may be more fully realized *because* it is entrusted to a wide circle of associates concerned with all facets of the educational enterprise. Restrictions imposed by a parochial committee or a narrow-minded administrator may be surmounted if a program must pass muster of a national agency representing other colleges and universities as well as those engaged in

the profession of teaching at other levels.

It is time we laid to rest this silly business of NEA's supposed "monolithic" influence on American education. Anyone who has served as I have on the Washington staff of one of the NEA's departments or as a member of an executive committee of one of these thirty affiliated units should be able to attest to the independence and autonomy with which these groups may go about their business free of NEA domination. And yet there are some who have had these experiences who choose to refrain from speaking the truth. By their failure to speak they do our schools and colleges a grave disservice.

In Perspective

People are important to teacher education and to its quality. College administrators—presidents and deans—are important. The capable ones must be supported while the poor ones are prevented from stifling or distorting promising programs. People in organizations are important too—people in state departments and in professional associations as well as those in school and college faculties. Members of such groups can do much to provide the perspective and balance that quality programs demand. However, they must be careful to avoid placing individuals or institutions in strait-jackets of convention and tradition. Their standards and criteria for evaluation cannot afford to be narrowly prescriptive nor destructive of experimentation and innovation in teacher education. But neither can they fail to insure that the preparation of our nation's teachers meets certain minimum standards and that every institution adequately supports its program of teacher preparation. Neglect of such programs cannot be permitted

because of pressures within a college for the diverting of funds in order to secure a government or foundation grant in some other area, in order to build up a specialized field that seems to have greater visibility or prestige value, or for other similarly dubious bases for academic decision making.

Fortunately, most administrators are broad gauge persons with outlooks that keep in mind a healthy balance of all elements contributing to our system of higher education. But some are not. And our schools cannot be permitted to depend alone upon the values of a single college administrator for the quality of the teachers they employ. Our schools deserve the protection and assurance of quality that comes when professional people in colleges, school systems, state agencies, and professional organizations join together in accepting responsibility for maintaining and seeking to improve the quality of programs of teacher preparation.

Refining Criteria

Make no mistake about it. The movement currently afoot to abolish or seriously curtail the functioning of national accrediting bodies in teacher education does not represent a step toward more imaginative and democratic planning, as some would have us believe. Instead, it represents, in some quarters at least, an unwillingness on the part of certain of our colleagues to accept the obligation to submit their thinking to analysis by their associates in the broader profession. It may be less troublesome to have each college or university responsible only to itself but such a plan cannot fail to damage the quality of preparation of our nation's elementary and secondary

(Continued on page 512)

the harvest home. We have had some parents help with the garden. The children are picked up at school at the end of the day and returned there within an hour and a half. This continues during the summer, and coincides with a special summer reading program for the children in the experimental group to sustain and improve their interest in reading.

During the summer of 1964 a one-week day camp experience has been initiated, staffed with volunteer Girl Scouts. The nature lore and crafts learned during this time will be utilized in the classroom.

The experiment is drawing to a close. The control group, now finishing the third grade, is undergoing the same tests these children took when they entered kindergarten. During 1964-65 more concerted efforts will be concentrated on the experimental group to stimulate the children further in their learning endeavors. They will then take these tests in the spring of 1965.

Although the final analyzing of data will not take place for another year, certain beneficial results even now can be noted. We know we have significantly increased the involvement of the parents in the education of their children. This is indicated not only by attendance at parent group meetings, but by increased attendance at PTA groups in these specific schools, which have always had trouble with PTA attendance. The parents and school personnel have come to know each other as persons and, as a result, there has been more cooperation between home and school. The parents feel the project has added a great deal to the school experience of the children. Many times they have said, "Why can't we do this for our other kids in school?" The family worker has been called spontaneously about problems in the family,

indicating the good feeling generated by the project.

The children seem to feel better toward themselves and society at this time and certainly they have a wider background of experiences. Our hope is that we will significantly influence their academic achievement as well, so the end results will help overcome the cultural disadvantages with which these children face the world.

A Statement—Denemark

(Continued from page 460)

school teachers. To be sure, there have been weaknesses in the processes and criteria we established through NCATE for broad professional and inter-institutional review. But the processes and criteria should be refined, not abandoned, for they support a system of values worthy of preservation.

The importance of full involvement of the practicing profession in determining standards for teacher preparation is even more evident when one reflects on the increasing role of in-service education. The education of a teacher is no longer something to be completed in a fixed period of preservice preparation, no matter how many years may be allocated to it. The education of a teacher must be seen as involving substantial parts of both preservice and in-service study and a careful plan for continuing career-long education that takes into account the rapid growth of knowledge and its recurrent obsolescence.

A major task of those charged with the preparation of teachers is that of working out a suitable division of labor between preservice and in-service experiences for teachers. To expect that such decisions can be made intelligently without the active involvement of the prac-

ticing profession—the teachers, supervisors, and administrators in the field—is to err as seriously as do those who would exclude representatives of the academic disciplines from the policy decisions regarding teacher education. The effective education of today's teachers depends upon the integrated planning of preservice and continuing educational experiences. Representatives of the practicing profession must be involved in this process in a fundamental way. It is essential that they recognize the importance of their involvement and insist upon it before the opportunity slips away.

Yes, people *are* important to the quality of American teacher education—both as individuals and in organized groups. But their importance depends upon their awareness of the issues before them and their vigor in accepting and discharging their responsibilities.

Supervision—Harris

(Continued from page 496)

program in the early stages, participant interest is high, leadership is high, but progress is low. As participants run into problems, leadership may be withdrawn and interest may decline before progress can be attained. At this point there is serious danger of the whole program's collapsing. When problems emerge, if leadership personnel will invest renewed energy, the problems can be overcome, progress will result, and interest will remain high.

It is important to remember that a supervisory program is something that grows out of a careful set of diagnostic procedures which identify problem areas. A supervision program can be designed with careful attention to the kinds of supervisory activities required to accomplish specified purposes.

NEW and recent texts on:

SCHOOLS IN AN AGE OF MASS CULTURE

Willis Rudy, Farleigh Dickinson University. Reviews in historical perspective certain selected themes in the history of twentieth-century American education. A limited number of questions which have loomed large in recent American education are probed here. Each of these themes selected for discussion is related to what appears to be the general direction of American education. *January 1965, 374 pp., \$6.95*

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES VIEW SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Donald E. Tope, Robert Campbell, John M. Foskett, Fred Fosmire, Richard A. Littman, all of the University of Oregon, and Howard Dean, Oregon State College. An outgrowth of an interdisciplinary seminar established at the University of Oregon, this new book gives the student of educational administration an up-to-date picture of each social science field represented, and indicates some of the implications that the concepts and research of that field offer the school administrator. *January 1965, 249 pp., \$6.95*

REWARDING CREATIVE BEHAVIOR: Experiments in Classroom Activity

E. Paul Torrance, University of Minnesota. Dr. Torrance summarizes the methods, outcomes, and possible consequences for classroom teachers and other educational workers of about 30 experiments conducted by the author and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota. *April 1965, approx. 400 pp., \$6.95*

SOCIETY AND EDUCATION: Readings

James Rath and Jean Dresden Grambs, both of the University of Maryland. A new book of readings designed to encourage student thought in the very profound issues of society and education in the United States today. *April 1965, 320 pp., paper \$3.50*

MEASURING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Robert L. Ebel, Michigan State University. This new basic book is concerned primarily with the kinds of tests of educational achievement that teachers prepare for themselves, their functions and problems arising in their preparation and use. *March 1965, 496 pp., \$7.95*

for approval copies, write: Box 903

PRENTICE-HALL, INC.
Englewood Cliffs, N. J.

Copyright © 1965 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.