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[Review of the book Education in the history of western civilization by Frederick M. Binder (London: Macmillan, 1970)

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EDUCATION IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILISATION

F. M. Binder. Collier-Macmillan London.

Those readers who are concerned with Teacher Training will know how difficult it is to prescribe a text in the history of education, for selection nearly always reveals not only the personal bias of the editor in what is presented but even more so in what is omitted. Dr. Binder's selection, first published in 1970 and since then reissued, seems to me to come as near to being an ideal selection as could be wished. He has extensively quoted original sources and reduced his own commentary to stage setting. His span is necessarily extensive, because he has to move from Homer's warrior to Dewey's socially adjusted American citizen, passing on the way through Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, Industrial and Technological theories and practices. I liked the use he made of source materials — not only the more formal educational treatise, but diaries, letters and official documents of the period. Truly, one might have wished to have included something of Arabic education — which made a notable contribution to European thought, and a final section on modern concepts and ideas would have rounded off an otherwise excellent book — but it would also have raised its price from R4,20 as a paperback edition to a level that might well have put it beyond student purchase.



THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

ed. J. W. Tibble. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Emeritus Professor Tibble has had a distinguished career at the University of Leicester. He is progressive in his thinking, and generous in his sympathies. In this, his latest work, he has gathered a number of English educators to consider the problems facing Teacher Education in the United Kingdom. They include, i.a., Peter Renshaw of Leeds, Maurice Craft of Exeter and Brian Cane of Sheffield. With the other contributors, the authors range over the friction points Teacher Training experiences in almost any part of the Western world: curriculum, school practice, relationships with the universities and so on.

Dr. Craft, for instance, traces the development of teacher training in Britain; and South African teachers will be interested to see the extent to which English experience parallels that of South Africa. The same growth patterns, the same attempt to broaden Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education, the same struggle to create a working formula that would combine university and college resources fruitfully — and many of the same snags, once the formulation was put into practice. 'Colleges," comments the author, "grew in size. In 1958 only 3 had more than 500 students, by 1962 the number had risen to 20 and by 1968 to 114. The qualifications of students, although still poorer than those of undergraduates, rose steeply. The average age of the staff had fallen sharply, and men still outnumber women and are generally better qualified and more concerned about further study and research." I am not sure whether men maintain a majority on the staffs of South African colleges — certainly men students don't — but otherwise the general picture is similar. These simple aspects of educational growth are part of an extraordinary inflation going on throughout English education. Expenditure on education has trebled since 1960 and doubled since 1963, whilst 89% more has been spent on schools over that decade. The overall national cost of English education in 1969 was more than 2 200 million pounds, or 6 per cent of the gross national product. All this has put strains on teacher training. In 1969, for instance, there were 377 000 teachers in England and Wales, an increase of 17% over the immediate five year period.

The "expansive" forces beneath the educational structure were expressed in a number of themes in the Robbins Report — which re-asserted the belief that education was closely linked to economic growth. The more intensive use of capital equipment in the form of buildings came under scrutiny, and there were a number of proposals to integrate teacher training with other institutions for tertiary education. Local Authorities, who to a large extent have vested interests in teacher education, were seldom willing to resign their influence in order to promote a more coordinated national policy. "British universities," says Dr. Craft, "have been cautious, reflecting a degree of 'institutional inertia' (a term that the Minister of Education might wish to borrow in some future speech) to proposals for the unification of higher education." The National Union of Teachers, in a "Young Teachers Report" suggested that students of 18 plus might enrol in a 2 year social studies course in a common campus setting, followed by a year as a paid worker ancillary in teaching or social work, and then by a further 2 years in teacher education or some other specialisation. The delayed vocational choice allowed here, and the opportunity of a short period of vocational "immersion" are interesting ingredients in this plan. A new type of interprofessional college that included education and other social science disciplines, might ease career mobility. Clearly, as the author comments, many colleges of education possess the skills and facilities to develop liberal arts programmes up to a general degree standard. Some universities would take over the colleges, treating them as inservice appendages, whilst others prefer the idea of a federation of effort and resources. Certainly, in whatever form it may eventually take, the regional expansion of the college of education is very much on the cards.

In a short review one can do no better than sample one of several interesting contributions. But I liked Professor Tibble's own remark that in response to the demand for some kind of national enquiry into teacher training, the response — as in the case for prayers for rain — has been more than the askers bargained for! What professional teachers seem unanimous about, is an insistence on flexibility in college approaches.