

A modest proposal by and for education students

The solution which I am urging is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject matter for education, and that is life in all its manifestations.

Instead of this single unity, we offer children algebra, from which nothing follows, geometry from which nothing follows, history from which nothing follows, science from which nothing follows, a couple of languages never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philosophical notes and a short analysis of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory.

Can such a list be said to represent life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is that it is a tepid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and had not yet determined how to put it together.

Alfred North Whitehead
"Philosophy of Education"

The aims of the ad hoc curriculum committee are three-fold:

- To evaluate the present program with the purpose of proposing changes and/or modification
- To reaffirm the need for a close liaison between student body on the one hand and the faculty and administration on the other
- To propose new approaches to the after degree, secondary program.

Curriculum and methodologies tend to be too rigid, said the report. Options are limited and because of schedule conflicts, are often non-existent. One-way communication appears to be the rule, rather than the exception.

Due to "other commitments", some lecturers appear unable to devote ample time and energy to

their course responsibilities. Even considering these cases as the exception, they are detrimental.

In view of this, the committee recommended:

1. The adoption of a more flexible approach to both the curriculum and the methods of instruction. This could be accomplished by offering a broader choice of available courses, and by the institution of a lecture-seminar approach. Module programming—that is the differential scheduling of time according to the needs of the course—would allow for a greater degree of flexibility than the present fixed-interval system. The seminar would replace the current monologue with a meaningful dialogue and would facilitate the desired encounter between lecturer and student.

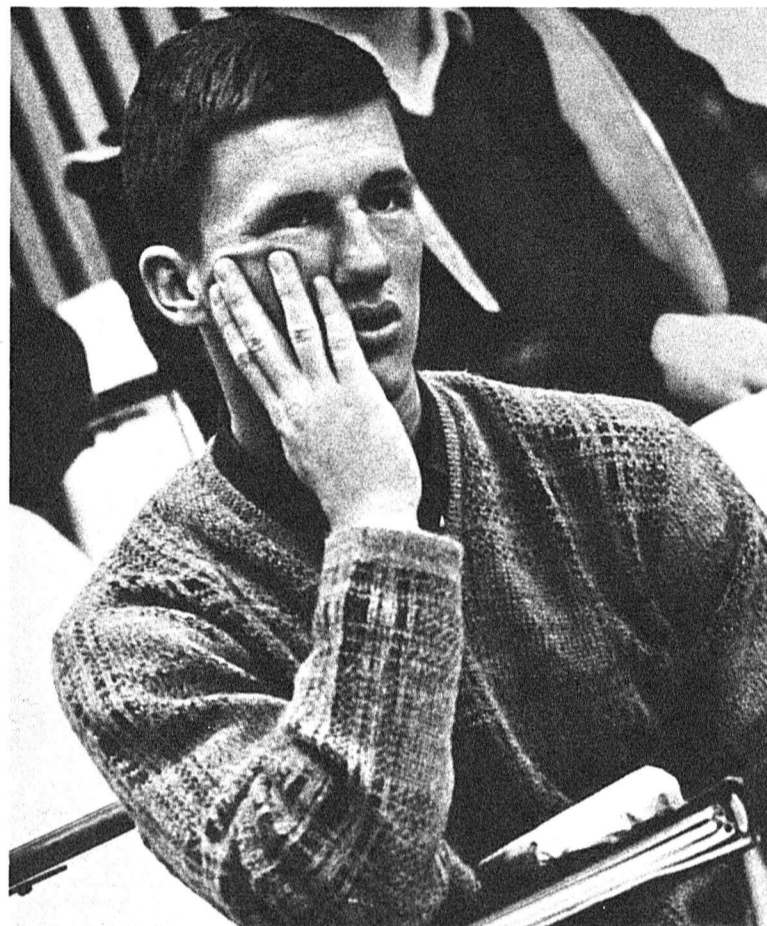
2. A shift of emphasis from theoretical "knowledge for its own sake" to the more practical "how does this apply?" type of knowledge.

The committee report then outlined an evaluation of student teaching and the system of examinations.

The extensive use of multiple-choice examination questions seriously inhibits creative expression and original thought, the students said.

"This approach is incongruent with the ultimate goal of this program—that is, becoming effective teachers. The essence of effective teaching is the meaningful communication of knowledge."

It seems that the high points of



THE PROBLEM OF ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION
... is it the rule or the exception?

the academic year are not the good seminars, the interesting discussions, the controversial ideas, but rather those weeks or days on the "anxiety mill" preceding examinations, said the report.

Just as ludicrous is the statistical approach to the evaluation of the comprehension of knowledge.

Percentages, stanines and other grading systems are "cute euphemisms for categorizing the students into a pseudo-sophisticated hierarchy of superficial abilities". They are; therefore, they must be.

The report recommended the present formal examinations should be eliminated and be replaced by a greater emphasis on term work, that is, short and frequent class presentations.

In addition, the lecturer should take into account student participation. Finally, the lecturer should hold oral interviews with each student during the academic year. The final evaluation may be based on a pass-fail system or simply on written evaluations and recommendations.

"This system may smack of subjectivity," said the report, "but this is a calculated risk which crops up even in the present system."

It is the opinion of the "ad hoc curriculum committee" that the student teaching period now allotted is too short. Most student teachers hardly manage to reach their optimal level of efficiency in the three-week session.

It is difficult to establish a close rapport and a class presence in such a short time. By the same token, any meaningful evaluation of the student teachers' effectiveness becomes tenuous and unrealistic.

It is felt that the one-month lecture prior to student teaching, for the most part, does not prepare education students for the teaching experience.

Student teaching should be begun immediately after a one-week orientation seminar, the report recommended. This orientation se-

minar period would consist of the three-day orientation as it presently exists, adding to it two days of seminar discussion centred around situations which the novice will encounter in the classroom.

The student teaching term should be lengthened to three months from the present six weeks, the report recommended. This would allow for a period of adjustment and for a meaningful term upon which an evaluation can be based.

The failure of some teaching consultants to devote sufficient time to the observation of student teach-

background

Last November, a group of approximately 20 students enrolled in the B.Ed. after B.A. program met informally to discuss their dissatisfaction with the Faculty of Education and, specifically, with the program in which they are enrolled.

In an attempt to turn their complaints into a more constructive approach, the students organized themselves into the "ad hoc curriculum committee" under the chairmanship of Saul Landa, ed 1.

A brief was prepared and circulated to members of the faculty and students in education. This Casserole feature includes a summary of some of the opinions expressed in the brief. A second brief, based on individual submissions, is to be presented next week.

ers has evoked bitter criticism from some students. Others have complained that some co-operating teachers would not allow for originality or flexibility, but rather

continued on C-5

An ed faculty view of education

Many faculty members in education realize certain inadequacies exist, but they are not prepared to make any outright condemnation of what they are doing.

Associate dean of education Wilfrid Pilkington told The Gateway he feels there is something wrong with the students coming into university. "It is so dead," he said.

On the other hand, Dr. L. D. Stewart, Co-ordinator, Division of Field Experiences, Faculty of Edu-

cation, said, "Students have some valid criticisms, but I don't agree with many of them."

Both men agree the education program does not offer enough student teaching practice. Dr. Stewart says it is first on his list of priorities, but increasing the student teaching time would hurt the rest of the program.

It appears that increasing the amount of student teaching time would disrupt an already-overburdened system. There are not enough teachers in the Edmonton school system to act as cooperating teachers with the student teachers. In fact, according to Mr. Pilkington, the situation is now so bad that marginal quality teachers are being accepted as cooperating teachers.

"I would like to see the university go on a semester system," said Mr. Pilkington. "This way we could have part of the students spend one whole semester on student teaching and one on course instruction."

It would also permit more time for student teaching while using fewer cooperating teachers.

"Just like there are different kinds of people, so there are different kinds of teachers, some good, some bad," said Dr. Stewart.

"We are now offering a preparatory course to cooperating teachers. It is only in the experimental stage, with 105 out of 700 teachers taking it this year," said Dr. Stewart.

"A pass-fail grade system for student-teaching is not successful, the employers are not satisfied with it," he said.

"As professors we can make reasonable judgments beyond just a pass-fail. We can divide passes into groups."

Both Mr. Pilkington and Dr. Stewart felt although there may be only one group of failures, passes vary in degree and should be differentiated.



—B. S. P. Bayer photo
DR. L. D. STEWART
... "pass-fail is not successful"