

RURAL TEACHER TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES.

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Perhaps a large majority of the American people, both rural and urban, would vote, if they had the opportunity, that no training at all is necessary for the teacher of a one-room rural school. In the estimation of many good people including even some high school principals and city superintendents, the one-room school is the dromedary of our educational system, the pack horse of educational sentiment. For them, it has been, and is, the garbage pile which receives the halt, the blind, and the lame. It is the dumping ground for the misfits from the flapper in the high school to the lame ducks of local politics. No matter if some school directors are waiting to receive them, it is not right for a high school principal, a city superintendent, a board of education, or any one else, who ought to know better, to send a teacher considered incompetent to teach in the city where she graduated, out into the country school to conduct classes in twenty-five or thirty daily recitations.

Many just out of school do well in the country schools, but they must be the pick, not the culls, of the senior class. The most pathetic sight one ever saw is that of the high school graduate who has always lived in town, who goes out into the country to teach, but whose heart and soul remain in town.

Why should those who are to teach in the country have special training for the work before they begin to teach? Not all will agree that any special training is necessary. Some of our greatest leaders say rather dogmatically that he who teaches well in one position will teach well in any other position. This argument, if it is an argument, has no bearing on the subject, even if true, but it is only partly true at most. It is to be seriously doubted that the best teacher in this body of teachers could fill satisfactorily any and every teaching position in Southern Illinois.

The average number of daily recitations in one-room schools of Southern Illinois is twenty-eight plus. It is

quite clear that no teacher can prepare all of these lessons ahead of her classes. If she *did* prepare them all, it would mean one hundred forty preparations a week. If she made plans ahead for every recitation, either oral or written, she would be "going some."

Since it is practically impossible for her to prepare all of these daily lessons ahead of her classes she ought to know how to proceed with them to the best advantage without much, if any, preparation. The teacher of this list of subjects should have a thorough knowledge of all the common branches: reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar or language, geography, history, physiology, physical training, and perhaps other subjects. She should know all these subjects *well* because she is compelled to go before her classes and "blaze away" largely at random. She should have, not only a thorough mastery of these common branches, but she should have, in addition, a good working knowledge of the fundamental principals underlying the *teaching* of these subjects.

But should the training of the rural teacher be different from training of any other teacher? No one claims that it should be entirely different but every one knows that the preparation of the primary teacher should be different from the junior high school teacher and that the principle holds all along the way.

There is a body of race heritages, common to all the race, which are held by all the children everywhere alike. These inheritances must be chiefly instinctive since instincts are organized reactions inherited from past generations. But children form habits from the very first. Habits are organized reactions built up during the individual's lifetime. When the child enters school at six, he has had a wonderful experience and has formed many habits. This experience and these habits may or may not constitute 75% of the child's life at six years of age—I do not know. But we all *do* know that there is a considerable and essential difference between the city and country child at six years of age due to the difference in the environment in which they have lived. The one has had experience in the flat, with electric

lights, electric irons, electric this and that, gas ranges, various kinds of food different from the country, with streets, street cars, shows, offices and indoor life generally. The other has had experience with the open air, clouds, rain, sunshine, grass, trees, flowers, animals, plows, hay and grains, dust and mud.

The country child, at six, often can go into the garden, pick out and name a dozen or more different growing vegetables. He can go into the fields and distinguish growing oats from timothy or clover. He can tell a grain of wheat from a grain of rye. He can tell sheep from hogs, roosters from hens, geese from ducks, and sparrows from robins. But he cannot understand many of the things with which the child, even in the small town, is familiar. If real teaching begins with what the child has already experienced and knows and leads into things which he does not know, but which are related, then the rural teacher needs different training from the grade teacher.

Furthermore, the teacher of a one-room school needs to know how to kindle a fire in the heater, the manipulation of the heater—its dampers, humidifiers, fresh air intake, foul air-escape, and how the heater causes the air to circulate in the room. She needs to know how to arrange the fire so it will keep over night and the most convenient way for removing ashes from the heater. She should form habits of looking at the thermometer, of keeping the blackboards clean, of assigning wall hooks to different pupils, of the care of the library, of the water supply, of the supervision of the playground and the physical and moral value of play.

The one-room teacher needs to know how to conduct a recitation so as to teach as much in ten minutes as the grade teacher does in forty. She must be able, in Southern Illinois, to teach as much in seven months as the grade teacher does in eight or nine months.

In one respect, the teacher of a one-room school, if she cares to avail herself of the privilege, has every one else "beaten to a frazzel." She has abundant opportunity to camouflage. Perhaps she could not practice

100% camouflage, but she could come very near it if she were so disposed.

The beginning teacher may learn (1) from seeing others teach (2) from hearing others talk about teaching (3) from reading what others have written on the subject. But in learning to drive an automobile one may see others drive and that helps some, he may listen to others talk about driving and that helps some more, and he may read literature, but he will never become a skillful driver until he takes hold of the wheel, and, under the direction of an experienced person, he performs the work for himself.

Darwin found, that, in later life, he had lost his early taste for art, music, and poetry. He had neglected these so long that he could not bear them when he became older. Just so it may be that one who attended a one-room school in childhood, perhaps taught in one or more, may lose his conception of the country school situation. He considers himself thoroughly in touch with rural problems even after he has been away from the country for years. It is then usually that he writes books on how to teach a rural school. In these books, or in articles written for school journals, he will say that twenty-eight daily recitations are too many, that the number must be reduced. Then, in the next chapter, he says that Domestic Science, Agriculture as related to the farm, and Manual Training as related to the farm home, must be taught in these one-room schools. However, we who teach in the country have learned that $28 \text{ plus } 3 \text{ equals } 31$. Bear in mind that I am not making a plea for the perpetuation of the one-room school. About every authority on the economic history of the rural life of the United States divides it up into epochs, usually four—sometimes five:

First, the pioneer period generally dating from the very earliest times until about 1830 or 35. During this period the people lived largely by hunting and fishing.

Second, the period of the household farmer dating from about 1830 to 1890. During this time American family life developed. The farmer established the one-

room school, the rural church, buried his dead on the farm, and never thought of selling out.

Third, the period of exploitation from 1890 to the present time. Farmers sold their farms, and moved to town or moved to town without selling their farms. The sons scattered to the four winds. Every permanent factor of farm life ceased to function. The retired farmer and the absentee landlord are the products of this period.

Fourth, the period of husbandry. This is just dawning in some localities and is being built up from the remains of the household farmer. Man begins to consider himself his brother's keeper. Cooperative societies, good roads, consolidated schools, better education, more intelligent farming, and a broader outlook on life are its products.

The one-room school was the best they could have in the household economy period but it is the product of days long gone by. It fitted well into the economic and social life of a half century ago but it is the "last leaf on the tree" of an outgrown system.

But back to the training of teachers for the one-room school. The person who attended such a school forty years ago, perhaps taught in one for a time, then went away to college, graduated and became principal, city superintendent, college professor or something, *may think* he *still* knows all about a country school, but he doesn't. Even if he, to use a common expression, keeps in touch with rural problems by visiting such schools or otherwise, he doesn't know them. The laws of forgetting apply in his case as in others.

Let our subject after all his experience in graded schools, high schools, colleges, or the county superintendency, go out into a real one-room rural school and teach it for one full year successfully.

Let him do his own panitor work—be responsible for the heating, ventilating, water supply, and general physical upkeep of the school; let him manage, discipline and meet all the problems incident to getting along with the people; let him hear 28 or more daily recitations and see that all the pupils make progress in their studies;

let him attend all teacher's institutes and meetings, make all reports to directors, county and state superintendents, and perform all other necessary activities. After he has proven his ability to do the thing himself, a license should be issued to him to *write a book* telling others how to do it.

While it is clear that the one-room school is rooted in the past, yet it is destined to exist in many, many places for a long period of years, perhaps stretching out into generations. Realizing therefore, that generations unborn are yet to receive the rudiments of an education in the one-room school, is it not high time that more and more attention be paid to the training of those who are to teach in these schools?

There are now approximately 20,000,000 school children in the United States. 8,000,000 and more of these are enrolled in the one and two room schools. They are being taught by 250,000 persons. About 87,000 beginning rural teachers are needed annually. I have tried to show why they should have some special training for their work.

The tendency of the times seems to be to get the training of teachers closer and closer to the real school. Most certain it is that any training which takes into account a recitation period of 40 minutes, which fails to take into account the vital factors which constitute the ungraded school does not prepare for effective teaching in a one-room rural school.

At the present time the training of teachers for rural schools has acquired a momentum of which the people and even the teachers themselves are not aware.

Allowing a liberal discount for over enthusiasm and obsession, on the part of those who are working in this field of education, just a minimum of investigation shows that all the agencies for it are carrying on slowly but surely.

The agencies through which rural teachers are being prepared are high schools, county normal schools, state and other normal schools, teacher's colleges and agricultural colleges.

The United States Bureau of Education has a rural department of no mean proportions. The present distinguished head of this Bureau considers rural education his greatest problem. His immediate predecessor, Claxton, said that rural life and rural education are the greatest problems for the American statesman.

The National Education Association, the greatest association of its kind in the world, probably the greatest that ever was, maintains a prominent rural department.

Columbia University, New York City, contains the greatest teachers' college in America. This college has a rural department in which one may work out his Master's or his Doctor's degree in rural education.

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, has a great rural department.

Twenty seven of the forty eight now provide some form of training for rural schools in their high schools. I am including only those states wherein this rural training is provided by law.

With reference to this training, the high schools offering it, may be classified into two groups: I. Those which have special rural department in the high schools. The students wishing to take the rural training are placed in a room by themselves with special teachers, libraries, and equipment. In this group of states are included Vermont, New York, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Nevada. II. Those states in which the students of the high school who wish to prepare for rural teaching are not segregated but sit in with the rest of students of the high school with a one year curriculum offered. In the majority of states coming under this classification there are special teachers employed by the high school for the purpose of training these teachers: Maine, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, and nine other states are listed in this group.

In all of these states, 27 in all, provision is made in the laws for this teacher training for rural schools.

In several, the provision is but an apology, while in others substantial aid is given by the state to designated high schools for preparing such teachers.

The chief criticisms offered on the preparation of rural teachers in high schools are: (1) that the actual practice teaching, if offered at all, has to be done in the grades of the city school system, (2) that, at best, it can be only temporary, the responsibility finally to rest on the State Normal schools.

Wisconsin is the only state which seems to have gone very far in the development of the county Normal school. Between thirty and forty of the counties of that progressive state have established County Normals for the training of teachers for the rural schools. Like the man who declined to express his opinion on Heaven and Hell because he had friends in both places, it is hard to form an opinion on the efficacy of the County Normal school in the preparation of teachers to teach in the country. Suffice to say that I once heard a spirited discussion between two men on the subject, both of whom claimed to have had experience in the county normal schools of Wisconsin.

There are, in the United States approximately 300 institutions which may be called normal schools for the general preparation of teachers. Many of these are now known as teachers' colleges. About 100 of these are private or municipal institutions leaving 200 which are supported by the different states. Of the 200, *thirty* are negro schools. The rest (170) are white schools, or, as in most cases, are open to both races. *Fifty-two* of the 170 maintain special rural departments, offering special courses in rural education, and maintaining some sort of practice teaching for those who have elected to teach in the country. *Sixty-one* of the 170 have no special rural department, but offer special courses for rural teachers and may or may not offer rural practice teaching. *Twenty-five* of the 170 have what may be called but a minimum of rural interest encouraging rural schools by holding rural conferences, etc. *Thirty-two* of the 170 profess no rural interest.

Of the 113 state normal schools and teachers' colleges which claim to have caught some of the rural spirit the courses most frequently offered are rural school management and rural sociology.

Some infallible survey has shown that the average teacher reaches her maximum of efficiency at the end of the fifth year of teaching and that observation work is subject to the law of diminishing returns after the fifth day. Whether or not either is true does not matter so much but it is certainly true that observation is good only up to a certain point. If observation were all the beginning teacher might need, then, the janitor would soon become the best teacher in the building because he observes more than any one teacher.

With reference to the plan for giving rural practice teaching the normal schools offering it are classified into four groups: 1. Those which maintain a one-room school on the normal campus where the practice teaching may be done. This is the ideal plan were it not for the fact that the practice school can not get the children to practice on.

2. Those which select a number of rural schools as observation schools in the different counties, not so far away from the normal, which schools are supposed to be taught by successful rural teachers regularly employed by the districts. To these schools the cadet teachers are sent to get ideas and to do some practice teaching. This plan is ridiculous because the students are away from the normal school so long that a term of work is all but lost, these observation schools are difficult of selection from any and every standard, the best rural schools are usually inaccessible, and because but few students elect to go out for the practice.

3. Those which have rural schools directly under the control of the normal, directed by critic teachers from the normal, to which students are sent or taken for several weeks and where they remain during the entire period of training. This plan is subject to one criticism: The practice teachers cannot carry on the rest of their work in the normal school while away taking the practice.

4. Those which maintain rural practice schools near enough to the normal, and on roads good enough for travel during the winter months, that the practice teach-

