DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 937 CS 200 175

AUTHOR Moodie, Clara Lee
TITLE The Community College "Is" Where the Action Is!
INSTITUTION Central Michigan Univ., Mount Pleasant.
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Community Colleges; English Curriculum; *English Instruction; Higher Education; Internship Programs; *Masters Degrees; Program Descriptions; Research Proposals; *Teacher Education; Teachers

ABSTRACT

A masters program specifically designed to train community college English teachers is badly needed is the contention of this paper. The community college holds greater job potential for English majors, does not pressure for faculty publication, and is the only area of higher education for which growth is predicted in the next decade. A proposed master's program would contain graduate work in traditional English areas, professional training including an internship, and correlative work in cognate courses. Problems in implementing a master's program include the choice of director and students, selecting qualified instructors to teach and supervise the internship, and financing the internship. (RS)

The Community College Is Where the Action Is!

Clara Lee Moodie, Director
Community College English Program
Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

The most startling and important change in higher education in the past two decades has been the development of the community junior college. The growth of this institution since World War II has far exceeded its innovators' wildest dreams. Not only is the two-year college here to stay, but it is estimated that by the end of the decade of the seventies, fifty per cent of all undergraduate enrollment will be in two-year colleges. Joseph Cosand's study, Campus 1980, shows that the 1,013 community colleges teaching 1,900,000 students in 1969 must, by 1980, increase to a sufficient number of community colleges and technical institutions to accomodate 12,000,000 students. In fact, the Carnegie Commission has recommended that between 172 and 235 new community colleges be developed by the end of the decade.

The community college differs radically in philosophy, goals and emphasis from the concept of the university. It's "open-door policy," its service orientation toward the community, its emphasis on teaching and counseling, its concern with innovation and experimentation, and the establishment of a varied curricula as a response to all of this--these differentiate the community college as an educational concept from its big sister, the university. On the other hand, the community colleges in this country are handling in their enrollments anywhere from ten to fifty per cent of the university-bound students, and it is estimated that the number of transfer students coming out of the two-year institution will increase. Therefore, the community junior college holds a unique and important position in the hierarchy of higher education.

Because of the uniqueness of this institution, teaching in such a situation requires special abilities, a certain educational philosophy and a specialized training. No one is harder hit by these demands than the community college English teacher, for he, more than instructors in other

disciplines, is called upon to meet the multiplicity of demands found in the community college. Only the English instructor comes in contact with all the students. He must be able to adjust his courses and teaching to at least four distinct types of students: transfer students of proven academic ability; general students, of varying ability, seeking enrichment; technical/vocational students, often of low academic ability and few cultural/aesthetic interests; and disadvantaged students, of obvious educational inadequacy. One community college English teacher, Helen Morris, in the December, 1969 issue of College Composition and Communication, describes her classes as consisting of: "...recent graduates of small rural high schools pursuing associate degrees of Agri-Business or Secretarial Science, state university 'flunkees' still cherishing the notion they will become engineers; former G.I.'s, now Physical Education or Business Administration majors; housewives in their thirties intent on gaining a bachelor's degree in elementary education--students from eighteen to thirty-eight, with interests ranging from fine arts to forestry management, music to medicine" (p. 363).

At this time the only source of English teachers that the community college has is the graduate student holding a M.A. in English or a M.A.T. conferred by either the English department or the School of Education. The M.A. student, with a concentration of period literature courses, and maybe a course in advanced composition or linguistics, is being trained for research and scholarship. The usual M.A.T. programs are designed most specifically for the secondary teacher. This is not altogether bad, but there are two major drawbacks when such a program is modified for the community college teacher. One drawback is that in many programs only token courses are provided for the teacher who wishes to cope with the

specific challenges of the community college. The other drawback is perhaps less real but must be considered, and that is the defensiveness community colleges feel about being treated as post-high school institutions. What is needed is a master's program specifically designed to train community college teachers.

Some faculty question the need of a special M.A. program for the community colleges. As the job market tightens, Ph.D. graduates are turning more and more to the community college. Won't this represent a temptation to community college administrators to upgrade their faculties? Interestingly enough, the Ph.D. graduates are being passed over for M.A. graduates, and even B.A. graduates with Peace Corp or Vista backgrounds. Both the training and the commitment of the Ph.D. graduate is inimical to the community college. He is often not happy there; he does not fit in; and no community college wishes to be a way-station to the university.

Yet, educators justifiably question the creation of any additional graduate programs. However, many students with sociological ideals and a real commitment to teaching feel that the community college is "where the action is." The opportunity to experiment and innovate and the release from publication pressure is appealing to large numbers of young people. In addition, it looks as if the current "Ph.D. glut" will encourage many students to channel their graduate work specifically toward the two-year college, which certainly holds more job potentiality for English majors. According to the Carnegie Commission, the community college is the only area of higher education that will evidence significant growth in the next decade. The immediate picture suggests that there is more justification for teacher preparation programs at this level than at either the high school or college level.

Pressure is mounting nationally for programs which will realistically train graduate students for two year college teaching positions. Institutions all over the country are beginning to respond to this pressure. With these needs in mind, I should like to propose such a degree program.

Proposal

Consultation with various community colleges (around the State of Michigan) and research in the available literature suggest to me that such a program should have a three-part structure: graduate work in traditional English areas, professional training including an internship, and correlative work in cognate areas. The program would consist of thirty hours of graduate studies in English and six hours of collateral studies. First, the student would elect fifteen hours of work in traditional literature courses. Particularly appropriate are upper division American and world literature, comparative literature, and course work in linguistics and grammar. Such courses would be chosen with regard to the student's total English preparation, both undergraduate and graduate. This would comprise the traditional preparation.

The heart of the program, as I see it, is the fifteen hours of professional preparation, and the core of this training is a seminar in the two-year college. The purpose of this seminar should be to introduce students to the concept of the two-year college: the history, the sociology, the purposes and responsibilities of the community college. Special attention ought to be given to the nature of the community college student and what this implies for the teaching of English in the two-year college. Visitations and observation of English classes in near-by community colleges could be a vital part of the seminar. I see this course as the core of

the professional training because it provides the context and orientation for all the other professional courses. Thus, it should be taken in the student's first term of graduate work.

As a second element in the student's professional preparation, I would recommend a course in the teaching of English to speakers of other dialects. This course should develop within the prospective teacher an understanding of the variations in language usage he is likely to encounter in his teaching. He would experiment with some of the latest technological equipment and texts devised to cope with dialect differences. He should also be introduced to some of the techniques now being used to upgrade literacy levels with adults. Finally, the course should act as a synthesis of the student's training in grammar and linguistics and help him to make practical application of this knowledge to situations he will encounter in the community college.

Composition comprises at least fifty per cent of the English teaching load in the community college. Therefore, I would recommend that the third element in the student's professional preparation be training in the teaching of writing. Such a course should prepare a student to cope with different levels of writing, from basic literacy to technical writing to composition for transfer students. Differing methods of teaching composition, pre-writing strategies and a review of current research in composition would be a part of this course. The student should be introduced to the systems approach to instruction and have the experience of writing behavioral objectives. The opportunity to develop multi-media materials for the teaching of all communication courses should be provided. Finally, attention should be given to techniques of paper evaluation and the use of individual conference time.

In addition to these three courses, the student's professional training should include an internship. Each student should be required to teach one full semester in a cooperating community college under the supervision of the faculty of the community college and the university.

Besides his professional and traditional training, the student should have six hours of cognate work of which a course in developmental or remedial reading would be required. The most useful kind of reading course would provide experience in the diagnosis and treatment of individual reading problems. In such a course the student could learn to determine reading levels, to understand the meaning of reading expectancy, and to explore some of the causes of reading disabilities. He could study the role of the psycholinguistic abilities of perception, visual memory and attention span in reading. He should be introduced to the diagnostic instruments used to evaluate visual perception, visual memory, learning rate, auditory perception, attention span, reading comprehension, reading rate and vocabulary development. He ought to have the opportunity to construct, use and interpret informal reading inventories. As a final project of the course he could make a detailed and individual analysis of and recommend treatment for a college student with a reading handicap.

The program would also include three more cognate hours in history, sociology or psychology. Studies in Black or contemporary American history; in racial and cultural minorities or contemporary community structure; in learning theory or the problems of motivation--all would provide particularly appropriate preparation for the community college teacher.

Problems of Implementation

The academic problems in implementing a program as complex as this one, involving as it does both traditional and professional training, are

immense. Once a program is designed and the English faculty committed to it, then one must simultaneously establish relationships with surrounding community colleges and begin concerted recruitment of student and faculty. Both require discretion. No academic program can succeed unless the quality of its staff and product is high. A director must be selective as to who is admitted to the program. To begin with a modest enrollment and to expect to grow gradually seems a good procedure. Also, the director has to maintain the interest of the community college over the span of a year or more before the first interns emerge and the two-year colleges become actively involved in the program.

Obviously, the Director is the key appointment to the program. Such an individual must fulfill all the scholarly requirements of other members of the department and yet know the state of the discipline in the community college. During the years of implementation of the program, he should be given released time to establish liaison between the university and the cooperating two-year colleges, to work out with the unions the details of the internship, to establish guidelines for the professional language and writing courses, and to help with the recruitment of faculty for the program. Once the program is implemented, in addition to teaching in the program, such an appointment should involve academic counseling of students within the program, supervision of the internship program and maintenance of liaison with the community colleges.

Ideally a department should seek faculty who have had experience in the community college and who will keep abreast of the innovations in teaching technique at this level. An instructor should be able to confront students with the systems approach to instruction and to direct them in the writing of behavioral objectives. He should be interested

in developing multi-media materials for the teaching of both literature and communication courses. In the area of linguistics, the instructor should be able to take the theoretical knowledge of the linguistics and grammar courses and apply it to the community college situation. Perhaps a department should seek for this post faculty with training in the new areas of sociolinguistics and dialectology.

The internship is one of the most important ingredients in any graduate program designed to prepare teachers of English for the community college. A successful internship experience is also one of the most difficult elements of the program to design and implement. Organizing an internship involved three steps: definition, design and implementation.

Thus, defining what is meant by the term "intern" becomes the first step. Many institutions are engaged in providing students with some kind of practical experience in the classroom. The experiences range all the way from commuting to a near-by community college and team teaching a few hours a week to a semester of traditional "practice teaching." This is not interning. The concept of interning differs markedly from previous attempts at providing a teaching apprenticeship. Fundamental to the internship, as the name implies, is the experience of <u>total immersion</u> in the community college. The intern leaves the university community and enters the community of the two-year college where he has <u>full</u> responsibility for two classes of English and for which he receives a small remuneration. In essence, he becomes a part-time instructor in the community college, an approach that differs radically from practice teaching. However, unlike the part-time instructor, the intern's semester in the community college is designed to be a rich educational experience. The intern is assigned to a master teacher who will assume the responsibility, in cooperation

with the director of the university program, for planning this experience for the intern. The university also grants six hours of graduate credit for the internship.

The problem in designing such an experience for the student is to insure a rich and full day's activities at the community college. First, the student should have full responsibility for two classes with all the attendant obligations of preparation and evaluation. Also, in connection with these classes, he should have office hours and the experience of counseling students on a one-to-one basis. A second activity for the intern should be the opportunity to engage in tutorial work. Many community college students whom the English teacher will encounter will have language handicaps. His university training should have prepared him to cope with some of these problems, and his internship should give him the opportunity to apply the understandings he has developed at the university. More and more community colleges are handling students with language deficiencies in self-instructional laboratories. The opportunity to work in such a laboratory and to become familiar with the self-instructional systems approach can be invaluable to the intern.

Third, the intern should audit a community college English course, entering fully into all the assignments and activities of the course. This provides him not only with the opportunity to observe a skillful teacher over an extended period of time, but also with a perception of what it is to be a community college student sitting in a community college classroom. In addition, the intern should follow a planned schedule of observations of teachers throughout his semester of internship. These observations need not be limited to teachers of English. The opportunity to observe a gifted teacher operating successfully in the classroom,

regardless of the subject matter, can only heighten the intern's perception of what constitutes good teaching.

Finally, the intern should be involved in committee work appropriate to his status, attend faculty meetings and participate as fully as possible in the cultural life of the community college. One of the essentials of such an internship is to place the student in a community college far enough from the university campus so that he cannot commute on a daily basis. He is far more likely to enter fully into the life of the community college if he has had to take up residence there for one semester.

It must be readily apparent that implementing such an internship presents a real challenge. There must be cooperation between the community college and the university if problems of communication and evaluation are to be resolved. Moreover, a financial commitment is involved. The key figure in this relationship is the community college supervisor. He performs three vital functions. First, he plans the intern's experiences. It is he who makes the arrangements for auditing, for tutoring and for observing, and the intern and university director must rely on his judgment. Secondly, he serves as the intern's guide and mentor, discussing lesson plans, observing and commenting constructively on the intern's teaching ability and serving as advisor when the intern seeks help with problems that arise in any aspect of his work. Finally, the supervisor evaluates the intern's performance. He must observe the intern teaching frequently enough to be able to pass judgment on his abilities.

Of course, the university is granting six hours of graduate credit for the semester of internship. Therefore the university director must be involved in the evaluation process and have some control over the quality of the internship. With several interns placed in various

locations, this can become a problem. However, a series of carefully planned conferences and the use of written communication and visitations can insure a continuing dialogue with both the intern and the community college supervisor. At an initial conference at the beginning of the semester, the director, supervisors and interns should establish the goals and activities of the internship and set the criteria of evaluation. At a conference with just the interns half way through the semester, the director would have the opportunity to discuss freely with his students any problems arising in the course of the internship. At a third conference with just the supervisors at the close of the semester, the intern's performance could be evaluated. The director's contact with the intern should be supplemented by a weekly journal in which the intern describes his experiences and his observations about these experiences. Also, the director should plan at least one visit to the community college in order to observe the intern for himself. In addition, a monthly progress report from the supervisor helps when the time comes to evaluate the intern's performance.

The community college is certainly under no obligation to help the university prepare its students. However, the success of the internship is absolutely dependent on the community college's willingness to provide these kinds of opportunities for the student, and specifically dependent on the supervisor's willingness to assume a large measure of responsibility for the intern's experience. The internship must be attractive to the community college, and there must be adequate remuneration to the supervisor for his efforts. The most feasible plan is to pay the student a small stipend and the supervisor an honorarium based on the college's standard salary for a part-time teacher. Whatever salary would be paid

to a temporary instructor for teaching one class for one semester could be paid to the intern in the form of a stipend, and this would help to defray some of the expenses involved in relocating during the internship. The same sum, the equivalent salary for teaching the second class, could be directed to the supervisor in the form of a paid honorarium or in the form of released time from one class.

This financial arrangement has several advantages. It keeps the handling of funds an internal matter within the community college. This allows the college to remunerate the supervisor either in actual dollars or in released time. It also eliminates any possibility of precedents for the university that is also engaged in teacher training at other levels. Finally and most importantly, it removes the necessity of the university establishing an arbitrary sum which might not reflect union demands in the various community colleges and which would be subject to review and possible cancellation by some budgetary committee each year.

Such an internship as this has much to recommend it. First, it meets the guidelines for graduate study set by the regional committee of the N.C.T.E. on English in the Two-Year College. Second, it involves a minimum of additional expense for both the university and the community college. Third, it provides the necessary apparatus for making the internship a truly educational experience. Finally, and above all else, it is a realistic and practical program for preparing teacher of English for the community college.

Many of the most exciting developments in teaching techniques, the most innovative curriculum designs and the most successful student/teacher relationships are coming out of the community college. Certainly it would behoove four-year institutions with a teacher training orientation to look beyond public school programs. Not only do the community

colleges deserve the attention and support of graduate faculties because of the unique social and academic services they perform, but also, as the market for traditional English majors dwindles, English faculties must broaden their prospective to include more diversified degree programs. The community college is where the action is.