



A Need for Teacher Emancipation

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With the emergence of the community school, there is felt an urgent need of re-stressing the important role of the teacher. Her part in this bold, new program of community improvement cannot be gainsaid. There can be no overlooking the fact that she must now fit in as the hub of many an educational activity with the ultimate aim of changing the community for the better. And to fit in that role the teacher should be freed from the atmosphere of restraint bordering on fear which surrounds her—a teacher whose personality and dynamic leadership must be felt everywhere in the community.

This task of community improvement is not a direct job of the administrators and supervisors. They plan, yes; and make suggestions, to be sure. Neither can we depend upon our town officials alone. We need not point to the existence of the same rural conditions as now obtain beginning from the time of Magellan, to point to the miserable failure of previous efforts to improve living standards.

The teacher is the remaining hope in improving, or rather, in helping improve the community. On his frail shoulders falls the gigantic task of lifting the rural community from the morass of filth and darkness.

This new program calls, indeed, for a kind of responsibility heretofore unknown to the teacher. There is no need to stress the fact

that to carry this program effectively, the teacher must be given more leeway to insure a more broadened outlook upon education itself.

No more is the time when she would think that her work is confined to the child within the four walls of the classroom. This view is the old traditional teaching, with emphasis on the acquisition of subject matter. This is no longer valid if our aim is to effect improvement upon the community. The time has come when the teacher has to look far beyond the four walls of the classroom to carry out education's ultimate ends. How can community life be improved when after acquiring the verbalistic learning in the classroom, the child goes home only to revert to the same old undesirable ways his folks at home have been accustomed to for years? How can the child be expected to carry over to the home the outcomes of school instruction, when, the moment he steps out of the school premises, he is again thrown helplessly into the fast grip of a backward community?

With this changed concept of education, the teacher's scope of work and sphere of activity are greatly widened. This needs a teacher who would not hesitate to take her class out into the community if she thinks that such procedure would make the children aware of the community's needs and problems thereby helping them become better citi-

zens. Furthermore, she must be a teacher who can enrich the course of study, not just merely follow it slavishly, or can participate actively in stimulating a sleeping community to strive for better living conditions. These presuppose more freedom on the part of the teacher in carrying out her program of activities.

The other approach to community improvement, which is through the child and the curriculum, demands integrated classroom procedures which are radical departures from meticulous observance of time allotments and courses of study. Indeed, the program must be flexible enough to give the teacher ample opportunity to organize and carry out units of activity. Where before she was concerned with the imparting of "minimum essentials" and the fulfillment of "minimum requirements" for fear that her class might be tested by the supervisor, now she works with a definite goal in mind—the development of sound, well-integrated personalities which will take their proper places in the community where they live.

The teacher, then, must be emancipated. She will not be just a mere cog in the vast educational machine. In her hands lies the magic wand that will tap the vast resources of the adults, kneading them and pooling them together for the ultimate improvement of the community.

What is the nature of the teacher's emancipation. First, the teacher should shake herself free from the seemingly inextricable bonds she has found herself shackled with. She seems helpless, un-creative, machinelike. Her life, after years of routinized work, has become a set pattern. She may possibly be aware of the po-

tential effectiveness of this new program, but she finds it simply impossible to change her old ways. She finds it impossible to surrender her easy old ways and to adjust herself to the demands of this new concept. "Bside," she rationalizes, "have not the 'old methods' she has been using for years turned out professionals whom the community can well be proud of?"

But how can this teacher implement the new concepts of teaching when she herself is a virtual prisoner within that shell of conservatism? How can she ever form a broadened view of life when hers is the mind of the colonial, the subservient, and the fearful? Whether she likes it or not, she must change. She must free herself from the grip of this inner bondage. Only then can we expect the democratic principles underlying the community school program to be implemented by a teacher with a well-rounded personality, free from the usual inhibitions imposed upon the majority of teachers.

This inner change—this emancipation from within—is not enough. The teacher would still find herself powerless. What with administrative rules and regulations interpreted rigidly by narrow-minded and autocratic administrators! There is an urgent need for a more liberal and democratic type of supervision. Without this, and the fact that her "superiors" put too many restrictions upon her freedom, the teacher would find only disappointment and frustration awaiting her when she realizes that she can not put to practice what she has learned about the New Education.

Unmindful of the sacrifice she
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