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1973
Johannesburg College of Education
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27609
Holmes, H. (1972/1973). The future of a college. Symposium: A Journal of Education for Southern Africa, pp. 11-14, 22.

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the future of a college

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THE TEACHER TRAINING CLAUSES of the Education Act of 1969 seemed to many educationists to be quite illogical; the Act certainly did not seem part of any evolutionary process in South African education. Historians of the future may discover what lay behind the Act and the changes it introduced. It is fairly unprofitable to speculate on what motives lay behind the changes. The simplest explanation is probably that the Transvaal had to be whipped into line, for this province had taken a direction of its own, developing its colleges of education into comparatively large institutions sharing in all aspects of teacher training. This training was alongside the teacher training offered by the Transvaal universities, excepting the University of the Witwatersrand. Though there were mutual criticisms, in general the system worked well, and the relationship between this university and the Johannesburg College of Education was unique in the country. All local relationships have at least been disturbed, if not dislocated by the Act. Teacher training for pre-secondary education is left in the hands of the colleges of education; for secondary goes to the universities. As some universities already offer training for the primary school, it is unlikely that the colleges will be left a clear field in the pre-primary and primary teacher training. This is part of the illogicality; the other is the strange fact that the provinces are still to be concerned with a branch of "tertiary" education, although there may be good reasons for this.

There have, of course, been the usual pious protestations that the changes would raise the status of the profession. Government in general is not interested in the status of teachers. In any country, the teaching force tends to be one of the largest occupational groups and thus must be employed as economically as possible. How training half the teachers at university is going to raise the standing of the other half is difficult to explain. Certainly the teachers who finally emerge qualified from the universities must be the most expensive professional product for the State when the exceptionally high rate of drop-out is taken into consideration. If such teachers stood professionally head and shoulders above the rest, there might also be some force in the argument, but they do not. Teaching has suffered more than any other profession from the historic professional versus academic training controversy, a controversy by no means dead as recent debates at both provincial and university levels go to show.

Whatever they feel about the Act, and feelings have on occasion run high, the Transvaal colleges of education must learn to live with the fact and plan actively for the future — a future which may in fact be along divergent roads. There have been, and are, strong, often cogent, criticisms of the provincial administration of education including teacher training, but one has to be fair and if one were to summarize the history of the last seventy years in Transvaal education it would be in the phrase "steady if unspectacular progress". Read especially the Transvaal Education Department's own potted history of teacher training (Onderwysers Opleiding 1902—1968) and the truth of the phrase becomes evident. The Annual Reports of the Transvaal Education Department confirm this view, but there was most of the time an urgent drive to give the Transvaal a good education system ("comparable with any in the world" asserted John Adamson, whose sixty-years-old reports read much more up-to-date than the jargon-laden mouthings of modern theorists. Is it too much to hope that today's directors give their teachers some sense of direction?)

Teacher training in the Transvaal as elsewhere was an evolutionary process, not a smooth, upward curve obviously — there were plateaus and occasional short periods of retrogression, but on the whole there was

steady progress and this fact can lead one to happy prognostications for the future.

"Historical backgrounds" are endemic to all surveys, backwards or forwards, in South Africa. If the future does lie in the past, it may be useful to show what the provincial authorities have achieved in the past in four main fields: entry requirements; length of training; the content of courses; and relations of the colleges of education with their local universities. There are other considerations, of course, the most important being finance. South Africa has been criticised for spending so little of its income on education. This is not the place to argue this criticism out; we must surely take up the standpoint that if a good thing in education is to cost money an enlightened government — and both the central and provincial authorities claim to be enlightened on education — will always find the money. The future that I see for the Johannesburg College of Education will not be cheap. For the moment, let us stay with the four points mentioned above which are more truly professional.

Entry to a profession has traditionally been linked with matriculation or university entrance. As in many other things, teaching is the exception, largely because there appears always to have been a shortage of teachers. In 1906, Adamson reported that the supply of teachers was one of the most serious problems before the Department (TED Report 1906 page 33). He set the minimum training as one year post-matriculation but had to compromise for a time on two years post-Std IX, which included a period as apprentice, or pupil teacher. Adamson was not, however, able to get rid of this until 1920. In the same report (page 34) he says, "Under a system by which the future teacher passes straight from a secondary school to training college, what he gains is invaluable; what is lost he is on the whole better without". Planners who are toda talking of some return to a teacher appreticeship system should take these words to heart. On the other hand, we should note that though Adamson wanted to raise teaching standards, he was not prepared to close the schools until he had sufficient qualified teachers. He was thus opposed to a line of argument not unheard today that education should be allowed to collapse to bring the authorities to their senses.

As late as the early years of the First World War, the Johannesburg College was offering training for the 3rd Class Certificate only, but in 1917 a Second Class Certificate was needed for promotion (there is a perennial desire in education departments to establish minimum qualifications for promotion).

The growing links with the universities made matriculation the minimum qualification for entry to the teachng profession. All the combined courses, i.e. provided by university and college in collaboration, involved university attendance, for one, two or three years. Teachers were not being trained in large numbers and so the profession got its share of the matriculants. The continued teacher shortage, coupled with the introduction of streaming in the Transvaal schools, led to a revision of policy. Insufficient teachers for the high schools were being produced by way of the combined courses and in addition practical high school courses e.g. industrial arts, needed specialist teachers; at the same time it was realised that many potentially good teachers would be found among the so-called B-streamers, or non-academic stream.

The sixties saw the admission to the colleges of students who would not qualify for admission to the university. Was this a retrograde step as many maintained? It seemed so when about half the new admissions each year were from the B-stream, but no scientific investigation has yet been carried out into this allegation of "inferiority". Many of these students have done well at college and in the classroom. The Johannesburg College of Education has paid special attention to these students and has suggested ways by which they could gain matriculation exemption after a successful period of study at college. The Joint Matriculation Board is not, however, very enlightened and such a proposal is not likely to find favour. The new style matriculation in 1975 will solve some problems and create others. Throughout its history the Johannesburg College of Education has tried to maintain and raise standards of admission but has been handicapped in recent years by the strange procedure that

allows the pupil's own school to select him for teaching or not. The inconsistency of selection and the regular halo- and devil's-tail-effect are all to evident. With the increasing number of applicants for entry to teaching courses, selection may be more stringent, and I should like to see the right of selection restored to the college as part of an increased autonomy which should be its right.

The second field of discussion is that of length of training. Throughout, the Transvaal Education Department has been consistent and courses have been lengthened whenever the moment seemed opportune. The one-year post-matriculation training for the Third Class Certificate was raised to two years full-time in 1920 (previously six months of the two years had been an apprenticeship period), and in the early sixties, the T3 or Lower Diploma course was dropped altogether. Basic training was now three years, leading to the Transvaal Teachers' Diploma for Junior Primary, Senior Primary or High School work. Prospective high school teachers were encouraged to take a degree at university and then the Higher Diploma at college.

In the mid-sixties, the general feeling in the Transvaal colleges was that all teachers should be given the opportunit of taking a four year course either at college or university. The Transvaal Education Department, conscious of the need for "renewal" (trendy but true) in education, instituted a fourth year course, which, in spite of initial difficulties, is proving its worth. The Johannesburg College of Education was in favour of making all teacher training of four years' duration, and this I see it striving to bring about in the future. English-speaking students accept the value of lengthened training and do not appear to be a reliant on state aid as their Afrikaans-speaking fellow students. Both these attitudes are favourable to lengthened courses. There must, however, be more autonomy accorded to the colleges if they are to be regarded by the public as responsible institutions (as long ago as 1935, the Transvaal Education Department accorded the freedom to the colleges each to develop in its own way. The Director of Education of the time was not notably enlightened. (Onderwysers Opleiding Deel 1, Chapter 2, page 18).

There is still a large group of students, however, who regard teaching as "just another job" for which it is useful to have a diploma following as short a course as possible. To counter this view is a matter of education. The Johannesburg College of Education has pioneered effective propaganda in the past; this educative function will be more important still in the future as the college develops in its own right.

Our third point has to do with content of courses and curricula. Here the record of the Education Department and the colleges is not too happy. The greatest criticism of the diploma courses was, and is, the number of courses that had to be taken each year, at one time as many as 18, compared with the universities' average of 4. The Transvaal Education Department has responded to pressure from the colleges and the maximum number of courses in any one year is 9. The Johannesburg College of Education has ideas of how to ameliorate the position, but cannot put ideas into practice as long as it is in lock-step with the other colleges; this demand for uniformity, evident in almost all fields of education, must be resisted.

On the positive side, the old gibe that a student had only to be admitted to a diploma course to be awarded that diploma is no longer true. The academic content of all courses has been increased and much dead wood cut out and standards have been raised by external moderation of examinations either by other colleges or by universities. I believe this has been a good thing and the standards attained by the Johannesburg College of Education's students may be the first step towards recognition of college courses for degree purposes. More will be said of this later.

The emphasis on the academic has been discouraging for many students, partly because in an old college tradition the college has done more than the minimum laid down. (See the Johannesburg College of Education principal's report in TED Report 1913 page 58. Incidentally, in the same report Professor Macgregor said that there had been no progress in sport — "something had to go, and it seemed to us that South Africa could more easily afford to go without games than without other things of some importance in the

serious walks of life".) The college must not in the future compromise its standards and must try to keep a proper balance between academic and professional studies.

The fourth field mentioned at the beginning of this article was that of university relationships. In evidence to the Gericke Commission, the college proposed a very close relationship with the University of the Witwatersrand. In simple terms, we saw the Johannesburg College of Education becoming the School of Teacher Training in the Faculty of Education of the university. The only difficulty in the way was, of course, financial. The central government could, of course, have bought out the college, lock stock and barrel, and handed it over to the university, but . . . No one liked working out the sums, or giving up power. So where do we go from here? The answer to this question is, I feel, vital for a happy future for the college.

I said earlier that the relationship between Wits and JCE had been unique, if only in its cordiality. Harsh words have been used on occasion on both sides; this was inevitable. But the two institutions have worked amicably together to produce good teachers for the province's schools. More recently, as the university planned its post-graduate teacher's diploma, the college has made important contributions to the planning, some would say helping to plait the cord by which it was to be hanged by the neck. But this was not so. Both college and university have seen co-operation as the normal way of life, as evidence of a continuing association and hopefully a more intimate one. There must come some kind of affiliation of the college with the university. We have gone a long way towards it already in use of staff and facilities, in representation on committees, in external moderation and examining, in sharing of practical teaching supervision. I should like to see the university involved in some way with college courses for pre-primary and primary training; recognition of success in college courses by the university is, I think, inevitable. Obstacles in the way are financial, as I have already stressed — staff salaries and pensions; equipment; the new campus and its buildings (the present campus was described in the TED Report for 1912 as "probably the finest campus in town" and its prospected buildings as "on a scale suitable to the dignity and importance of up-to-date education". How much truer this is of JCE's campus in the making.) Surely English-medium teacher training is due for a break!

The college has, of course, a future beyond these four aspects of education. It must keep teacher training at least level with, preferably ahead of, world trends. The college must strive for originality and if this is not always possible, at any rate independence of outlook. JCE has time and time again taken the lead in aspects of teacher training (to name but a few, the introduction of a cyclic time-table to mitigate the ill effects of an overcrowded time-table; the setting up of the first educational CCTV system in South Africa; the introduction of properly programmed micro-teaching activities; the establishment of subject workshops). The leadership must be maintained. The opportunities are endless.

The pre-primary or nursery school four-year course must be expanded. The provincial authorities cannot drag their feet forever over the provision of the much needed nursery schools; after all, this is surely a most important field of youth preparedness. Probably the course should go on as at present partly integrated with the Junior Primary course. There is need to stress the unbroken nature of education. The present Junior and Senior Primary courses are as good as any provided anywhere. The increasing stress over the academic subjects for Senior Primary students is a good thing, but must never be allowed to interfere with the freedom and initiative that are so much a feature of our primary schools.

The college must also play an increasing role in the further training of teachers, especially in the line of one-term or two-term intensive courses for teachers. A scheme of this kind was submitted by the Johannesburg College of Education to the Transvaal Education Department some years ago, fruitlessly. There is nothing original in the idea, but the need is there, especially in the sciences, and similar schemes have worked well overseas.

Teachers also want to improve their qualifications. College already provides full-time

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visual education programme, and becomes mechanical. The nature of the activity becomes formulated by the requirements of the skill to be developed and the whole process has little relevance to the subject art, or, to use a more fitting designation, visual education. This becomes a matter of emphasis. Pupils will be given a stencil of a bird, or taught to make one using circles, so as to have a fitting subject with which to learn to do, let us say, seed-mosaic. The pupils have been denied a personal confrontation with the subject, a bird. It is during this initial consideration of the subject matter that the pupil should be extended in terms of his awareness — awareness of shape, texture, pattern, colour tone and so on. He should have the opportunity to learn to see, feel, explore and relate to the subject he is going to use, and then select and express what is significant to him.

> "Only by encouraging the child to draw directly from nature can he really develop the careful, sensitive observation which can be a basis for a creative intepretation of the world around and about him."[13]

Stevini, in **Art and Education,** writes:

> "Art education is also concerned with enriching visual perception, with forming concepts that are not based on word patterns, with imagination and imaginative problem-solving, with communica tion . . ."[14]

If we could clarify our reasons for teaching art as concrete, relevant and fundamental concepts teachers would be provided with a framework in terms of which they could give purpose, validity structure and continuity to their visual education projects and programme.

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courses for this purpose, but a future development must be part-time courses for serving teachers. The correspondence courses provided by the Department are excellent in conception but not really loved if we judge by criticism voiced by teachers to their teachers' associations.

There must also be much more organized experimentation and research. The Johannesburg College of Education has already done a fair amount into such topics as teaching practice and evaluation, but there are many other directions where research is necessary; the high rate of drop-out is one. And with the increasing emphasis on remedial work, there is pressing need for a clinic attached to the college, not to mention the problems of special education.

The future of the college must be greater than the past. It has its own ethos. It has its traditions of freedom and initiative, of making use of all available talents, not least of those of students who have had recognition long before the universities thought of it. But if we are to go ahead under present conditions, there must be real autonomy in the university sense. Colleges are not irresponsible; they do not have to be tied down by regulation from a central authority any more than universities are. Nor must they be moated keeps housing a body of students cut off from life. However, their best future — JCE's future at any rate — must lie in the university.