EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The financial depression has caused a general reduction of educational budgets and has led to the curtailment of various activities in educational institutions. The National Advisory Committee on Education rendered its final report to President Hoover. This report recommended a novel type of federal department, which is being subjected to frequent editorial criticism. The "new plan" of the University of Chicago has been in successful operation since October 1, 1931. An international conference on the form and social influence of examinations assembled in May, 1931, at Eastbourne, England. The American Association of University Professors has undertaken a study of college teaching. Several important educational surveys were launched in 1931. The apparent oversupply of teachers was made a subject of inquiry by the Research Division of the National Education Association.

CURTAILMENT OF EDUCATIONAL BUDGETS

The problem which, more than any other, engrossed the attention of educational administrators during 1931 was the problem of conducting the institutions for which they were responsible on drastically reduced budgets. Shrinkage in revenues available for the conduct of public schools amounted in some cases to as much as 20 per cent. A canvass of public-school systems made in the middle of the year showed that there were practically no cases in which increases in resources could be reported and that in 40 per cent of the school systems school revenues were reduced below the level of the year preceding. Many of the systems which escaped reduction in their budgets during 1931 are quite certain to experience curtailment during 1932.

There is no uniformity in the methods adopted to effect retrenchment. In most centers there is a disposition to maintain, as far as possible, the schedules of teachers' salaries. In a few cases salaries for the year have been reduced either through the closing of schools for a period or through consent on the part of teachers to serve for a time without pay. Economies of minor types have been very common. The supervisory force has been reduced. Summer schools have been abandoned. Classes for adults have been closed. More fundamental changes have been introduced in the form of reorganization.
of classes. Classes have sometimes been increased in size, and periods of instruction in laboratorics and shops have been shortened. It is doubtless true that some of the changes will be found to be so harmless that they will outlive the depression.

In the college world the depression has resulted in a number of mergers of institutions which were competitors. There will undoubtedly be more mergers in the future and complete suspensions of institutions which are financially weak. The small liberal-arts colleges have opened a campaign which aims to convince the public that it will be a major social disaster if the small college is eliminated from the American educational system.

Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, suggests that colleges which find it difficult to offer advanced courses unite with neighboring universities and, while preserving their individuality, provide their students with opportunities that only the stronger institutions can supply.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION

On November 16, 1931, President Hoover released, without comment, the report of the National Advisory Committee on Education. After two years of labor this committee succeeded in preparing a report which was adopted with very little opposition by its members. Such opposition as the report encountered in the Committee came from three sources. The members of the Committee who were closely related to the Federal Board for Vocational Education voted negatively on all sections of the report. The members of the Committee who belonged to the Catholic clergy filed a minority report, opposing a recommendation which they believed would lead to federal control of schools. The three Negro members of the Committee favored the principles of the report but contended that the federal government owes a special duty to the Negroes in those states which maintain dual school systems.

The report of the National Advisory Committee on Education contains (1) a vigorous statement of the traditional American policy of state and local control of education, (2) a clear account of the gradual development of bureaucratic interference with the autonomy
of the states and local school districts through specification of the
types of education to be aided by federal grants and through the im-
position of direct federal supervision over certain types of teaching,
and (3) an argument for the creation of a strong headquarters for
education presided over by a cabinet officer.

Many of the editorial comments on the report have asserted that
the recommendation of a strong federal headquarters is in funda-
mental opposition to the earlier sections of the report which argue
that the traditional policy of local control is the truly American
policy and one which should be continued. The report is explicit in
its declaration that the federal headquarters recommended is not to
be endowed with administrative powers or duties. It will require
time and careful consideration of the novel character of the recom-
mendation to secure complete understanding of its significance. The
people of this country are so accustomed to administrative depart-
ments that they cannot grasp at once the idea of a purely service
branch of the federal government.

THE "NEW PLAN" OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago received in October, 1931, the first
class of undergraduate students who are to be educated under the
"new plan." These students began preparation for thecomprehen-
sive examination which most of them will take in June, 1933. A few
of them who are highly competent and industrious will have the
opportunity to take the examination at an earlier date. The com-
prehensive examination will assume (1) that the student has ac-
quaintance with four fields, or divisions, of knowledge—the biologi-
cal sciences, the physical sciences, the social sciences, and the hu-
manities; (2) that he can write clear and correct English; (3) that
he has made some progress in the direction of mastering the tool
subjects, such as foreign language and mathematics, necessary for
the pursuit of some specialty; and (4) that he has more than an in-
trodductory acquaintance with the field in which he intends to spe-
cialize.

As aids in preparing for the comprehensive examination, courses
in each line are provided; but students are not required, as students
in most colleges are, to follow any strict routine of class attendance.
Among the courses provided are four new orientation, or general-survey, courses in the fields enumerated in the preceding paragraph. The individual student is also given as much guidance through personal conferences with instructors as he cares to accept.

It is too early to venture any estimate of the success of the plan. It is quite certain that the students have not, up to the present, abused their freedom. Indeed, so anxious have they been not to fail, and so uncertain have they been regarding the character of the comprehensive examination to which they will be subjected, that they have attended classes with at least the usual degree of regularity. The chief complaint which the students make is that the new plan imposes on them heavier labor than they have been accustomed to perform. Some of the readings which they are encouraged to undertake overtax their immature minds. On the whole, the new plan has not produced any of the shocking abnormalities of human behavior that critics feared would appear. There seems to be an increase in personal responsibility as compared with the results produced in earlier years by the assignment-and-recitation plan.

The graduate classes of the University have felt to some extent the influence of the new plan. Indeed, it may be said that in very large measure the new plan is but a generalization of what has long been common in well-conducted graduate classes. There has been, however, in graduate courses further relaxation of formal requirements. There are fewer term papers and more free reading. There are opportunities outside the field of narrow specialization. A student is encouraged to think of himself as related to a division made up of a number of departments rather than hemmed in by the boundaries of a single department. The Division of Social Sciences has gone so far in extending the range of its offerings as to provide certain divisional lecture courses summarizing, for all who are interested, the essentials of some field of knowledge.

THE EASTBOURNE CONFERENCE ON EXAMINATIONS

During the closing days of May, 1931, there assembled at Eastbourne, England, in response to an invitation from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the International Institute of Teach-
ers College, Columbia University, a group of educators from Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, and the United States to discuss the form and social influence of examinations. The Conference was an extension of the work which the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have been doing in this country in improving methods of examining college students and secondary-school pupils. The desirability of holding an international conference was suggested by Sir Michael Sadler and Professor Carl H. Becker, both of whom had visited this country and had observed with interest the experiments in formulating tests of various types, including comprehensive examinations.

The Eastbourne Conference led to the organization of several national committees which will carry on experiments in their own countries and will in due time publish reports of their findings. The Conference itself was devoted to discussions of the present practices and problems of each country represented. It became evident in the course of the discussions that one problem which confronts every nation is that of selecting the leaders who are competent to direct national policies. The French representatives were in favor of reliance on a single test of clarity and fluency of expression. The German representatives called attention to the advantages of the individual examination, which has always been typical of Germany. The English representatives were very desirous of overcoming the undesirable formalization of education which they believe results from the examination system enforced by the older English universities. The Scotch representatives were enthusiastic advocates of the new-type examination and the tests which, in common with American experimenters, they are perfecting. The American and Swiss representatives were somewhat less favorable to selective examinations and were more favorable to tests which furnish the basis of guidance and placement.

Perhaps one of the most profitable features of the Conference was the opportunity which it supplied for a frank interchange of national ideals of education among representatives of the leading civilizations of the Western world.
A STUDY OF COLLEGE TEACHING

Announcement was made at the annual meeting of the American Association of University Professors held in November, 1931, that the Association is to undertake an investigation of college teaching. The Association has been largely absorbed in establishing academic freedom. It has even been charged with so much devotion to the defense of professors that it has become virtually a trade-union. The new line of inquiry which is now being launched attacks so broad a problem and one which is of such general importance to all colleges and universities that the Association must be recognized as having a far more objective and general purpose than does any trade union.

The chairman of the committee which is to direct the study of college teaching is Professor William B. Munro, of the California Institute of Technology. It is expected that a field agent will be appointed who will gather information under the supervision of the committee.

The grant which makes this investigation possible was made by the Carnegie Foundation.

EDUCATIONAL SURVEYS

Several surveys were inaugurated during 1931 which promise results of national interest. One of these is being carried on in North Carolina. The legislature of that state passed a law making the three state institutions of higher education into a single administrative unit. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the North Carolina College for Women at Greensboro, and the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering at Raleigh, like all separate state institutions, have developed their programs in such ways as to produce certain duplications. The state is attempting to eliminate wasteful duplications and promote efficiency by making all its institutions part of a well-conducted system.

The Carnegie Foundation has accepted the invitation of the governor of California to conduct a comprehensive survey of the two universities, the normal schools, and the public junior colleges of the state with a view to co-ordinating the activities of these several institutions.

The United States Office of Education has begun the survey of
The American Association of Dental Schools has for some years been discussing the desirability of organizing a general survey of dental education in the United States. Such a survey has been launched with the aid of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. The technical advisers are Floyd W. Reeves, of the University of Chicago, and W. W. Charters, of Ohio State University. The executive secretary of the survey is L. E. Blauch, of the North Carolina College for Women.

APPARENT OVERSUPPLY OF TEACHERS

In many of the larger centers of population there seems to be an oversupply of teachers. The Research Division of the National Education Association has made an elaborate study of this apparent oversupply and has reached the conclusion that a part, at least, of the surplus is due to the fact that states do not require school districts to employ trained persons as teachers. The most general statement contained in the report of the Research Division is the following.

Apparently, however, there was a surplus of persons with teaching licenses in 1929–30 in a number of the states. If the supply could be restricted to persons with two or more years of professional training, a teacher shortage would exist in many states. The soundest conclusion to this chapter is: State departments and other interested parties should get the facts before trying to deal with the "apparent" teacher surplus.