

FOR THE STUDENTS:

Educational Workshop at Work

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If an airplane pilot having trouble with his ship were to bring it down on a field near a large aeronautics laboratory where a corps of designers and specialists were advising and directing other pilots with similar difficulties, he would stand an excellent chance of finding out what was wrong with his plane and getting it fixed. A very similar set-up is the educational workshop in America to which teachers and administrators can bring their technical problems and work out a solution under expert guidance while enjoying the advantages of superior library facilities and the counsel of fellow educators with like problem.

Workshops originated in the United States shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and their purpose was the solution of the perennial problems that puzzle educators. Undoubtedly, however, they are the best of all devices so far developed for overcoming such difficulties of the postwar period as the adaptation of old programs to new needs, swollen enrollments, housing and classroom shortages. They were humming all over the country this past summer.

It was the Progressive Education Association that in 1936 first applied the term "workshop" to a special kind of summer educational study. At the present time considerably more than 100 such workshops are in operation. They exist on the elementary, secondary and college levels. Some are purely local and are planned by city school systems, as in Philadelphia. Some are sponsored by such national organizations as the American Council on Education and the Teacher Education Commission or by regional associations like the North Central Association of

Colleges and Secondary Schools. Some are organized by universities. They are designed for practically every phase of education. In August the University of Chicago held a workshop in the humanities; Syracuse University scheduled one in student personnel work; the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota, prepared for workshop in the social sciences. Some workshop last six weeks, some for only ten days.

In spite of their great diversity, workshops have certain qualities in common that distinguish them sharply from the older educational institutes, conferences and summer sessions. In advanced vocational education they are the counterpart of the seminar that is typical of graduate study. Their essential purpose is to meet the individual needs of the participants. The troubled educator brings his practical problems to the group and is informally assisted in his search for a solution by the coordinators or advisers and by the other workshopers. The details of the program are not set except in broad outline but, as the problems presented are discussed and solutions found, the program takes shape.

Experience during the past ten years shows that workshopers have received the greatest help from the expert advisers the workshop makes available for consultation; but much of the success of the plan is due also to the pooling of experience with fellow educators and the suggestions they offer.

More workshopers find it helpful to keep a diary or log of activities. These logs are a record of new plans to meet

changes in evaluation and modifications of policy to improve educational procedure. They are usually developed into reports to be made to colleagues who have not participated in the workshop, and these reports are the beginning of the follow-up that is essential to the full effectiveness and complete success of the workshop.

The follow-up is carried on in monthly or bi-weekly faculty meetings. The North Central Workshop in Higher Education sends one of its coordinators to confer with and advise both faculty and students in its enrolled colleges and to participate in the discussions of a faculty meeting during the school year. It receives reports of progress made in follow-up activities of its members.

This past summer a College Workshop on Organization and Administration was held at the Catholic University of America under the direction of Dr. Roy J. Deferrari, Secretary General of the University. All the important phases of college administration were ably presented by the staff and studied by the workshopers in a stimulating if not exhaustive way, and the rich resources of the university were placed unreservedly at the service of the ninety-four participants, who represented about sixty colleges. The greater majority of the colleges represented were women's colleges.

An unusually large staff of twenty-six lecturers and consultants, one-half of them members of the university faculty and one-half from other institutions, formally discussed college administration and gave unstintingly of their time in seminars and private interviews. Seminars

were conducted in statutes, duties of administrative officers and departmental organization; the organization and development of the faculty; the curriculum and programs of concentration; instruction; personnel and guidance problems; and the college catalog. Workshopers were not permitted to enrol for more than one seminar.

Educational workshops are new, and their form is not set. Like other workshops they are organized according to the job they have to do, and no two are alike. They will keep on changing as new problems arise. The time may come when carefully selected students will be called in to advise workshopers as to what they want and how they want it, when recent graduates will be asked what they most regret having missed, and when people who employ college graduates will be consulted as to the deficiencies of college education and as to how those deficiencies may be remedied.

Besides the pressing problems created by the advent of thousands of veterans to the campuses since the end of the war, many other difficulties of a more permanent nature were being studied in the college workshops this past summer. The new plans developed in a number of the universities during the war years, and recently reported, give rise to countless questions — the proper place and character of general education, the most promising curricular developments, the best kind of organization for an effective student-personnel program, what standardized tests to use and how to interpret them, how extra-curricular activities can be better integrated with formal education, and many other problems which are now occupying the attention of workshopers.