

**SELF-SURVEYS BY
TEACHER-TRAINING
SCHOOLS**

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Self-surveys by teacher-training schools by William H. Allen & Carroll G. Pearse

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WILLIAM H. ALLEN & CARROLL G. PEARSE

**SELF-SURVEYS BY
TEACHER-TRAINING
SCHOOLS**



State Normal and Industrial School for Women, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Teacher training made attractive

EDUCATIONAL SURVEY SERIES

Self-Surveys by Teacher-Training Schools

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A. M. C.

INTRODUCTION

NO other enterprise in the United States is as important to its future welfare as its teacher training. We may reorganize our systems, revolutionize our courses of study, introduce innovations of scheme and scope, increase salaries, insure pensions, and mass endowments, but none nor all of these can appreciably raise our standard of education unless we improve our teacher training. Wherever the Stars and Stripes fly there is immediate and urgent need for helps in training teachers prior to and during their service as teachers. The first and longest step forward is for each teacher-training school to analyze its present program, methods, and needs.

No commercial enterprise would be permitted to go on for a very long period without an exhibit of assets and liabilities and profits and losses, and a showing of present condition. To record the transactions and progress of such business, books of account are kept, and exhibits, drawn from the facts as set down in these books, are made to show the owners the condition of the business and the results of their venture. It is comparatively easy to make such showings in financial matters, for records are kept in recognized units of material values, and trial balances and profit-and-loss statements are set down in terms which depend merely upon a correct count of these recognized units. Well-devised and accepted systems of showing business facts have been established and recognized experts in commercial accounting are at hand to record transactions and to exhibit results in balance sheets and statements which are easily read and commonly understood.

Until very recently, however, our most important public enterprise — the education of the youth of the land — was allowed to proceed, and, in many quarters, still proceeds, without any recognized or understood plan of accounting, so far as its most vital features are concerned. Most school systems have a fairly accurate method of keeping track of income and outgo in dollars, although there has

been and is little understanding of relative expenditures as between different communities, based upon recognized standards of unit costs for various educational purposes, and there is much need of careful study to arrive at a satisfactory system of accounting and cost-showing for educational systems and institutions. But up to yesterday, there had been little attempt to show actual conditions as they existed in the schools, or to make any correct or reliable valuation of their educational product. Within the past decade this lack of a knowledge upon which to base a judgment of school conditions and performance has been felt, and attempts have been made to overcome it.

When a business concern has permitted loose methods of accounting, and its business has got into a tangle, two plans of procedure present themselves. The firm may call in expert accountants to make a thorough examination of the records, of the assets and liabilities and resources, and of the profits or losses; and, following such an examination, to make a statement or exhibit showing the facts which it is important for the owners to know. Or they may put in charge of their plant either some one who is already in their employ or some one from the outside, who is competent, in person or with the help of others whom he may associate with him, to make the necessary examination, modifying conditions as they are found to be wrong, and not only making an examination and a showing, but applying the remedies thought to be appropriate for the bad conditions discovered, so that when the study of the institution is completed, poor methods of doing business may have been done away with. A third alternative, a combination of the other two plans, may be used. Experts may be set to make an investigation and exhibit the results; this may then be followed by the second plan, some one either already in the establishment or from the outside may be put in charge to reconstruct and operate the business.

A serious embarrassment arose when attempts at the examination and exhibit of conditions in schools were first

made. There were no trained examiners or recorders of school management and results. The profession of expert accountant and evaluator of schools and school work had still to be created. A number of men, most of them in prominent positions in large universities, at once came forward, however, and signified their readiness to undertake, for a generous remuneration, any tasks of the kind which might be assigned to them; with one accord they recommended themselves and each other as educational "surveyors." The fact that a considerable proportion of them had little previous personal knowledge of public schools and other public educational institutions seemed not in any way to dash their confidence in themselves as qualified for this work.

Some ludicrous situations have arisen as the result of these conditions, as was forcefully and repeatedly pointed out at the Kansas City meeting of the nation's school superintendents and college presidents. In some cases surveys have been made and reports promulgated in an incredibly short space of time. In others, the report might have been written in advance by any one familiar with the personal bias and affiliations of the members of the surveying party. In one especially interesting case, representatives of a large, privately endowed university were commissioned to study and report upon the teacher-training schools of the country, nearly all of which are either state or city normal schools. The main subject of inquiry in this case seemed to be the number and kind of academic degrees possessed by instructors in these schools. A normal school or a college or any other kind of school is, like an apple orchard, of value as a going and producing concern; the number and quality of apples, or the number and especially the success of the graduates are the things of most moment. An estimate of teacher-training schools, based on the degrees standing after the names of instructors, is very like an estimate of an apple orchard based on the height of trees or the diameter of their trunks, or on the relative quantities of oxygen or carbon or earthy ash in the composition of the wood, or the

names of the nurserymen from whom the trees were bought.

For the most part our studies of schools — our surveys — have been of the examination and report order, similar to that used by the concern whose owners want to know the present status of their enterprise; there has usually been no connection between the study and constructive measures to correct those things found not to be right. It has been as though the expert accountant had made a report and gone away, and the business had been allowed to go on in the same old loose and unscientific fashion; or as if the physician had been called to make a diagnosis, and afterwards no use had been made of it to change the conditions surrounding the patient.

The educational survey, a discussion of which forms most of the subject matter of this volume — the survey of Wisconsin's eight normal schools — is one of the most notable so far made, in a number of particulars. It was begun, and so far as concerned the school with which he is now connected, practically completed, before the writer entered the service of the normal-school system, so that he can speak of it without personal interest or bias.

The survey was made by an official body, responsible to the people who maintain the public educational system, including the normal schools. This body, the State Board of Public Affairs, made up of leading state officials and a number of prominent citizens, the non-official members appointed by the governor of the state, employed the investigators and determined the nature of the inquiry upon which the report was based; and the findings and recommendations were made to that board. The study was neither framed nor carried on by any foundation or other private agency, nor was it conducted by a distant bureau, whose knowledge of the study and findings and whose influence on the methods of work and conclusions drawn could not be only nominal.

The survey was coöperative. The Board of Normal Regents and the presidents and faculties of the normal schools were enlisted in determining the scope of the study, in fur-