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WHY TEACH PSYCHOLOGY TO TEACHERS-  
IN-TRAINING AND WHAT KIND OF  
PSYCHOLOGY DO THEY NEED?



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BY ALBERT H. ABBOTT, B.A., PH.D.  
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WHY TEACH PSYCHOLOGY TO TEACHERS-IN-TRAINING  
AND WHAT KIND OF PSYCHOLOGY DO THEY  
NEED?\*

A. H. ABBOTT, B.A., PH.D.

University of Toronto.

FOR two classes of men and women there is no real problem in connection with the training of teachers: the first is composed of those so gifted that they seem to be teachers by nature—no method of training will harm such unless it be absolutely wrong, and indeed, they may survive even that treatment; the second is composed of those who can not be made teachers by any kind of training.

The problem of the training of teachers arises when one faces the great mass of men and women whose mental aptitudes, at least so far as we are now able to recognize and determine them, are equally adapted to many different lines of activity. For such the great question is what kind of training will do most to equip them for the work of teaching in our schools?

This question, stated thus in the abstract, need not, however, be approached altogether in this way, for there are certain very definite limitations to the conditions under which we in Canada *can* approach the problem. We are not given the boy of eight, ten or twelve years of age and asked to plan a course which will fit such a one to teach at, say, the age of eighteen or twenty. Rather, young men and women come to the various training institutes at sixteen, eighteen, twenty or even later in life, having behind them such training as our high schools, collegiate institutes, colleges or universities give, and the normal school or other institution is asked in one year

\*This somewhat peculiar subject was selected on the advice of Dr. D. J. Goggin, Secretary of the Dominion Educational Association. He felt that as this subject was being discussed by teachers of Psychology in Normal Schools, and elsewhere, as well as by others interested in the training of teachers, its discussion at the Dominion Educational Association meeting might be timely and helpful.

—that is in eight or ten months—to give them such special training as they need to fit them to approach the work of teaching.

We may, however, make the question still more definite, so far as psychology is concerned for there are certain subjects which *must* be given to would-be-teachers. It is pretty generally accepted in Canada that such students must have opportunity to observe recognized teachers at work and to do a certain amount of teaching themselves under the observation and criticism of such teachers; they must get lectures on methods of teaching and on school organization and management, and they may or possibly must find time for physical culture, manual training, household science, music, sanitary science, etc. When all this is fully provided for, there still remain three subjects which generally, if not always receive recognition, namely, History of Education, Science or Philosophy of Education, and Psychology. For these three subjects six hours a week (i. e., six forty-five to fifty minute periods) were provided in the Time Table of the Ontario Normal College last winter: the History and Science of Education were allowed three and Psychology was allowed three hours. Whether this be less time than is generally given to these subjects or whether it be more, need not now occupy our attention, for it seems ample for the purposes which they serve and, what is perhaps more to the point, the *capacity* of the average student at training institutions will not demand more. Our question thus becomes the following: All other recognized subjects being provided for, is psychology worth three hours a week, or in all approximately seventy-five hours a year, on the time table of a normal school or other teacher-training institution, and what can be done in that time for, let us say, students who have not taken the subject before?

An alternative question would, of course, arise if psychology be found to be of little use to such students for then these three hours a week would have to be otherwise and more profitably provided for.

I have taken the liberty of putting the problem of the place of psychology in the curriculum for teachers-in-training in this very definite form, for one hears the objection of "No time" so frequently raised when this subject is under discussion that it seemed wise either to preclude the possibility of this criticism being offered on the present occasion or at least to limit the possibility within certain definite bounds. That is, the present discussion assumes that three hours a week or roughly one-eighth of the student's time

and not more than this be devoted to psychology and the "no-time" critic must show that this is too much for its usefulness or what is perhaps more to the point, that these three hours a week could be more profitably spent in studying some other subject. As has already been indicated, it is not at all clear that more than about this time can be devoted profitably to psychology unless the lecturer go into very great detail by way of illustration, or something along the line of individual laboratory work or seminary work be introduced. There is, of course, more of interest and value in psychology than can be given in the suggested time, but the capacity of the student and true educational work set certain evident limits to the amount of any subject which should be attempted in a year's work. In three hours a week a fairly detailed outline of general psychology may be given with sufficiently full experimental demonstrations and applications to the work of the teacher.

With this as introduction we may now turn to the first part of the question we are to discuss, namely, why teach psychology to teachers-in-training? That is, in effect, of what value is psychology to teachers?

This question should not, however, receive too narrow an interpretation, for education, and so the work of the teacher, may be said to take two directions according as it fulfils the end of culture or that of utility. The distinction between these ends is not, however, to be sought in the nature of the subjects taught nor indeed in the way in which they are taught, but rather in the attitude of the student to what he studies. The same subject may to one man serve the highest culture while to his neighbor in the class-room its value is estimated wholly from the standpoint of its utility: he asks the question, What good is it? How will it help me to teach, to preach, to manage a business or what not? All subjects may, therefore, be *culture*-subjects when they are studied for the sake of information alone or of the general outlook they give one on the world or life, and all subjects may serve the end of utility in so far as they are studied for the sake of the immediate aid they may be in obtaining a livelihood, in doing this or that.\*

\*In making this distinction we do not overlook the fact that culture and utility need not at all be opposites of which one or the other may be taken but not both. However easily some subjects may become cultural and however naturally others may be utilitarian, it is still true that it is only the attitude of the student that can determine which end they actually do serve in a given case, and indeed there is no reason why they may not in many cases serve both.

The utilitarian side of education, then, tends to make expert workmen, men and women well informed in the deeper aspects of the work they do: the cultural side of education tends to give these same workmen breadth of outlook on life and history from as many sides as possible; it tends to make men and women who are more or less interested in, and who can converse intelligently upon, topics other than those of the daily work. In other words, it tends to make people who can do more than "talk shop."

Now, in the training of teachers, so far as I understand the problem, it is too often assumed that the student is to get most, if not all, of his culture before he comes to his normal training, and, therefore, that the time he spends in the training institution shall be filled practically altogether with the kind of instruction which is supposed to be of immediate aid to him in the work of teaching. Recognizing fully the limitations of time in the year devoted to normal training, it is still true that this is a very lamentable error. Some tradesmen may get along with very little information beyond their own work—no professional man or woman can, and of all professions this may be said with greatest truth of teaching.

Consequently when we ask, Of what value is psychology to the teacher? we have in mind two distinguishable questions: First, of what value is it for general culture? Second, of what direct service is it in the work of teaching?

It is, however, not worth while attempting to classify the points mentioned below directly under these two questions for there is no place in all the round of human activity in which the highest culture and the purest utility stand more closely related than in the work of the teacher. We may proceed accordingly to the discussion of the question of the value of psychology to the teacher without making any sharp distinction between culture and utility in the points brought out.

Psychology is of value to the teacher *in the first place*, because it deals with those well-nigh universal and ever recurring problems of the soul, mind, ego, personality; of thought, knowledge, belief; of will, freedom, necessity, responsibility; of the aesthetic, the beautiful, the ugly, etc.

It is not the specific function of psychology to solve these problems nor to discuss the details of their history, but a course in psychology can hardly be given without coming close to the fundamental facts of experience on the basis of which these questions

are raised and from the investigation of which they must be finally solved, if, indeed, they are susceptible of solution at all.

The teacher is not a metaphysician and he need not be taught metaphysics but he should have some rather definite idea as to what these great problems are and how they arise, and it would be well if he had a sound basis of fact on which he can stand if he fail to reach a satisfactory solution of them. There is no way more accessible and from the point of view of time, more direct, which leads to this desirable end than that found in psychology properly presented.

But here one may well enter a plea along the line of the teaching of psychology. The *psychological* history of these great problems, especially as it has developed in Great Britain, should always be sketched in connection with the discussion of the problems. If this be not done the strong probability is that the teacher will fail to touch the real difficulties of the students and will simply give them another theory to place beside the ones they have already met in a more or less indefinite way. This practice is certainly to be condemned from a strictly educational point of view, for it must have the air of dogmatism to the student, however it be meant by the teacher and instead of real understanding of the solutions taught and appreciation of their value, it leads invariably to pure memory work, the very thing against which all educationists of insight must protest most strongly.

*In the second place*, psychology is of value to the teacher in that it is calculated to give him a sound introduction to and a clear idea of scientific method and the general relations of the various groups of sciences to each other.

Students follow scientific method in studying physics, chemistry, biology, physiology, etc., as well as in the higher work in literature, history, etc., but in no one department can they get more than such method as used in that one science and then, generally speaking, they get it only in practice and hardly ever realize the meaning of the method they follow—i.e. it is not definitely pointed out and discussed.

In teaching psychology, the very fact that it is, in its strictly scientific aspect, a recent development—it is not yet more than about fifty years old—almost compels one to discuss scientific method in an explicit way. This method is equally applicable to every science, for, since science can investigate only those facts of which someone



is conscious or of which men as a whole are conscious, the methods which are employed to investigate facts of consciousness themselves must apply equally to every science. Each science may go farther in the details of the methods but the general principles remain unchanged through all. The discussions to which reference is here made concern themselves with such processes as scientific analysis, definition of terms, experiment, etc. These same topics may be studied under the name of logic if they be studied in themselves, but a psychologist can hardly avoid discussing them in his work to-day without serious loss of clearness.

This is hardly the place, and if it were, there is not the time necessary to say what might well be said on this particular subject. There is, however, probably no part of the teacher's general culture which is designed to exercise so potent an influence for good in the work of the school-room. The insight into scientific method gives one a wholesome spirit in one's outlook that must be beneficial not only to the teacher but, perhaps, quite as much to his pupils.

*In the third place*, psychology is of value to the teacher in that it gives him a detailed knowledge of the actual operations occurring in himself and the pupil in the process of teaching and learning.

We cannot here pause to discuss the contribution of psychology to our knowledge of the thought-process. It is true that these significant discoveries by the use of experiment are as yet but few years old and the works of Kuelpe, Watt, Ach and others dealing explicitly with them are not readily accessible to the English reader since no translation of them exists\*. This fact of itself, however, offers no possible basis of criticism of the conclusions reached below, since, no matter how reached or by whom, the knowledge of the facts of consciousness is calculated to be of use in the directions indicated.

The scientific knowledge of the thought-process must be the only ultimately valid basis on which to construct our theories as to methods of teaching. All merely empirically-established methods have value in that one can state that such procedure has been found to give good results, but on the basis of use alone one may only conclude that such methods are better than certain other methods and not that these methods have a firm psychological foundation. In teaching and learning it is exactly as with the

\*In my evening experimental lecture on "Recent Investigations of the Thought-process," the methods used in these researches were illustrated and some of the more important conclusions reached discussed in outline.

processes of nature—man uses them to advantage only as he knows what the facts and laws are. His knowledge is not calculated to change what has *actually* been done, it can only change what man has *attempted* to do. Hence, the more useful a method has been found in relation to a certain end, the more valuable will such a method be if that end be sought, but such experience can never establish that, were the facts of consciousness clearly known or scientifically understood either the end or the method would be highly esteemed. This might be illustrated fully from the history of physical science, for almost every great discovery has brought with it the condemnation of old practices and the introduction of new and more natural "methods."

Then, too, the exact knowledge of the processes taking place in teaching and learning is calculated to give the teacher a deeper sympathy with his pupils in practically every relation. For example, we know quite well that clearness of statement alone is not sufficient for the understanding of an author's works; to catch the standpoint of the author is even more essential—indeed the clearness of statement is only appreciated when the standpoint is realized. This means in practice that the teacher is led to realize in much more than the ordinary theoretical way that the standpoint of the boy or girl must be reckoned with, and that to use this well is at least half the art of teaching.

*In the fourth place*, psychology should both interest the teacher in and equip him for doing valuable work in the investigation of the psychological problems of general interest which arise in the class-room.

It seems to me that this side of a teacher's value to the community has been too often quite overlooked and hence no effort, or at least very little effort has been put forth to train him for this work or to compel him to realize the existence of such a duty. A teacher should do more than instruct the boys and girls who come to him, he has a duty also toward the community at large and especially toward those who lay down the courses of study and who largely make the conditions under which these are to be carried out in practice. This duty the teacher takes up in conventions and his voice is then heard in advice to or censure of the government and its officers, and doubtless good may be done in this way, but, after all, it is neither the most profound nor safest way of reforming the educational system. Majorities may move politicians but they

convince no one on a rational or scientific basis; they may be the club which the teacher in distress will use but they are not the educator's natural weapons. These can only be facts or the knowledge of facts reached in a thoroughly scientific way.

One reason at least, if not the great reason, why the teacher's voice is not more carefully heeded and, indeed, listened for, is that the average teacher's observation of the facts is coupled with an almost complete lack of critical analysis in his report on them and in his estimate of the defects of the school system. For this condition the teacher himself can hardly be held accountable, for he is the result of a system of training which largely left out of account the very things needed for such a case. A teacher cannot be supposed to be able to do such careful critical work unless he has had some training to equip him for it. For this there is nothing more fundamental than scientific psychology.

On the basis then, of these four aspects of the value of psychology to the teacher, I hold that no subject can take its place on the curriculum for teachers-in-training and thus the above points are the answer to the question why teach psychology to teachers-in-training.

The second part of the subject still remains to be discussed, namely, what kind of psychology do teachers need?

The answer to this question has, of course, been to a certain extent presupposed in the former discussion, for whatever method or phase of the subject be given these outlined results should be reached; nevertheless, the above references are not so specific that any competent teacher should not be able to accomplish what is suggested if he be only reasonably exact or scientific in his presentation of the subject.

It must also be borne in mind that the subject is being discussed on the assumption that students have had no previous knowledge of psychology, or at least that any knowledge they have is largely of an unsystematic character.

In the first place it may be laid down as a fundamental principle that applied psychology, genetic psychology, child psychology or so-called educational psychology cannot be successfully taught until the student have a thorough foundation, even if that be only in outline, in scientific adult psychology. All of these secondary phases of the psychological investigation, at least as they are ordinarily presented, lack the very properties which psychology can and ought to have for teachers-in-training. It is nothing but a

huge mistake to give such students, on the supposed grounds of utility, a kind of psychology which lacks in its general cultural advantages practically everything which strictly scientific psychology possesses, and which, by way of compensation, brings hardly one advantage which could not easily be had in connection with the more fundamental study. In other words, scientific adult psychology leads on naturally to the discussion of child, genetic, and applied psychology while one cannot be supposed to really understand these latter without that critical analysis and definition of terms which this basal psychology gives.

One other point is worth raising in this connection, namely, the nature and place of the science or philosophy of education on the curriculum for teachers-in-training. When this subject is discussed without the definition of terms used, as this may be drawn from scientific psychology it must surely become a kind of anomaly. If psychology be not recognized as the only natural or secure foundation for the discussions undertaken under the name of science or philosophy of education, where can one possibly look for such a foundation? It seems practical, therefore, to have one man give both the psychology and the science of education, for a large part of such discussion must be of the nature of applied psychology, or, failing that, it should be placed beyond peradventure that whoever lectures on the science of education shall at least be thoroughly conversant with the results of scientific psychology. Much time could be saved by making sure that the teaching in psychology and science of education were made consistent and to this must be added the by-no-means insignificant fact that only by so doing can either have its full educational value for the student.

The objection that Scientific Psychology is too difficult for beginners may be met as follows :—At the Normal College, Hamilton, for the session 1906-07, I lectured to a class of some two hundred students. The result of the Christmas and May examinations with certain other work prescribed during the session was the following :—

13	University graduates (men) averaged . . . . .	78.7	per cent.
37	Non-University graduates (men) averaged . . . . .	74.5	"
34	University graduates (women) averaged . . . . .	72.43	"
103	Non-University graduates (women) averaged. . . . .	71.7	"
187	Students graduates	averaged 74.33	"

Being summarized this shows that

47 University graduates averaged.....	75.56 per cent.
140 Non-University graduates averaged.....	73.1 "

This statement shows clearly that those who came to the study without previous University training evidently succeeded in grasping it, so far as examinations reveal the facts, practically as well as graduates, many of whom, by the way, were also with previous training in the subject.

