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AUTHOR Rice, Marion J.
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ABSTRACT

In the 60's in response to the social studies curriculum reform movement two demands on the training of elementary school teachers were evident: (1) more instruction in the parent social sciences, and (2) more pointed attention to the development of inquiry processes in the various fields. In response, the University of Georgia initiated a double major of education and a teaching field and introduced specialized methods courses, where previously such courses were offered by a generalist. Ten years later the hours available to social science courses had actually declined because of increments in professional education, and a review of course work indicated that not one student in the sample of 23 elementary education graduates had taken an upper division social science course. This case study points up the need to face these topics: the scope of elementary education, the emphasis on field-based experience, and the subject competency. By limiting the scope of elementary education from 1-7, as it is in Georgia, to K-2, 3-5, 6-8, or similar segments, it would be possible to gear teacher training curriculum more specifically to the cognitive needs of a particular age group thus insuring more precise teacher preparation. (JH)

SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE TRAINING OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

by

Marion J. Rice, Professor
Social Science Education
University of Georgia

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One of the assumptions of social studies curriculum reform in the 1960s was the need to include more of the basic content of the social sciences in the social studies in the elementary grades. Jarolimek best expressed this point of view when he charged that the social studies were "starved" from the lack of basic social science content and conceptual structures. Despite differences in content, single disciplinary as with the Georgia Anthropology Curriculum Project or MANCOS of EDC, multidisciplinary as with the Minnesota Social Studies Project, or using a core approach with supporting disciplines, as with the Senesh or Providence materials, these Projects shared a common concern--to make the conceptual structures of the social sciences more explicit through appropriate content. A sincere attempt was made to bring to the social studies at the elementary level more of the hard knowledge and insights of the social sciences.

At the same time, the increase in cognitive content was accompanied by an updating of the Dewey-Kilpatrick activity-problem solving mode under the name of inquiry. Despite differences in theoretical conceptualization, the universal methodology of the new social studies might be described as inquiry, whether of the Taba or Fenton variety. In fact, one methodological contribution of the 1960s was the translation of the Dewey problem-solving paradigm, based on the recognition of a "real" problem, to the more theoretical and abstract problems encountered in the use of school-contrived data and evidence.

It was recognized by the Projects, if not by the publishers when they later produced commercial versions of many of the products, that the inquiry mode placed a greater responsibility on the teacher for the quality of classroom discourse. Bloom's taxonomy, as well as evaluation specifications such as those of Ebel, invited serious attention to the quality of teacher questions, whether given verbally or in writing. To question, to probe, to extend and sharpen the cognitive processes, and to guide the inferential learning of children required a new orientation in lesson objectives as well as tests. To help children go beyond recall questions and engage in analysis, synthesis, inference, and evaluation required teachers to lift their cognitive sights.

From the emphasis on more social science content and a methodology which was assumed to require the utilization of more complex intellectual processes derived the belief that the elementary teacher would require (a) more instruction in the parent social sciences and (b) more pointed attention to the development of inquiry processes in the various fields. What was the reaction to these two demands? I do not have data for the country in general, and will use the elementary program at the University of Georgia as a case study.

In the mid-60s, the elementary education program at the University of Georgia required 35 hours in history and the social sciences and permitted 30 hours in electives. In response to the need for more content in the various subject fields, the Elementary Education Department in 1965 authorized what was described in the catalogue as a double major: a general education major and a teaching field major. The general education major consisted of the usual professional content courses found in most elementary programs--art, music, physical education, health, reading, children's literature, and mathematics for the elementary teacher. It was proposed to use the electives to give added subject matter competency in one or two teaching fields, such as mathematics and science, language arts and social studies, social studies and science, or some other combination which would permit teachers in elementary schools to have additional subject matter training beyond the junior college level, a program of general rather than professional training. It was also thought that this method of preparation would better prepare teachers to work in teaching teams, where the combination of teachers who had different subject strengths might contribute to a higher level of competency.

A parallel change was the introduction of specialized methods courses in language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies, taught by specialists in these areas. Previously, methods courses had been offered by a generalist, and it was thought that a division of labor in teaching the methods courses would permit more appropriate methodological training related to the subject area.

What was the reality, in contrast to the theory? The first reality is that the University of Georgia receives over half of its graduates as transfer students, mainly from other colleges within the University system. Courses taken at the lower division level frequently do not reflect progress toward a total program, but often a smattering of courses which, within the limitations of a four-year program, must be accommodated as "electives" without extending the total time in a program of study. The second reality appears to be that elementary advisers did not take seriously the recommendation to use electives to develop subject matter competency. Students and advisers used the electives, willy-nilly, and did not use the 30 hours to develop any kind of subject competency in depth. This was equally true of native as well as transfer students. Thus while the opportunity existed to develop subject competency, it was seldom exercised.

It is now the year 1973. Where do we stand at the University of Georgia in social studies training within the general elementary program?

The current elementary education program stipulates a minimum of 30 hours in the social sciences, 15 hours of which must consist of a five-quarter-hour course in American Government (which may be exempted by examination), 5 hours in American history (which may be exempted by examination), and 5 hours in cultural geography. The remaining 15 hours may be in any social science. The program allows 15 hours in electives.

In June 1973, 234 teachers were graduated from the University of Georgia with a major in elementary education. A random sample of the folders of 23 graduates was pulled, and their social science courses tabulated, as shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1

Sample of 23 Graduating Seniors in Elementary Education, June 1973; Distribution of Social Science Courses

	Frequency	Percent
Anthropology	7	30
Economics	2	9
Geography	22	96
American History	22	96
World History	16	70
Political Science	22	96
Philosophy	1	4
Psychology	20	87
Sociology	18	78
Social Science (multidisciplinary)	4	17
Range in hours	25-40	
Mean in hours (six courses)	30	

Table I indicates the following:

In quarter hours, the low ranged from 25 hours (5 courses) to a high of 40 (8 courses). In cases where the student had less than the minimum of 30 hours, usually be exemption, some other course related to the social sciences, but not classified by the Georgia State Department of Education as one for certification purposes, had been substituted. No student had a program in which electives had been used to establish a teaching field concentration in social studies. In fact, the great dispersion of courses listed under "electives" in programs of study would indicate that neither the prospective elementary teacher nor elementary advisers are committed to the use of electives to extend subject competency. Rather, electives are used as a means of including a variety of courses in an approved program, for native as well as transfer students. In this respect, the situation has not changed from the mid-60s.

The most frequently taken course was Political Science 101, American Government, required of students who do not pass the statutory examinations in the constitutions of the United States and Georgia. All except one of the students in the sample had taken POL 101. All except one student had a course in American history, but only six students, about 25 percent of the sample, had both courses in the sequence which gives a survey of the total chronological scope of American history. The next most frequently taken course was Geography 101, taken by all except one students in the sample. The frequency of these courses relates, of course, to the specific course requirement in the program.

Psychology 101, an introductory course, was taken by all except three students. In the College of Education, this course is highly recommended, if not required, in most education programs. A course in world history was taken by all except seven students, but only one-third of the sample had the two-quarter survey in the history of western civilization. The other common course was introductory sociology, taken by 80 percent of the students; in contrast, cultural anthropology was taken by only one-third of the students. One multidisciplinary course, Social Science 104, Contemporary Georgia, was taken by four students, one-sixth of the sample.

In reviewing Table I, economics and philosophy are striking by their absence. No native elementary major took work in these departments. One transfer student had ten hours of work in economics; one transfer student had an introductory philosophy course.

Another striking fact about these programs is the absence of any advanced work in social science. Not one student in the sample had an upper division course. Five students took a second course in lower division sociology, four of whom selected a course in family development.

Ten years after the inauguration of "Project Social Studies," where do we stand? There has been an actual loss in opportunity to take social science courses. The number of hours theoretically available had been

reduced from 65 to 45. Twenty hours, which formerly could have been devoted to the development of subject competence in social science have been absorbed by increments in professional education: an additional required reading course, an early field experience, an increase in mathematics education, an endorsed course in educational media, and an increment here and there, as in music. As a matter of fact, however, there has probably been little change--a reduction from 35 required hours to 30 required hours.

This case study in training in social science education at the University of Georgia is not intended to denigrate the elementary program. While I do not have concrete data, I suspect that most of the elementary programs in the country are much like it. This case study does point up, however, several issues which the professional community has not yet faced. Among these are (1) the scope of elementary certification; (2) the emphasis on field-based experiences, and (3) subject competency.

The scope of elementary certification. In Georgia, elementary teachers are certified to teach all subjects in grades 1-7. Any elementary consideration of principles of developmental psychology indicate that the child in the upper elementary grades requires different kinds of cognitive experiences than the beginner in school. While there are different taxonomies to describe the interaction of maturation and learning in the progressive development of the child, it has been recognized since the time of Comenius that ability of children to practice more abstract and formal thought develops with their age-grade progress in school. Since children vary in psychological maturity, there is no one age at which children display more complex and abstract intellectual processes. By the time many children enter the fifth grade, many children begin to display these characteristics, according to the Piagetian schema.

Another practical distinction is in the type of learning tasks children face in school. The beginning pupil everywhere is faced with the major tasks of learning to read, write, and number. Notwithstanding the many experiences in which primary children engage, the ones basic to their ability to receive and process information in school appear to remain the three R's. Practical pedagogy, as well as theories of child development and research into conceptualization and information processing, seem to indicate that any training program based upon training teachers for grades 1-7 certification is an intolerable archaicism, and lingers on with us under the dead weight of inertia and tradition, a design more compatible with the one-room, one-teacher school house than with the large, consolidated elementary schools of today.

I have long advocated, with no success, training programs based upon three-year cycles, K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11 or 9-12. This would permit the training of teachers more in accordance with the functional tasks they must perform in school, as well take into account the growth in psychological capabilities of the learner. The primary training program would be much like the present elementary programs, but with additional emphasis on teacher

competency in reading, language development, and computation. The upper elementary would begin to bridge what would be essentially a primary reading school to an information processing school. Here teachers should have training in subject competency in at least two broad fields, such as natural science and social science, or language arts and social science. In the middle or junior high school, the teacher should receive intensive training in a broad field, such as natural science or social science, and serve as a broad subject specialist, whether the courses are offered on a departmentalized, team, or open classroom basis. Even in the upper elementary, social studies instruction should take place in social science laboratories, rooms specifically designed to provide the teacher with the requisite learning aids and materials which are seldom if ever found in the self-contained classroom. High school preparation should focus, as now, on a distribution of core subjects, and a major.

Whether we are talking about social science, natural science, or some other field, unless these major modifications are made we will continue to condemn elementary teachers to try to be an Encyclopedist. It is my recollection that even Diderot was aided in his endeavors by other savants.

Field-based experiences. The movement toward competency based instruction has revived the vogue of school based experiences. In this respect, it is interesting to note that in our college we are reinstituting many arrangements as "innovations" which were standard in the early 1960s long before we heard of Triple T, portal schools, accountability, and similar "innovations." There are a number of problems with field based experiences. First of all, there is a good deal of enthusiasm among the aficionados and much favorable testimony, but little hard data that the measurable competency of the product of field based experiences is superior to the traditional lecture-observation courses followed by student teaching. Second, the time demands on faculty are greater than conventional instruction. Third, the student demands more credit hours for extra time input. Where do the credit hours come from? They come from the time given to subject matter instruction? A fourth difficulty is that students are frequently involved in field based experiences with a minimum of theory and practice in the theory using simulated teaching conditions before application. Even when students are concentrated in one or two schools, dispersal in the ratio of one intern to a teacher allows for only episodic supervision by the college teacher. And, with the emphasis on working with children, what happens to the real internalization of theory and method?

Because our elementary social science methods courses are taught by specialists, the methods course in the past has served not only as an introduction to methodology, but as a seminar in which the instructor has tried to rationally unite methodology and content. The movement toward field based experiences, in which we are now involved in our Department, has raised many questions. We have thus far not come to grips with appropriate ways of getting adequate feedback for evaluation. We are concerned, however, that the shift in emphasis to doing is not accompanied

by a substantial loss in philosophical and psychological learning. The practicing teacher perhaps of necessity must be an episodic empiricist. There appears to be a real danger that the current emphasis on field-based experiences may exaggerate rather than mitigate this tendency.

Subject competency. Subject matter competency is perhaps more a matter of intellectuality and sensitivity than number of courses, and the ability to teach is not necessarily a function of the number of courses in a subject. Our own research in the Anthropology Curriculum Project has indicated that training in anthropology did not automatically bring about greater increments in pupil learning in anthropology of pupils taught by "trained" as compared with "untrained" elementary teachers. The converse does not necessarily follow, however, that untrained teachers are ipso facto better than trained teachers. Studies of teacher competency from Barr to Ryans indicate that intellectuality, as indicated by knowledge of subject matter or interest in science and scientific matters, are traits of high as compared to poorly rated teachers. In the Geography Curriculum Project, Imperatore, in an ingenious study of teacher traits associated with pupil achievement in geography, was able to identify that preparation in geography was positively related to interest in geography, teacher perception of the suitability of the kindergarten material, and hence to pupil achievement. I still prefer to follow the maxim that "knowledge is power," and to believe that while the presence of knowledge of subject matter does not guarantee excellence in teaching, the lack of knowledge is almost certain to assure poor teaching. Even the advocates of process learning, such as Bruner and Fenton, specifically recognize the importance of previous knowledge before a student can engage in meaningful inquiry. It seems that no less applies to teachers.

In conceptualizing idealized programs of social science concentration for the elementary teacher, it appears that the task of adequate subject matter training is insuperable as long as the elementary teacher is a generalist. It is generally recognized that the area of history and the social sciences can be divided into about nine clearly distinct areas. Notwithstanding all the years of talk about multi- or interdisciplinary programs, the hard fact remains that social scientists have not yet developed comprehensive, integrated programs that can be used as a basis for teacher training. And there is real doubt as to its possibility--surveys or compilations, yes. They were popular in the 30s. But a real synthesis? A juxtaposition,is not an integration, although such a concurrence of subject matter is often so labeled.

At Georgia, for example, if all the hours now required in social science plus electives were used for social science courses, the total would be only 45.hours. To give one introductory course in each social science area, and two courses in the two major history areas, requires a total of 55 hours. And the prospective elementary major would not have had any work in depth in any field. His exposure would still be at the elementary level. But would this not be better than 30 hours, which he now gets?

He could have more extensive work in history, and more work in the behavioral sciences. This level of preparation, with some adjustment for another broad field, might be suitable for teachers of grades 3-5. But for teachers of grades 6-8, some exploration in upper division courses seems a necessary base for subject competency, perhaps with the addition of two "minors" or a "mini-major" of 15 hours each in advanced history, economics, geography, or a behavioral science.

Another alternative, which we will introduce at the senior high school level of certification in 1974, is the area major as an alternative to the subject major. While geographically limited in scope, it will provide teachers with an opportunity to explore a diversity of social science subjects in upper division offerings. A middle grade social studies team which could pull on the resources of four or five social studies teachers, each with a different area major, e.g., American studies, Latin American, European, and Asian, would have a basis for multidisciplinary teaching which is not now available.

Conclusion. When faced with the problem of incorporating additional subject matter and specialized methods training in any field into the elementary program, we often find that the conventional requirements and certification scope preclude any real changes. A course is added here and dropped there, but no substantial modification is brought about. C'est plus change, c'est plus la meme chose.

It is my recommendation that programs of certification be broken down into a much narrower grade span, so that they can be adapted to progressively higher levels of specialization. Until that is done, I believe we will still find a great gap between our curriculum content and methodological demands, and the competency of the teachers to carry them out. This is not so much a teacher deficiency, as it is the result of archaic training programs. The curriculum reform of the 1960s tried to deliver a jet-age curriculum. The institutions training elementary teachers met it with a Model-T, a normal school curriculum superimposed upon a two-year program of general education. And that curriculum can't deliver the curriculum knowledge and competencies needed to teach for the present or for the future.