

CHAPTER VIII

The Preparation of Special Education Personnel

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Mackie and Williams (1959) presented the most recent predecessor to this chapter of research on special education personnel and their preparation. They concluded that at that time research in this area lagged behind productivity in the general field of special education insofar as the output of experimental studies was concerned. They reported research to be centering primarily in the area "of developing conceptual constructs, of collecting status data, of appraisal by the technique of consensus of expert opinion. . . ." (p. 404). More recently, Roucek's (1963) review of this literature and Cain's (1964) statement on the preparation of special education teachers have reinforced the comments of Mackie and Williams. However, Cain's critique went somewhat further than either of the aforementioned reports, in suggesting that other disciplines, such as medicine, psychology, and psychiatry, have contributed more to increasing understanding of special education than has this field itself, and that the general literature in teacher education shows a void in research during the past 10 years. This is not to say that there has not been a great deal of criticism of both content and procedures of teacher preparation in the United States. Nor is it to be implied that this decade has not presented us with a number of well reasoned and passionate appeals for a resurgence of research on teacher education (*see* Gage, 1964). Further, some might claim that Conant's (1963) prestigious contribution answered this demand.

The following review may indicate that there has been remarkably little change since 1959 in the status of research on the preparation of special education teachers. Little experimental work has been completed; there is, in fact, a scarcity of any systematic study of the problem, whether historical, descriptive, or experimental. Borrowing from Gage's (1964) classification of stages of knowledge, obtained from psychological theory and empirical research for purposes of teacher education, one might conclude from this review that (a) we know more and utilize more of our research findings than ever before, (b) we are narrowing the difference between what we know and what we utilize of what we know, and (c) we are making very slow progress in investigating unsolved problems and unexplored areas.

* The author acknowledges the substantial assistance of Gail Ensher, his graduate assistant, who contributed to the search for relevant studies for this review.

Methodological Considerations

The *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Gage, 1963) is a signal contribution to the literature on design and execution of research on teaching. Especially important contributions to methodological advancement are the chapters by Gage ("Paradigms for Research on Teaching"), Campbell and Stanley ("Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research on Teaching"), Medley and Mitzel ("Measuring Classroom Behavior by Systematic Observation"), and Wallen and Travers ("Analysis and Investigation of Teaching Methods"). This compendium is, in the reviewer's judgment, the major achievement to date concerning research on teaching and is as significant—and possibly more so—for the study of special education pedagogies as for research in the other teaching areas.

As Cain (1964) suggested, and as was clearly demonstrated in the aforementioned handbook by Gage, scientists not associated particularly with the field of special education have contributed substantially to the development of new knowledges and insights that influence this field. Of noteworthy interest is Flanders' model for observing interaction in classrooms (Flanders, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965; Lambert, Goodwin, and Roberts, 1965) and Schoggen's (1964) ingenious system for the concurrent recording of field notes on observations of children's behavior.

Other impressive studies of classroom interaction were reported by Gallagher and Aschner (1963) and Aschner and others (1965). For the purposes of their research investigating productive thought in gifted children, they developed a system for classifying thought processes within the context of classroom verbal interaction. Through the development of a reliable classification system for analyzing verbal interaction of teachers and pupils in any classroom and regardless of subject matter content or student ability, it was expected that greater understanding of the teaching process would develop and, therefore, more effective ways of preparing teachers to stimulate deductive thought process would obtain.

A study centering upon observation as an important methodological procedure in studying the preparation of teachers in general and of special educators in particular was reported by Sarason, Davidson, and Blatt (1962). It was their impression that traditional teacher preparation methods do not come to grips with the question of how to maximize the harmony between a teacher's practice and principles of learning and development. To compound this problem, the authors were unable to locate the detailed descriptions of actual teaching that might lead to a better understanding of effective or ineffective approaches to accepted goals. Further, though there was a surfeit of attractive course descriptions and vague generalizations of what the future teacher experiences and learns in the course of preparation, there was a dearth of detailed descriptions of how teachers are actually prepared. The authors called for serious analysis not only of what the university student is exposed to but also of specifically how it is

structured, who structures it, and what the student himself does. They contended that without detailed descriptions of what actually goes on between student and teacher and between student teacher and master teacher it is impossible to judge whether the theory supposedly giving rise to preparation practices is adequately reflected in the implementation of these practices. The problem of providing more meaningful clinical experiences for students preparing to teach exceptional children led to the establishment of an observation seminar whereby the college student could discover that the complex processes of observation and inference are a method of investigation requiring sustained intellectual concentration and critical self-scrutiny.

Additional References: Anglin and Carroll (1964); Bidna and Hahn (1959); Blatt (1963; 1964a, b); Brown and Sheldon (1965); Grinder (1964); Kuenzli (1959); Murphy (1962); Spicker (1962).

Role Considerations

Teacher Preparation

The most recent survey of college and university programs preparing teachers of exceptional children was made in 1961 by Mackie, Neuber, and Hunter (1963). The study included institutions of higher learning giving at least a minimum sequence of specialized professional preparation for teachers of exceptional children, and included programs for other special educators such as supervisors and administrators. The usefulness of this survey is diminished by recent developments in teacher education programs, probably as a result of Public Laws 85-926, 87-276, and 88-164, which suggest that there are probably a great many more college and university programs in special education now.

Although recognizing the rapid obsolescence of most survey data, Willenberg (1960) utilized the survey of handicapped children by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education to develop a 10-year projection both of enrollment of handicapped children in California's special education classes and of the corresponding need there for special education teachers. In addition, he outlined necessary steps to be taken within single states before effective regional planning between states can be developed for both recruitment and preparation of teachers of handicapped children.

Taylor and Taylor (1961) studied the education of special teachers in Western Europe and reported that formal course work in teacher education, even for teachers of deaf and blind children where special preparation is so obviously needed, had been inaugurated only recently in some countries. Further, they found that the need for special programs to train secondary school teachers of the handicapped is not generally recognized in Europe, the assumption being that few children will continue beyond elementary school and that those who do will adjust in one way or another

to the regular program. Educational programs for special teachers needed to be both strengthened and enlarged. They recommended greater depth of theoretical study as well as more varied practical experience. This end might be accomplished by combining in a single institution both research and teacher education activities so that the current gap between discovery and application could be narrowed.

Additional References: Blatt (1964a, b) ; Knight (1965) ; Watson (1961).

Advanced Graduate Preparation

Two papers have been published in recent years centering upon doctoral training in special education, the first by Kirk (1957), not previously reported in the REVIEW, and the second by Gallagher (1959). Both these papers dealt with admission requirements, program requirements, and objectives of advanced graduate preparation for special education administrators, teacher educators, and researchers. Although one might question the usefulness of expert opinion without the corroboration of more systematically gathered data in designing standards for advanced graduate study, there are several points made by both Kirk and Gallagher that appear to be of real importance and that are widely accepted among university professors responsible for graduate teaching: (a) Advanced graduate preparation in special education presupposes that the candidate has attained proficiency in an area of educating exceptional children; he should have a master's degree in special education and at least two years of relevant professional experience. (b) Basic course work to make up deficiencies in his professional major or related areas should be added to the regular advanced graduate program. (c) The doctoral thesis, an integral part of all advanced graduate preparation, should reflect the highest standards of scholarly research whether the student is majoring in administration, teacher preparation, or research. (d) Advanced graduate students should be required to be in residence at the university for no less than one full academic year. Students should be encouraged to maintain residency for the total doctoral program. (e) A graduate department should have an adequate staff; to call one faculty member "a graduate department" is certainly a confusion of terms. Further, advisors to doctoral students must have both an earned doctorate in their area of special education and a demonstrated research contribution.

Field Considerations

Deaf

Rotter (1962) reported the results of a questionnaire designed to assess the attitudes and feelings of 113 graduates of the cooperative program for the preparation of teachers of the deaf of the Lexington School for the

Deaf and Teachers College, Columbia University. Respondents were generally pleased with all aspects of their preparation program, although they considered some facets more valuable than others. Teachers reported that all course work directly related to education of the deaf proved of value to them in their current professional activities; however, they were less enthusiastic about the basic course work required. Although former students were satisfied with the methods of instruction in their teacher preparation program (e.g., lectures, demonstrations, and observations), a considerable number felt that there would have been decided value in having more opportunities to discuss observations and demonstrations with instructors soon after these experiences. Further, these former students recommended more opportunities for student teachers to take more active and meaningful roles with parents, critic teachers, and staff members.

Streng (1964) submitted a questionnaire to 40 heads of teacher education programs and 60 supervisors or principals in schools for the deaf in order to identify major issues in the preparation of teachers of the deaf. Reported issues fell primarily into the following groups: recruitment and selection of potential teachers, desired professional background for teachers of the deaf, broadening of theoretical knowledge of teachers of the deaf, special professional courses for teachers of the deaf, student teaching and observation, and desired background for personnel for college programs.

Additional References: Bruce (1964); Hoag (1963); Murphy (1963); O'Connor (1963); Quigley (1963); Sellin (1964).

Culturally Deprived

Ornstein (1964) posed the question of why colleges have not prepared teachers for duties required in "difficult" schools. He contended that education courses offered at a university are clearly inadequate and that theories usually are unworkable insofar as preparing teachers to provide bona fide educational experiences for underprivileged students. Further, he predicted a worsening trend with greater numbers of teachers puzzled, harassed, and unable to understand and guide their pupils. While granting that teaching in "difficult" schools is a most arduous assignment, Ornstein contended that teachers may be at least partly at fault: they are generally unmotivated and unqualified or afraid to teach "unruly" students. The author suggested that teachers in preparation should spend certain periods of their preservice training working specifically with "difficult" students.

Haubrich (1963) described a program at Hunter College designed to meet the objections to current teacher preparation and suggested the innovation proposed above. At Hunter student teachers are given opportunities to begin their professional careers in "difficult" schools by being assigned for student teaching in less favorable neighborhoods. The first two or three weeks of this program afford the student teacher an opportunity to observe and adjust to the new surroundings; the next three weeks

provide him with actual teaching participation. During the remainder of the semester the student teacher assumes control of and responsibility for classes of children. Supplementary to the teaching, students are exposed to a wide variety of community agencies serving adults and youth in the neighborhood where they teach. Further, they are regularly supervised and attend conferences at the school where they teach. These conferences cover a wide scope of problems in teaching, with central concern on the resolution of specific issues through utilization of school and other personnel.

Additional References: Bloom, Davis, and Hess (1965); Fraser (1961); Perlman (1961); Strom (1965).

Gifted

French (1961) asked deans of all higher education institutions known to offer a course on the psychology and education of gifted children to submit a list of objectives and an outline of their course for inclusion in a summary to be distributed to persons interested in establishing such a course. From 66 institutions offering at least one course, 35 usable replies were received. The generally accepted objectives were (a) to develop a familiarity with classroom procedures and administrative plans for the gifted; (b) to learn the characteristics of the gifted child and the problems and techniques of instructing him; (c) to build a philosophy of education for the gifted; and (d) to improve the quality of education for the gifted, either in regular or in special classes.

In order to learn what teachers do in their classes to help motivate their more able pupils, the Metropolitan Association for the Study of the Gifted (Wilson, 1961) solicited reports from teachers describing classroom activities that they felt were particularly well designed to motivate their more able children. An analysis of 32 replies revealed that there is an immediate and pressing need for improved preservice teacher education programs designed to acquaint the prospective teacher with the nature and nurture of children possessing unusual capabilities. It was recommended that there should be many direct experiences with gifted children in the forms both of observation and of participation.

Additional Reference: Newland (1962).

Mentally Retarded

Olson and Hahn (1964) analyzed and described a special approach to preparing teachers of the mentally retarded. They recommended that undergraduate teacher candidates need the following experiences: (a) a sound general education with emphasis in the behavioral sciences, (b) early exposure to the field of special education, (c) instruction in curriculum and teaching methodology, and (d) the opportunity to observe excellence in teaching. They would assign particular emphasis to observation

and practice teaching experience. Directed observations should be carefully arranged to include observation of excellent teachers in action followed by a seminar in which the professor and university student can jointly evaluate what was observed. These demonstrations might take place in public school classrooms, in university demonstration classes, and, under certain conditions, in university classrooms where the curriculum methods course is taught. During the last phase of teacher preparation, students would be assigned to full-time student teaching with provision for weekly seminars concentrating on problems encountered during the teaching day.

Wolinsky (1959) analyzed aspects of a teacher education program for those preparing to work with the trainable child. She recommended three areas for incorporation into any such program: (a) adequate foundation in developmental psychology, including emphasis on laboratory experiences and the case-study approach; (b) acquaintance with basic skills and insights of other disciplines involved in preparing atypical children; and (c) awareness of basic principles of counseling and interviewing.

Additional References: Blatt (1959) ; Cotter (1964) ; DeProspero (1964) ; Goldstein (1960).

Physically Handicapped

Mackie and Connor's (1960) report on the specialized competencies needed to teach effectively children who are crippled or who have special health problems is part of a nationwide study known as "Qualification and Preparation of Teachers of Exceptional Children," conducted by the U.S. Office of Education in collaboration with leaders in special education throughout the nation (*see* Mackie and Williams, 1959). This study utilized statements by a committee of specialists in the field of the physically handicapped plus a special inquiry completed by teachers, directors and supervisors, and college staff members, all concerned with the education of children who are crippled or who have special health problems. This study reported that the special abilities required by teachers of both groups of children center on (a) understanding each child and his particular problem; (b) adapting curriculum, teaching methods, and materials to specific needs of each child; (c) utilizing reports and records from physicians, psychologists, social workers, and other teachers; (d) cooperating with other professional personnel in evaluating needs of children and in planning educational programs; and (e) helping parents with problems arising from having a handicapped child in the family.

Socially and Emotionally Maladjusted

Dorward (1963) developed a list of competencies for teachers of emotionally disturbed children and sought opinion through a questionnaire

as to which specific competencies were needed by such teachers in contrast to those needed by regular classroom teachers. On all but 3 of the 100 competencies, regular classroom teachers rated the competency as being as important or more important than did teachers of disturbed children. The two items that teachers of disturbed children, in contrast with regular class teachers, found to be most significant were ability to accept pupils who are violent and experience on a clinical team with psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. The study raised questions concerning the content of special courses for teachers of disturbed children and the relevancy of that, or other, content insofar as the preparation of regular class teachers is concerned.

In a national study of 117 public school programs specifically designed for the emotionally maladjusted, including site visits to 74 classrooms, Morse, Cutler, and Fink (1964) presented the most comprehensive data currently available on teachers' perceptions of their work with the emotionally maladjusted, of their classroom methodologies, and of the degree of support, supervision, and consultation they received. This report also discussed the preparation and experience background of these teachers and their evaluations of the adequacy of their backgrounds for demands of their positions.

Additional Reference: Rabinow (1960).

Speech Handicapped

In spring 1963 a National Conference on Graduate Education in Speech Pathology and Audiology was held in Highland Park, Illinois (Darley and others, 1963). The 106 official participants and 11 invited observers discussed five basic issues and, in plenary session, balloted on a series of propositions. The issues were (a) definition of the field and roles of the workers in it, (b) selection of students, (c) graduate curricula, (d) techniques of teaching and learning, and (e) organization and administration of graduate education. The proceedings of this National Conference included the keynote address, "Professional Education Within the Framework of a Graduate School," by Crawford as well as papers by Matthews, Steer, and Wendell Johnson.

Additional Reference: Sokolnicki (1960).

Comments

A survey of the literature between 1959 and 1965 concerned with the preparation of special education personnel disclosed no experimental studies and few investigations of any kind that could be classified as systematic research. The few descriptive studies completed fall into the opinionnaire-questionnaire category. In contrast with the general development of

research programs in special education due to the tremendously increased support now provided by federal agencies and private foundations for both research and graduate education, the total impact of findings reported here is somewhat disappointing.

It was encouraging to note the publication of a major resource for scientists concerned with research on teaching (Gage, 1963) and to witness the development of observational methodologies, both as a way of evaluating the content and procedures of professional programs and as a powerful stimulator of professional preparation. It would be salutary if better advantage were taken in the next decade of what is now known concerning the observation and recording of behavior. It is possible that through these and other methodologies questions raised, but heretofore inadequately answered, concerning the preparation of professional workers in special education will elicit clearer, more satisfactory responses.

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