

“Willing to Listen Humbly”: Practice Teaching in Alberta Normal Schools, 1906–44

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Practice teaching enjoys prominent and long-standing status in teacher education. Although courses in theory and content have ridden the tides of educational reform, practice teaching has been a mainstay in the education of teachers since the activity was formalized in the late seventeenth century.¹ Why this continued resilience? An historical case study provides possible clues. Participating student teachers—normalites, as they called themselves—offer evidence that its function transcended occupational familiarization. Practice teaching served as an integral and persistent component of teacher training because it shaped identity, enhancing normalite desires to meet institutional demands.

Practice teaching in Alberta normal schools before 1950 invites discussion from three perspectives.² I begin with a brief investigation of the administration of practice teaching. With this structure in place, I explore the experiences of normalites, using direct archival evidence. School yearbooks and local newspaper articles written by normalites give voice to this otherwise silent group. By today's standards their views are often unfamiliar and surprising. Finally,

¹The first modern teacher training schools required trainees to create and give model lessons. W. J. Battersby, *De La Salle: A Pioneer of Modern Education* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1949).

²Secondary sources on this topic are limited. Works by R. Patterson—“History of Teacher Education in Alberta,” in *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, ed. D. Jones et al. (Calgary: Detselig, 1979), and “Go, Grit and Gumption: A Normal School Perspective on Teacher Education,” *The McCalla Lecture* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1983)—and by G. Mann—“Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development 1905–1994 (University of Alberta: M.Ed thesis, 1961)—are the most detailed. More theoretical works include J. White, “Student Teaching as a Rite of Passage,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (1989): 177–195; L. Hale and R. Starratt “Rites of Passage: A Case Study of Teacher Preparation,” *Journal of Educational Administration* 27, no. 3 (1989): 24–29; and R. Carney and H. Hodysh, “History of Education and the Rite of Passage to Teaching: The Alberta Experience 1893–1945,” *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 40, no. 1 (1994): 35–56.

I consider the impact of progressive thought on contemporary educational philosophy.

Administrators saw practice teaching as an invaluable educational component of teacher training. Most normalites, however, experienced it as terror-ridden and anxiety-filled, an experience simply endured. Practice teaching left normalites dependent on institutional authorities and thus compelled to conform to the latter's definition of good teaching. Ironically, the progressive education movement intensified that dependence. One is left to ask whether the drive to conformity was practice teaching's primary function.

PRACTICE TEACHING: THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

During Alberta's normal school era,³ practice teaching was a central feature of teacher training. As E. W. Coffin, Principal of the Calgary Normal School, noted, "The practice teaching is, of course, the *sine qua non* of the course whatever else has to be omitted or condensed."⁴ W. D. McDougall, Principal of the Edmonton Normal School Practice School, wrote:

Practice teaching has been a unique and stimulating experience. In general, the lessons taught have been thoughtfully prepared and efficiently presented. Poise and power have been developed. The hesitant, uncertain, rather bewildered individual of November has become confident, assured and clear-thinking, capable of making a half-hour lesson a profitable and stimulating experience to a group of children. . . . There is no student in the school—whether a success or failure in his teaching—but is leaving with a more mature character, a more forceful personality and a greater social charm than he possessed last September.⁵

W. A. Stickle, Principal of the Camrose Normal School, argued that practice teaching sought "the detection and correction of a student's special weaknesses, and . . . to establish methods based on the teaching of the Normal School staff."⁶

³From 1906 to 1944, three normal schools operated: Calgary (1906–44), Camrose (1912–37), and Edmonton (1921–22, 1928–33, 1935–44). Each was under the close supervision of the Department of Education.

⁴"Normal School Annual Report" (hereafter, NSAR), Alberta Department of Education *Annual Report*, 1920, p. 51.

⁵*Edmonton Normal School Yearbook* (hereafter, ENSYB), 1929–30, p. 7. Found in the Normal School File, Provincial Archives of Alberta 84.484:3 (hereafter, NSF, PAA).

⁶NSAR, 1922, p. 45.

Efficiency and deficiency were thus central to understandings of teacher training. Practice teaching did not merely revolve around a pre-determined cluster of desirable attributes and exercise of them. It operated on the premise of deficiency: it emphasized what the normalite did not have, and sought to rectify inadequacies in accordance with what the normal staff modelled.⁷ Normalite actions were structured under the guise of proper teaching methods. Practice teaching functioned to make the normalite aware of his or her deficiencies, and, more importantly, to instill a willingness to remove those defects, to harmonize action with that promoted by institutional authorities. Insofar as it achieved a normalite frame of mind characterized by considerations of anxiety and despair, practice teaching was a valuable tool in the effort to construct the normalite's vision of the good teacher.⁸

Practice teaching was from the start part of Alberta teacher training. During the four month course of 1906, observation and practice teaching consumed most of the third and fourth months, and integrated both normalites and instructors.⁹ Essential components of practice teaching were the construction of a lesson plan, the teaching of that plan, a criticism of both, and the compilation of a record which indicated the normalite's teaching ability, including deficiencies, and which could be used for comparisons.

By 1908, a Practice School operated in conjunction with the Calgary Normal School.¹⁰ This school provided opportunities both for normalite observation of teachers' work, and for his or her practice in teaching. The teachers at the Practice School were selected from among the best in Alberta. As part of their duties, teachers were to illustrate appropriate teaching techniques, and to act as critics of normalite efforts.¹¹ Five years later, in 1913, normalites were teaching an average of eight lessons, of different types, and in various grades. Staff of both the normal and practice schools acted as critics, "and each instructor in the Normal School, while paying particular attention to lessons in his own department, made an effort to see a maximum number of students in

⁷The characteristics modelled by normal staff fall beyond this study, but they included service, sacrifice, efficiency, enthusiasm, and cooperation.

⁸It was only one such tool. Others included the physical environment and examinations.

⁹NSAR, 1906, p. 38.

¹⁰The Department of Education and the Calgary Public School Board agreed to permit the Normal School to use a city school for practice teaching. The Department of Education controlled the hiring of teachers, discipline, and general management. There is no indication if the pupils of the practice school were selected. NSAR, 1908, p. 39.

¹¹NSAR, 1908, p. 39.

their practice teaching."¹² Practice teaching was invaluable for ensuring normalites were under the regular gaze of teaching authorities.

The structure of practice teaching in place by 1913 was thereafter subject to refinement, but not to substantial change. It was lengthened, as by the early 1930's, for example, normalites spent four days in rural observation and practice teaching,¹³ and two weeks teaching in the city schools, during which "every student . . . [was] observed and reported on in detail by at least two members of the staff, and from five to ten formal reports on teaching [were] . . . filed for each student."¹⁴ Practice teaching reports were also becoming increasingly detailed. By 1936, the Department of Education had developed a new form for use by supervising practice teachers. Ratings of "poor," "fair," and "good" were to be assigned on a check list of 49 points of achievement.¹⁵ By the late 1930s this list had been honed to forty-six points, including categories which evaluated "Personal Attributes," "General Equipment," "Professional Training," "Classroom Mechanics and Management," and "Results." "General Remarks on Hints and Suggestions" were also solicited.¹⁶

PRACTICE TEACHING: THE NORMALITE PERSPECTIVE

To a considerable degree, the energy of normalites during their normal school experience was expended negotiating practice teaching.

Many normalites claimed practice teaching had a staggering emotional impact, one which left them reeling and anxious to conform to institutional demands. Kathleen Moore, the valedictorian of the Calgary Normal School in 1936–37, put the experience in context.

Leaving high school behind us, we entered the Normal School with mingled feelings of trepidation and expectation. We were all conscious of great things to be accomplished, of new worlds to be conquered. This year's crop of teachers was going to be the best ever produced. Then came our first taste of teaching. We found that it was not easy to "put

¹²NSAR, 1913, pp. 29, 31.

¹³Normalites on rural placements often lived with their supervising teachers. This system extended the institutional gaze, for the normalite who lived and worked with his or her supervising teacher had little privacy. And it was an institutional gaze, for requirements demanded that "teachers in these schools must have full qualifications," which essentially required a successful normal school experience. The supervising teacher also had to complete a lengthy report for use in final normal school evaluation. Chief Inspector of Schools to E. W. Coffin, 22 November 1938. NSF, PAA 78.92:2.

¹⁴NSAR, 1932, p. 27.

¹⁵Supervisor of Schools to G. S. Lord, 13 March 1936. NSF, PAA, 78.92:1.

¹⁶*Practice Teaching Report Form*. NSF, PAA 78.92:1.

things across" to a class. We found there was an art to teaching, an art not to be acquired by mere force of personality. Gradually, our self-esteem was lowered, and we were willing to listen humbly to the teachings of our instructors.¹⁷

The experience was powerful enough to make at least one normalite believe the demanding critic's eye would be inescapable even after graduation. Setting the scene for a play situated in the school of a recently graduated normalite, he wrote, "After entering the room, teacher looks about for the Critic, but suddenly remembers she is no longer at the Normal School."¹⁸ Of course, to ensure that the teacher was ever-mindful of the gazing eye was a foremost objective of teacher training. Even the Normal school staff recognized "the inevitable torture of practice teaching. . . ."¹⁹ What was this torture that permeated memories, eroded self-esteem, promoted willingness and humility, and culminated in a mostly predetermined hesitant self-control?

"The Strain of Practice Teaching"²⁰ was a topic invariably commented upon by normalites. Two primary sources of normalite voice, the *Camrose Canadian*,²¹ and the normal school yearbooks, provide illuminating and rarely used glimpses into practice teaching. What did they reveal?

"Practice Teaching"

Practice Teaching's here again,
Two more weeks of toil and pain,
We sweat and grind, work and slave,
Until we're fit just for the grave.

The days go by on leaden wings,
Lesson plans are beastly things.
The first ten days are sure the worst,
Why are we burdened with such a curse?

Then comes respite, like a cooling breeze,
That whispers through the leafy trees,
And calms our troubled matter grey,
Next practice round is months away.²²

¹⁷*Calgary Normal School Yearbook* (hereafter, CgNSYB), 1936-37, p. 14. NSF, PAA 84.484:1.

¹⁸"Prize Story," ENSYB, 1929-30, p. 48. NSF, PAA 84.484:3.

¹⁹Principal E. W. Coffin, in NSAR, 1921, p. 40.

²⁰Alex McGregor, ENSYB, 1929-30, p. 9. NSF, PAA 84.484:3.

²¹In the weekly town newspaper, reports were regularly submitted by a normalite; a considerable number of reports dealt with practice teaching.

²²"The Poet's Page," CgNSYB, 1929-30, p. 31. NSF, PAA 84.484:1.

A less literary, but equally disclosing, journey through practice teaching is provided by entries in the *Camrose Canadian* for the fall term of 1915. Teacher training then lasted four months, and in that period at least five entries foreshadowed the sentiment of the reports of many subsequent normalite correspondents.

All the students are looking forward with fear and trembling to the days to be spent in observation in the Practice School beginning next Wednesday.²³

Should you happen to see any normalites going about the streets the latter part of this week with happy smiles on their faces, you may safely conclude that they have taught their first lesson somewhat successfully.²⁴

“Practice teaching,” that great terror of all Normalites past and present, has been met and—well, conquered, in most cases, and now the students consider themselves full fledged teachers.²⁵

We are pleased to announce that a general promotion of the students from being mere victims of practice teaching to the position of critics has taken place.²⁶

Watch and see how the Normalites celebrate the finishing of practice teaching. Pent up enjoyment has at last been given its liberty.²⁷

The pattern of these themes—*anxiety, confusion, relief*—regularly surfaces in normalite reports.

Practice teaching was a black cloud looming over the horizon of every normalite's training experience. Its presence shook them.

That inevitable terror of the Normal student's existence, Practice Teaching has approached with relentless dread, and, as an immediate result, kind-hearted friends have extended their solicitude to weeping damsels and pale-faced youths with the expressed hope that all is not as bad as it may appear to be.²⁸

The faces of the tots are noticeably drawn with expressions of utter despair and resignation to their fate. The days of practice teaching begin on Monday next.²⁹

²³*Camrose Canadian* (hereafter, CC), 7 October 1915.

²⁴CC, 21 October 1915.

²⁵CC, 28 October 1915.

²⁶CC, 18 November 1915.

²⁷CC, 2 December 1915.

²⁸CC, 22 November 1917.

²⁹CC, 22 February 1917.

In the face of this terror, even long-utilized emotional outlets were of little value. Normalites were advised that "Humour Would Be Unbecoming."³⁰ As one normalite remembered,

Now practice-teaching came, and it
 Was tedious and long.
 It told with its painstaking care
 That gaiety was wrong.³¹

With trepidation, most normalites simply awaited and endured their fate.

Normalite reaction to practice teaching suggests the activity led to fear, exhaustion, and confusion, corrosive reactions that promoted dependency and culminated in a disposition favourable to institutional demands. Was this not its intention?

During the week the students of the Normal school have been learning by bitter experience what the poet meant when he said, "The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year." The practice teaching began Monday morning and the prospective teachers have been suffering tortures of anxiety daily while waiting for their criticisms.³²

Practice teaching is on now and we are all worried to death. We all suffer from shortage of time but certainly not from shortage of assignments. Charts, maps and art assignments are heaped up higher every day. Show us the student that has spare time and we'll show you one that doesn't intend working anyway.³³

During these practice teaching rounds, Camrose was populated by solemn-faced pedagogues-to-be.³⁴

Normalite Irene Westvick gave personal testimony to her experience. Her story, "On Practice Teaching," is illuminating enough to be given in full.

Of all the thrilling experiences Normal school offers us, practice-teaching is surely the most adventurous. Psychology and music are paradise compared to it, while bug hunting, like literature, becomes pure enjoyment. But for some unavoidable reason, practice-teaching makes one nervous, timid, and frightened.

³⁰CC, 23 November 1932.

³¹Excerpt from M. C.'s "The Rural School Teacher," CgNSYB 1930-31, p. 77. NSF, PAA 84.484:1.

³²CC, 8 November 1917.

³³CC, 29 November 1928.

³⁴CC, 30 November 1932.

I am called upon to teach a grammar lesson in grade six. Unconsciously, I stumble up the aisle, and, fortunately, find support against the teacher's desk. I feel faint, I tremble, I become speechless. No sooner do I secure my bearings than Mr. Manning [of the normal school staff] walks into the room. Worse than this, thirty small individuals stare wide-eyed at me. I grope around for the chalk, and at the same time mumble a few incoherent words which seem to come floating back to me on the air.

Then, "Please, but you've written 'we was' instead of 'we were'." A bright student, no doubt, who will go far in the world; but into what humiliation he has plunged me. From the depths of my disgrace I come up for air, and gasping as pleasantly as I can, "I was wondering how soon you would notice the mistake."

Then I see a hand waving madly. "Well, what is it?"

"Please, miss, why can't an adjective modify a verb?"

I feel myself going down for the third time, and catch myself hoping that a few bubbles, at least, may mark the spot. Why can't an adjective modify a verb? Adjectives should modify verbs. Adjectives should modify prepositions. A'j'tives sh'd mod'fy a'j'tivs. A'j'tives shld moffy. . . .³⁵

Westvick's personal view grants a singular but shared perspective on practice teaching. Her emotionally drained responses, unavoidably produced by the activity and its environment, are remarkable. In his drawings, Larue Harney provided an equally revealing, and not dissimilar, peek into the impact of practice teaching (see Figure 1).³⁶

Military terminology sometimes informed descriptions of practice teaching. The *Camrose Canadian* noted that Class B went "over the top" last week and took another shot at practice teaching.³⁷ Another correspondent reported that "The casualty lists are light, two students only having apparently succumbed to the practice teaching. . . ."³⁸ Normalite Claire Richardson, IID, waxed, "It's science, art and literature the courses of Studies saith; The Normal Student makes reply, 'It's P.T. to the death.'"³⁹ Such language, and the mood it

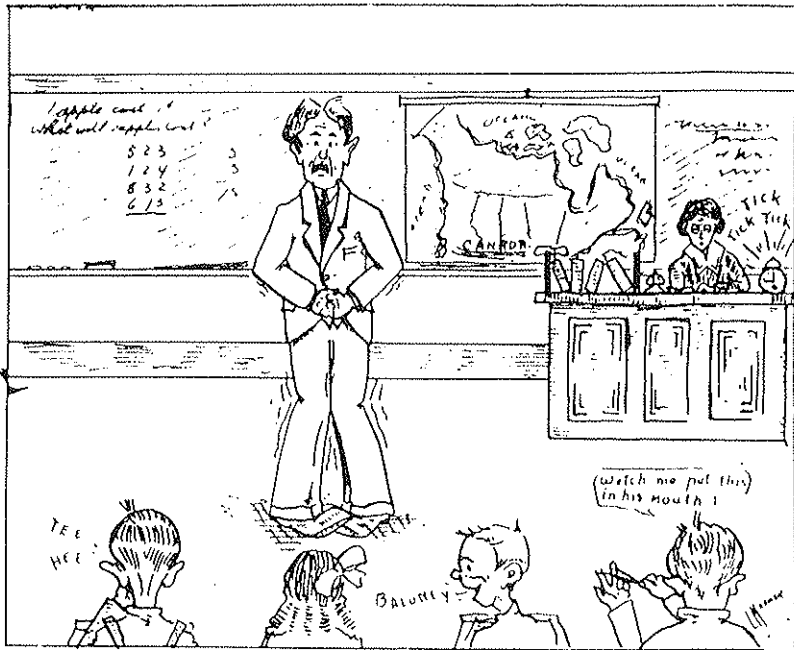
³⁵*Camrose Normal School Yearbook* (hereafter, CmNSYB), 1931-32, p. 27. NSF, PAA 84.484:2. A similar story appeared in the CgNSYB for 1930-31. It began, "Of all the gratifications of this year's entertainment, practice teaching stands highest (or lowest). Music classes are heaven compared with it, Physical Training is soothing, and Psychology becomes a dream within the pale of that hovering nightmare" (p. 23; NSF, PAA 84.484:1).

³⁶CmNSYB, 1929-30, p. 67. NSF, PAA 84.484:2.

³⁷CC, 9 February 1938.

³⁸CC, 15 November 1917.

³⁹CmNSYB, 1929-30, p. 35. NSF, PAA 84.484:2. "P.T." arguably refers to practice teaching.



Practice in Teaching?

FIGURE 1

revealed, were not inappropriate. Practice teaching was an intimate attack on the individual: with the aim of constructing the ideal teacher as the institution understood that notion, practice teaching sought to render the normalite vulnerable and weak, and in this it often succeeded.

Although much normalite commentary on practice teaching was abstracted, one person often attracted special attention—the critic. Descriptions of student despair suggest that the critic was a powerful force in enhancing normalite dependency. According to the *Normal Dictionary*, criticism was written in black pencil on yellow paper, which made the normalite see red and feel blue. The artist of this rainbow was the critic, a stern-looking individual who did his

best to mesmerize one during the lesson, defined as a half hour's amusement for a critic.⁴⁰

Deference was often accompanied by anguish.

"To A Lesson Plan"

O, dream of hope! O, father of despair!
 You hold me in your clutches, O! that I
 Could wiser be, and know how to apply
 Thought provoking questions. Oh! I can but glare,
 At this poor presentation. How can I bear
 To face my critic and admit that my
 Faint aim and application, were by
 This hand committed—An ill-be-gotten pair:
 A ray of hope appears amid the gathering mist—
 Critics are sometimes kind, mayhap
 This one will kindest be, and give me C.
 Next year, then I shall work and get the gist
 Of this year's work. Meanwhile I can but tap
 My scanty knowledge—but it is weel!⁴¹

Despair and doubt; lowered and tempered hope; existence in an environment where absurdity apparently reigned, for practice teaching, and the grading of it, often did not make sense to normalites. It should not be surprising that in negotiating practice teaching normalites often followed their instructor's advice. Practice teaching appears designed to ensure this end.

In his ode to a normalite, A. Gordon wrote, "If in Practice School you've taught And criticism's all you've got. . . ."⁴² Gordon would have found a sympathetic reader in normalite Reg Turner. In a short story in which he describes the various instructors at the Calgary Normal School, Turner wrote:

This is . . . Mr. Scott, the Geography Instructor. He also looks after the Practice teaching and that's where the students fall out with him occasionally. By occasionally, I mean the times when they have to get up at six-thirty, travel about seven miles into the country and return with a "Fairly Good" criticism.⁴³

⁴⁰CmNSYB, 1929–30, pp. 42–43. NSF, PAA 84.484:2.

⁴¹By Claire Richardson, Class IID, in CmNSYB, 1929–30, p. 35. NSF, PAA 84.484:2. The normal school grading system was an eclectic collection of letters (from A through F), numbers, and comments, with no direct connections discovered.

⁴²Excerpt from "A Normalite," CgNSYB, 1930–31, p. 37. NSF, PAA 84.484:1.

⁴³Excerpt from "Ghosts at Normal," CgNSYB 1930–31, p. 60. NSF, PAA 84.484:1.

Orest Zarasky, Student Council President at the Edmonton Normal School, believed criticism to be important enough to address in his message. "[W]e also have our problems. . . . How often do we experience a sinking feeling when some instructor drops "like a bolt from the blue" to criticize a rather difficult lesson?"⁴⁴ The anticipation of sharp criticism, and its deflating impact, undoubtedly promoted a willingness in the normalite to adhere to the critic's suggestions.

Ultimately, the problems of practice teaching gave way to the relief of having survived the ordeal. In a short entry entitled "The Bugbear," the *Camrose Canadian* correspondent wrote,

What is it? Anyone entering the Normal school can detect it and anyone who has anything to do with Normal school can understand it. All the students are smiling, and their faces so recently flushed with excitement are calm, composed and tranquil. The reason is obvious—Practice teaching closes this week.⁴⁵

The reaction had little changed twenty years later when the correspondent noted that Class "A" students heaved a sigh of relief Thursday as they left the Practice school, and heaved a still greater one when they received criticisms on Friday.⁴⁶ Class "A" exhaled a final sigh of relief in April when they completed their last round of Practice teaching.⁴⁷

It is apparent that for most normalites practice teaching was a traumatic experience; so, at least, they claimed. It filled them with apprehension and self-doubt. Normalites were isolated in alien circumstances often beyond comprehension; uncertainty was of the essence of the activity. They were in a position that demanded acquiescence. The resultant anxiety undoubtedly created in many normalites a desire to please their critics and instructors. Thus, it was effective in reproducing particular teaching techniques. However, success was rooted in the erosion of any non-institutional initiative, any will which might challenge the knowledge and authority encouraged by such techniques.

PRACTICE TEACHING: THE IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Progressive education was the chief theoretical challenge to established practice in this period. Arguably, progressive education, strongly promoted by

⁴⁴ENSYB, 1936–37, p. 27. NSF, PAA 72.298:2.

⁴⁵CC, 29 March 1917.

⁴⁶CC, 1 December 1937.

⁴⁷CC, 6 April 1938.

Canadian educational authorities in the late 1930s, offers a significant challenge to my interpretation. Its emphasis on individualized learning and creative student responses suggests that an oppressive, directed and vigorously monitored teacher training would be inconsistent with a "progressive" outlook. However, any examination of the relationship between progressive education and practice teaching must consider that its proponents saw it as much more than another educational philosophy.⁴⁸ For many it was a faith. As part of a broader social reconstruction, made visibly necessary by the Great Depression, progressive education was to play a foundational role. Dickie, for example, wrote of the "new gospel," of transferring "the spirit" of progressive education, of "trust[ing] the activity" if one doubted.⁴⁹

A faith, however, particularly a new one, demanded commitment from its adherents. For teachers, it was to be forged and demonstrated in the normal school. The result for normalites was intensified institutional oversight.⁵⁰ The Deputy Minister commented at the end of the Depression:

[D]uring the first two or three months [the prospective teacher] is the object of special observation on the part of the staff of the Normal School. At any time during the year he may be required to withdraw if it appears that he is not likely to make a success of teaching.⁵¹

And although he thought that "Enterprise procedures became the prevailing method employed in all courses," this assertion is at least debatable. William Swift, principal of the Calgary Normal School (1940–42), suggested its effect on methodology was minimal.⁵² Normalites also disagreed, as the following comments indicate.

⁴⁸Also consider that the impact of progressive education on schools in Alberta was likely minimal. Donalda Dickie, Alberta's foremost authority on, and advocate for, progressive education, stated in 1940: "In many ways [its introduction] is still an 'attempt.' Many of our teachers still do not know how, or are afraid, to use the new methods." From "Enterprise Education—Part 1," *B.C. Teacher*, September 1940, pp. 18–20. Historians also suggest that many teachers were not adequately trained in the approach. See R. Patterson, "The Implementations of Progressive Education in Alberta, 1930–45," and N. Kach, "Progressive Education in Alberta," both in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed. N. Kach et al. (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), pages 79–96 and 97–120, respectively.

⁴⁹D. Dickie, "Enterprise Education in Alberta," *Understanding the Child*, (April 1940), p. 7, and *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* (Toronto: Gage, 1940), preface and p. 433.

⁵⁰Consider the more specific evaluation forms, noted on p. 8.

⁵¹Alberta Department of Education, *Annual Report*, 1939, p. 9.

⁵²I thank Steve Boddington for this information. See his forthcoming dissertation on Swift.

[In the late 1930s] no one was too sure what the [new method] was, and even summer school instructors dealt with it as a subject rather than a method. (Calgary Normal School, 1932–33)

When I was in Normal School, the demonstration teacher in Grade Six had absolute order in her room. As we students sat watching, the children in their seats were like statues. She said,

“Desks open”——They did.

“Take pencils”——They did.

“Desks close”——They did.

“Put pencil down”——They did.

. . . Later this teacher was an instructor in the Edmonton Normal School itself. The changeover from this attitude to the permissive enterprise was not that easy. (Camrose Normal School, 1924–25)⁵³

There is no consensus on progressivism’s impact.

A better understanding of progressivism’s influence on practice teaching will require more research. Even this cursory investigation suggests that it resulted in more careful and exact observations by institutional authorities. Practice teaching was stubbornly resistant to fundamental change. If anything, those aspects which heightened dependency (longer practice teaching activities, refined considerations of appropriate behaviour) were magnified. Apparently this was the case even with the introduction of progressive education, which demanded even greater conformity of normalites, and sought it through practice teaching. If so, this is irony at its most delicious, for practice teaching served to reproduce, rather than to reconstruct. It further suggests that progressive education had limited effect.

SPECULATIONS

Any reflections on practice teaching must consider that its value has historically rested less in its efficacy in training better teachers (however defined) than in its ability to ensure that the teachers who emerged from the normal schools internalized the characteristics promoted by institutional authorities. “Changes” in practice teaching thus takes on a new meaning. Innovations did not merely allow for increased exposure to teaching and for refined

⁵³Cited in “Research Questionnaire: History of Canadian Education”, in R. Patterson, *Progressive Education: Topics in the History of Education in Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, n.d.). Normal School instructors regularly taught summer school. At least one respondent (Edmonton Normal School, 1935–36) suggested that progressive methodologies were incorporated into her practice teaching.

evaluations; they intensified the normal school experience. They served to enhance anxiety, promote dependency, and encourage conformity to institutional norms, the latter the objective of teacher training.