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THE NEBRASKA COUNCIL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION:
THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

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During the early 1940's, to the educational leaders in the United States interested in improving our schools, it was becoming increasingly clear that there was much need for strengthening programs of teacher education. From the beginning of our history, it has been clearly recognized that our schools were only as strong as the teachers who manned our classrooms; and teachers, in turn, were only as effective as their training permitted them to be.

A study of teacher education prior to the forties revealed that relatively little attention had been paid to accreditation of colleges offering teacher education. Furthermore, practically every college in the nation was preparing teachers and little was being done to coordinate teacher preparation programs among colleges. Each college developed its own program and practices, quite independently of what was going on in other colleges.

It is of interest to note a few facts concerning Nebraska's teacher education programs in the early forties. During this time, Nebraska had more than 100 high schools training teachers in high school Normal Training programs. A sizable number of teachers were certificated to teach with only 12 hours of college credit taken during a summer session following high school. In fact, a study of teacher preparation in the elementary schools of Nebraska revealed that there were more elementary school teachers in the state without an hour of college preparation than there were with college degrees. Most elementary school positions in towns and cities were filled with teachers having the Junior Elementary Certificate based on only two years of college preparation and most rural teaching positions were filled with "normal training" or "twelve hour" prepared teachers.

Much of this history of teacher education in Nebraska is still very clear to the writer because he held a position in the State Department of Education for three years, from 1943 to 1946; and for a part of this period, he was given the responsibility of supervising the high school Normal Training program.

In the early forties, the American Council for Education appointed a commission headed by Dean Walter Pike, from the University of Minnesota, to make a study of teacher education. This commission was charged with giving leadership for a program of "Teacher Education and Professional Standards." A great deal has been accomplished through national and state TEPS commissions since that time.

As one of the projects of the commission, the State of Georgia, under the leadership of Laurence Haskew of Emory University, created a "Georgia Council for Teacher Education." This Council was organized to provide a clearinghouse where all of the teacher education colleges of the state could meet together to exchange ideas with each other in respect to their teacher education programs, and through which the State Department of Education could exercise effective leadership. Foundation funds were available to help defray the cost of the council activities.

Because of the successful accomplishments of the Georgia Council, it was decided to hold a national meeting in Atlanta, bringing together persons interested in teacher education from all the 48 states, for a week's conference, at which time delegates could see the Georgia Council in action and could visit teacher education programs in many parts of the state. This conference was held the first week in November of 1946. Delegates from Nebraska included Leo Black, from the State Department of

Education; Earle Wiltse, Superintendent of Schools, Grand Island; Galen Saylor, Chairman of the Department of Secondary Education, Teachers College, University of Nebraska; and the writer, who was the Director of Teacher Education and Chairman of the Department of Education at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

This week's sojourn into Georgia will always remain in the memory of the writer. Not only was the trip an exceedingly pleasant one with four full days of discussion, mostly about teacher education, by this committee of four while driving to and from Atlanta; but the conference itself was an inspiration. Delegates saw both the white and colored councils in action in a regular meeting. This meeting was conducted on a stage, with the delegates in the auditorium. Following these two council meetings, the conference delegates divided into groups and traveled by bus to various sections of Georgia to see firsthand, what was taking place in teacher education at the various colleges. No two delegates from the same state were scheduled for the same trip.

The writer was privileged to travel to West Carrollton, to see what was going on there in teacher education. Here he saw a college genuinely concerned about developing good teachers for a rural section of Georgia. As a result of this good working relationship with the surrounding area, much progress has been made in redistricting and good schools with good facilities had been and were being developed. The writer discovered, too, that the teachers of these schools were considered as members of the faculty of the college with all of the resources of the college available to them. The student teaching program was conducted in these schools under the direction of these teachers who had college faculty status.

In the two-day visit in and around West Carrollton, the writer saw good community schools with the college giving much help and counsel. The citizens in the area, in turn, showed much respect for the college and what it was doing for them. The teachers in training were getting an excellent program of preparation for teaching. The writer still remembers numerous incidents during the visit, all of which stressed the community school concept.

Following the visits to colleges in the state, the delegates returned to Atlanta where ideas were exchanged, questions about the Georgia Council were raised and answered, and the challenge issued for each state delegation to determine what they could carry back for implementation in their own state.

On leaving Atlanta, the Nebraska delegation decided also to visit Holtville, Alabama, where a very unique program was developing in community schools. This visit proved to be very worthwhile as the group learned about the many ways a school superintendent with vision and determination was able to work for community improvement through education. The superintendent of Holtville, with help and counsel from the Southern Accreditation Association, organized this school program around many community projects. A furniture factory, a cold storage locker and meat-cutting plant, a beauty parlor, a barber shop, a print shop, a soil conservation project, a home sanitation project, and a theatre were some of the activities managed by the school and operated to provide real learning experiences for high school students.

The conference in Atlanta and the visits to the college and community activities in connection with the conference, suggested to our delegation of four, that there was a great potential for a "Nebraska Council for Teacher Education" patterned somewhat like the one in Georgia. The two-day trip home provided the opportunity for considerable discussion and some agreement as to steps which needed to be taken in order to accomplish this goal. To this writer, because he had just recently assumed the position of Director of Teacher Education and had found many problems and questions in building a strong program of teacher education, it appeared obvious that much would be gained through cooperative planning with other Nebraska colleges.

Upon returning to Nebraska, each of the four delegates to the Atlanta conference agreed to tell the story of the Georgia Council to education groups and organizations whenever possible. The NSEA, the Nebraska Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Nebraska Association of County Superintendents, the Nebraska School Boards Association, and the Nebraska Association for Better Education were just a few of the groups contacted.

In the spring of 1947, under the leadership of the State Department of Education, a conference was called involving representatives from all Nebraska colleges and from all education groups who indicated an interest. Dr. Haskew, from Georgia, came to help as a resource person.

After much discussion, it was decided that a committee should be appointed, headed by Leo Black of the State Department of Education, to write the guidelines for council activities and to call for an organizational meeting in the fall of 1947. This was done; and in October, 1947, the Nebraska Council for Teacher Education came into existence with Dean Frank Henzlik of Teachers College, University of Nebraska, as its first president, Leo Black as the executive secretary and treasurer. It was also agreed that three regular meetings would be held yearly; one in early fall, one winter meeting, and one meeting in the spring.

The guidelines for council activities included the organization of six permanent committees. The chairman of each of these committees, with the president and the executive secretary and treasurer, made up the executive committee which would give leadership to the council and act for the council between meetings. The names of these committees and a thumbnail sketch of the work of each committee as it was originally conceived follows:

Committee One – Administration and Supervision—This committee was charged with the responsibility of visiting the colleges for the purpose of counseling with persons in charge of teacher education in the college and also making recommendations to the council regarding the approval of teacher education programs in each college. Nebraska law at the time stated that the state superintendent should visit or should appoint a board of examiners to visit each of the non-state-supported colleges to determine whether or not that college should be permitted to train teachers and recommend prospective teachers to the department for certification. Wayne O. Reed, then the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, elected to office by popular vote of the electorate in the state, agreed with the council that this responsibility would be delegated to Committee One as his appointees.

It is of significance to note that Committee One, while it has taken on additional responsibilities, has continued to carry out this primary function during the entire twenty years of the council's existence.

Committee Two – Certification—This committee was appointed to carry out a continuous study of certification standards and problems and to make recommendations to the council and through the council to other education groups in Nebraska, regarding changes needed in certification standards and practices.

Committee Three – Recruitment—This committee was appointed to carry out a continuous study of ways and means that could be used to attract capable young people into teaching. It is of interest to note that early in its work, the committee asked to change its name to "Selective Recruitment and Professionalization."

Committee Four – Pre-Service Education—As the name would imply, this committee was concerned with planning effective programs at the undergraduate level of training. Through the years, it has done a great deal of work through numerous sub-committees appointed to do a specifically assigned task.

Committee Five – In-Service Education—This committee focused its attention on graduate programs, summer programs, field courses, correspondence study, and other phases related to “on the job” education.

Committee Six – Research—This committee was appointed to carry out research projects as directed by the council. Specific research projects have varied widely through the years, and as the council spread out into many and varied activities, many research activities have had to be conducted by the committees requesting them.

During the course of its work, the council added two additional standing committees modified somewhat the organization of Committees Four and Five, and from time to time, modified the names of the committees.

Committee Seven was added for the purpose of making continued study of educational problems in Nebraska. This committee has from time to time, developed policy statements on these issues and problems.

Committee Eight was established to study the working functions of the council and to recommend such changes in organization as may appear necessary from time to time. This committee also developed the policies and criteria for evaluating teacher education programs in the state. This policies and criteria statement has been widely used by other states.

From the beginning, it has been the practice of the council that the membership of the standing committees could be selected from outside the council, bringing in persons who were interested and willing to work on these committees.

Approximately a year ago (1966), Committee Eight was given the assignment of bringing together in one concise statement, the purpose, the composition, and general regulations within which the council operates. This statement follows:

Objectives and Regulations

The Nebraska Council on Teacher Education is a voluntary organization of statewide agencies and institutions which have a special interest in teacher education and professional standards. The term “teacher education” is interpreted broadly and is concerned with all aspects and levels of preparation for teaching and educational administration and supervision.

Main Purpose

The council is organized to facilitate a unified approach to the solution of problems involved in the selection and preparation of teachers and other professional school personnel. The council acts as an advisory body to those agencies and institutions responsible for teacher education and certification. To achieve this purpose the council continuously studies and appraises the total situation relative to teacher education in the light of: (1) its own analysis of the scope and nature of the education needed by teachers and other professional school personnel, (2) the results of studies and evaluations made by individual teacher education institutions and agencies, and (3) the studied opinions and judgments of outstanding educational and lay leaders. Furthermore, the council motivates and coordinates the efforts of all institutions and agencies concerned with the improvement of teacher education.

Objectives

The council dedicated itself to the attainment of the following objectives:

1. To arouse public interest in and stimulate action for improved standards in teacher education and certification.

2. To develop common understandings among those who work in teacher education and to bring about voluntary agreement for allocation of responsibilities among existing agencies.
3. To conduct investigations of such state-wide problems as teacher selection, supply and demand, conditions of service, status of profession, and financial support for teacher education.
4. To disseminate the latest findings of research in regard to teacher education and to urge consideration of the recommendations of authoritative and accrediting groups.
5. To assist teacher education institutions in planning desirable programs for preparation of teachers, including both the academic and professional content.
6. To improve standards and procedures for the admission of prospective teachers to teacher education programs, and to foster programs designed to motivate and encourage capable young people to consider seriously entering the teaching profession and dedicating themselves to the ideals of public service.
7. To provide leadership in the development and improvement of in-service programs for teachers and other professional school personnel.
8. To advise the State Department of Education in the evaluation and approval of institutions and programs of teacher education.
9. To formulate pronouncements on basic issues relative to education problems and principles.

Procedures

Statements of regulations and purposes guide the activities of the council and its committees. The committees report their plans, activities, and progress to the council at each regular meeting. The council takes action on matters of major concern. Pronouncements and reports of studies are frequently distributed to all interested individuals and groups in the state. The Executive Committee acts for the council between regular council meetings.

Membership and Finances

The membership fee is determined by the council. This fee includes membership dues and the costs of studies, materials and other services provided by the council. The following list of member organizations and number of representatives from each reflects the present (1967) composition of the council. The member organization and/or number of representatives may be modified as circumstances change.

1967 Composition of the Voting Membership
(All members are appointed for a three-year term)

Organizations Represented	Number of Representatives
State Department of Education	6
University of Nebraska	4
State Colleges	12
Private Colleges	21
Omaha University	3
Public Junior Colleges	5
Association of College Teachers of Education	1
Nebraska State Education Association	2
State TEPS Commission	16
Nebraska School Boards Association	2
Nebraska Congress of Parents and Teachers	2
Nebraska Association of County Superintendents	2
Nebraska Council for Better Education	1
Nebraska State Institutional Teachers Placement Officers Association	1
Nebraska Personnel and Guidance Association	1
Nebraska Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers	1
Nebraska Student Education Association	2
Association of School Administrators	2
Department of Elementary Principals	1
Nebraska Department of Classroom Teachers	1
Nebraska Federation of Council for Exceptional Children	1
Normal School Board	1
Nebraska Association for Student Teaching	1
McRel – Omaha Region	1
Total Representatives	90

Additional voting members include past-presidents and secretaries of the council and standing committee chairmen who are not otherwise members of the council.

Responsibilities of Specific Committees

Committee I – Approval of Teacher Education at the State Level This committee shall:

1. Evaluate teacher education programs in Nebraska Colleges and Universities in the light of the “Policies and Criteria” and make recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning the approval of institutions and of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs.
2. Report committee findings concerning approval to the local institutions and to the council.
3. Serve as a permanent professional committee of the council working closely with all council committees with emphasis upon ways of improving teacher education programs.
4. Keep the council informed about and make recommendations concerning the structure and function of higher education at the state level; existing legislation concerned with teacher education; and the policies of the National Council of Chief State School officers and other national and regional teacher education groups.
5. Assist in the development of standards for approval of teacher education programs in Nebraska Colleges and Universities.

Committee II – Certification This committee shall:

1. Study the present standards and procedures for the certification of teachers in Nebraska and make recommendations to the council and State Board of Education concerning legislation which will improve certification standards and the procedures for the issuance of certificates and permits.
2. Give consideration to the facts and trends concerning the supply and demand of teachers.
3. Study and make recommendations concerning reciprocity agreements pertaining to teacher certification.
4. Serve as the Advisory Committee on teacher certification to the State Board of Education.

Committee III – Teacher Selection, General Education and Professional Education This committee shall:

1. Suggest procedures for selecting and guiding young people into teaching, emphasizing areas of critical need in teaching, and emphasizing available scholarship and loan programs.
2. Periodically review criteria for General Education and Professional Education Programs, including laboratory experiences, and recommend changes to the Executive Committee.
3. Stimulate improvement in the professional education of college teachers. Bring to the attention of the council new developments in teacher education.

Committee IV – Programs for Teaching Endorsements This committee shall:

1. Develop, review and recommend endorsement programs to the Executive Committee for the: Pre-Standard, Standard, Professional, and Special Services Teaching Certificates.
2. Give special attention to the improvement of: Summer workshops and workshop seminars; correspondence and television courses; off-campus and study-center programs; the use of new media of communication in the education of teachers; and other developments affecting professional growth.
3. Cooperate with academic and professional association in recommending teacher education programs that reflect the criteria projected by the recognized academic and professional societies and leaders and that are practical in reflecting the needs and attitudes of the educational and lay public of the state.
4. Recommend to the Committee on certification standards and procedures for certification of school administrators and supervisors.

Committee V – Programs for Administrator and Supervisor Endorsements This committee shall:

1. Be responsible for the careful study of the trends and needs concerning the requirements and preparation of educational administrators and supervisors.
2. Make recommendations to the Executive Committee for criteria for the preparation of administrators and supervisors.
3. Prepare statements which can be approved and used by the council concerning the scope and nature of education needed by Nebraska educational administrators and supervisors.
4. Recommend to the Executive Committee professional graduate programs for the preparation and certification of administrators and supervisors.
5. Consider and recommend possible improvements in the materials and procedures used in the preparation of administrators and supervisors.
6. Recommend to the Committee on Certification standards and procedures for certification of school administrators and supervisors.
7. Cooperate with the State Department of Education and Colleges on developing and recommending in-service activities and programs for the improvement of administrators and supervisors.

As one reviews the activities of the council, it is clear that its primary objectives have been and are being achieved. Council and committee meetings are providing a clearinghouse for an exchange of ideas between colleges. These meetings also provide the forum whereby significant problems can be raised and discussed and decisions reached concerning proposed solutions.

During its twenty years of existence, the council has had a profound impact on teacher education programs in Nebraska and has influenced the direction of public education in Nebraska. Only a few of the activities accomplished can be mentioned in this paper.

The council took the lead in the passage of the constitutional amendment establishing a state board of education and appointed a commissioner of education.

The council took the lead in getting legislation to transfer teacher certification standards from the statutes into the hands of the state board of education.

The original statutes specified that the state board of examiners should visit the non-state colleges to see whether their programs of teacher education conformed to those in the state programs are evaluated in light of the policies and criteria for approval – a statement cooperatively developed through the council. In other words, instead of having standards set only by the state colleges, these standards are cooperatively developed and all colleges in Nebraska are evaluated on the basis of these standards.

Twenty years ago, approval for offering teacher education programs by a college amounted to a “blanket approval” for practically all teacher education programs. Today, specific programs are approved for a college in keeping with that college’s request to offer that program and in consideration of the adequacy of that college to offer the program. For example, if a college wishes to prepare teachers in special education, home economics, or industrial education, then the examination is made for these specific programs and approval is given or denied in light of the adequacy of the college to offer the program.

Periodically, the council has formulated a position paper on current educational problems and issues. These position statements have been widely circulated and have been of significant influence in clarifying and crystallizing professional and public opinion. Some of these position statements include the following:

- “Teaching About Communism”
- “Religion in the Public Schools”
- “Censorship of Textbooks and Library Materials”
- “Teaching Controversial Issues in the Schools”
- “Orientation and Induction Procedures for New Teachers”
- “Policies on Admission to and Performance in Teacher Education Programs”
- “What Nebraska Schools Are Up Against”
- “Improved Certification Requirements”

It has been my privilege to be a member of the Nebraska Council for Teacher Education during the first twenty years of its history. As I view the working relationships which exist in Nebraska between the agencies and organizations interested in and responsible for education, I am much impressed by the excellent cooperation which is practiced and the goodwill and mutual respect which exists. It is my sincere hope that this relationship will continue. I know that the Nebraska Council has contributed much to this goodwill relationship, and I sincerely hope that it will continue to do so – not just to provide a happy working relationship for educators in Nebraska, but for the purpose of providing the best possible education for Nebraska children and youth.

Much progress has been accomplished by the Nebraska Council for Teacher Education, but much more remains to be done. It is to this purpose that the council must dedicate its future efforts.