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ABSTRACT

The aim of this 1970 investigation was to analyze the professional education of Indiana's intermediate school teachers. This analysis involved a comparison of the data collected from middle and junior high school teachers. Results obtained from the junior high school teachers were also utilized in a second comparison with the findings from a similar study of Indiana's junior high school teachers in 1959. Data were collected from 199 middle and 289 junior high school teachers in 44 selected intermediate schools throughout the State of Indiana. Interviews were conducted with five middle and five junior high school principals. Findings indicate that there are no major identifiable differences between the professional preparation of today's junior high school teachers and that of 10 years ago. The professional preparation of middle and junior high school teachers in Indiana is quite similar, usually with an emphasis on the senior high school. This preparation generally lacks two important elements: course work in counseling and guidance and student teaching in either a middle or junior high school. In-service college classes specifically related to the junior high school are no more frequently a part of the junior high school teacher's in-service activities than they were 10 years ago, and middle school teachers are no more involved in in-service activities than are their junior high school counterparts. The paper concludes with various recommendations for the preparation of intermediate school teachers. (DDO)

TEACHER EDUCATION
FOR THE
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STAFF

James R. Stainbrook, Jr.

Introduction

The education of any teacher must, of course, be viewed as more comprehensive and inclusive than simply those courses labeled as "professional education" and offered by a department or school of education. Nevertheless, this fact in no way depreciates the value of course work in those "education" classes commonly considered as constituting the professional preparation or teacher education of the aspirant teacher. Gruhn has observed, for example, that "...professional preparation is fully as important as training in subject areas." (6, p. 364) Few educators would disagree with this premise.

One of the major problems for the junior high school has frequently been the lack of well-trained teachers especially prepared for and dedicated to working on the junior high school level. A popular textbook dealing with the junior high school states this particular difficulty very succinctly:

Perhaps the most serious obstacle to the educational development of the junior high school has been the lack of teachers specifically prepared for work at this level. This long-standing and all-too-general problem has elicited such labels as "the

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blind-spot in teacher education" and "the forgotten teaching area." (10, p. 49)

With an ever-growing number of developing middle schools and their advocates, there appears to be little diminution of the problem inherent in staffing the intermediate school with well-qualified faculties. The chief proponents of the middle school have, in fact, already taken note of the need for better prepared teachers: "Present teacher education programs are slanted toward preparation for teaching in the elementary or secondary program." (1, p. 19) Southworth in an article entitled "Teacher Education for the Middle School" reminded his reader:

If ever a new program is needed to replace the junior high school, there will need to be both teacher training support and teacher personnel involvement to maintain and refine a new pattern adequately. (7, p. 123)

Such statements as the above evidence a real need for attention and study to be given to the question of teacher education programs for the intermediate school--whether it be called a "junior high school" or a "middle school." Needless to add, this is just as true in the state of Indiana as it is elsewhere in the nation. Acting on this assumption, the present writer undertook just such a study in 1970. (8)

The Problem

The aim of this investigation was to analyze the professional education of Indiana's intermediate school teachers.

This analysis involved a comparison of the data collected from middle and junior high school teachers. Results obtained from the junior high school teachers were also utilized in a second comparison with the findings from a similar study of Indiana's junior high school teachers in 1959. (9)

Procedures

A revised form of the 1959 questionnaire was used in the study to collect data from 199 middle and 289 junior high school teachers in 44 selected intermediate schools throughout the state of Indiana. Analysis of the data included the use of frequency tables, rank order, percentages, and chi-square. Interviews were conducted with five middle and five junior high school principals.

Results

Most of both the middle and junior high school teachers had had some school level emphasis other than that of the intermediate school in their pre-service preparation. The same was true for junior high school teachers in 1959. Still, the highest percentages of today's junior high school teachers, as well as those of 1959, evaluating their pre-service preparation as highly valuable were those teachers having had a junior high school emphasis in that preparation.

In the case of the middle school teachers, however, those having had an elementary emphasis in their pre-service preparation had the highest percentage of those rating their preparation as highly valuable. Nevertheless, the middle school teachers did rate preparation with a junior high school emphasis more highly than that with a secondary school emphasis.

At least 74 percent of the middle school teachers and 62 percent of the junior high school teachers had not done any of their student teaching in a middle or junior high school. Yet, the highest percentages of both middle and junior high school teachers describing their student teaching experience as highly valuable were those few who had student taught in a junior high school. Almost one-half of both the middle and junior high school teachers had had no course work in counseling and guidance.

Although both middle and junior high school teachers having taken in-service courses dealing with the junior high school reported that they found such courses to be of more value than did those having taken professional education courses with some other level of emphasis, only about 25 percent of the junior high school and slightly less than 25 percent of the middle school teachers indicated that they had had such courses. A similar finding was reported in 1959.

The percentages of middle and junior high school

teachers appraising a special curriculum for the professional preparation of intermediate school teachers as helpful were 91.4 and 87.1 percent respectively. All three groups of teachers ranked in the same order three prerequisites as most important for good teaching as follows: thorough preparation in subject areas; basic understanding of the young adolescent; and basic understanding of individual differences in the social, emotional, mental, and physical development of young adolescents.

Conclusions

Some conclusions based on the above findings were as follows:

1. No major identifiable differences exist between the professional preparation of today's junior high school teachers and those of 10 years ago.
2. The professional preparation of middle and junior high school teachers in Indiana is quite similar, usually with an emphasis on the senior high school.
3. There is substantial agreement among the middle school teachers, junior high school teachers, and the principals of both school units that special curricula specifically oriented towards the preparation of intermediate school teachers would be of value.
4. Two important gaps in the professional preparation of Indiana's intermediate school teachers are evidenced

by a lack of course work in counseling and guidance and by a lack of student teaching in either a middle or junior high school.

5. In-service college classes specifically related to the junior high school are no more frequently a part of the junior high school teacher's in-service activities than they were 10 years ago.

6. Middle school teachers are not any more involved in in-service activities than are their junior high school counterparts.

Recommendations

From the data collected in this study, their analysis, and subsequent conclusions as outlined above, there are certain implications which appear to warrant several recommendations:

1. In-service education activities oriented specifically towards the middle and/or junior high school should be encouraged for all intermediate school teachers and especially for the younger and/or less experienced faculty members.

2. Both middle and junior high schools should have their own individually organized in-service education programs which deal with the specific needs of those teaching in the intermediate schools.

3. Both middle and junior high schools should have some organized orientation program for new staff members.

4. For intermediate school teachers, especially those in the middle schools, in-service activities and instructional leadership by the school principal should include an effort to inculcate pride in and dedication to teaching in the intermediate school unit.

5. The entire area of teacher licensing should be re-examined in order to provide appropriate certification options reflecting the necessary and desirable training for those who are to teach in the middle school with its inclusion of the sixth grade and various degrees of departmentalization.

6. In specific courses or at least as a part of the overall professional education of intermediate school teachers, understandings of and skills in counseling and guidance should be developed to at least some degree in order that the intermediate school teacher may contribute effectively in some way to the guidance function.

7. Teachers certified to teach in either the middle or junior high school should have done at least a part of their student teaching in an intermediate school.

8. College courses dealing with the intermediate school and teaching at this school level should be widely publicized among the middle and junior high school teachers.

9. As a part of their pre-service professional preparation program, teacher candidates should be fully

apprised of the professional opportunities for service in the intermediate school unit.

10. Special junior high school teaching certificates, when available as one of the teacher certification options, should be made more widely known among possible applicants.

Epilogue

The functions of the middle school appear to have much in common with the functions of the junior high school. (1, p. 19; 6, pp. 31-32) Whether one agrees with the rationale calling for a change from the junior high school to the middle school or not, the aims of both the middle school and the junior high school are exceedingly worthwhile. Central to the attainment of such objectives, however, is undoubtedly the necessity of a well-trained and dedicated staff of teachers. With the two well-known books by John W. Gardner in mind, one might observe that the professional preparation of Indiana's intermediate school teachers calls for real "renewal" if "excellence" of instruction is to be characteristic of all our intermediate schools. (4;5)

To stress further the importance of the teacher in the process of intermediate school education, the words of Alexander, who has since become the major proponent of the reorganized middle school, seem particularly appropriate. He has written: "The last third of the twentieth century may be a millenium in which every child has every year

in school at least one teacher who makes a difference."(2, pp.276-1
Alexander went on to note that this should be the aim and
perhaps the primary goal of the intermediate school whether
it be called a middle or junior high school. The junior high
school, said Alexander, too often has had more than its share
of teachers who have lacked interest in teaching at that level
because they were simply marking time until they could move
up the educational ladder to the senior high school. It
becomes readily apparent, then, that the professional teacher
education of intermediate school teachers is of real concern
not only in Indiana but throughout the United States.

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