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Colonel Francis Parker and beginning reading instruction

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Abstract

In the late nineteenth century progressive educators advocated reforms in the educational system that were intended to humanize instruction. At the forefront of this movement was Colonel Francis W. Parker, a teacher and later an administrator who concerned himself with all aspects of the curriculum, including beginning reading. He was acclaimed by some as an innovator and attacked by others as a heretic. Parker's viewpoints concerning education countered the existing educational practices of the late 1800a. His beliefs concerning the teaching of reading were no leas radical to his time.

COLONEL FRANCIS PARKER AND BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century progressive educators advocated reforms in the educational system that were intended to humanize instruction. At the forefront of this movement was Colonel Francis W. Parker, a teacher and later an administrator who concerned himself with all aspects of the curriculum, including beginning reading. He was acclaimed by some as an innovator and attacked by others as a heretic. Parker's viewpoints concerning education countered the existing educational practices of the late 1800s. His beliefs concerning the teaching of reading were no less radical to his time.

Reading instruction in the late 1800s consisted of teaching children to recognize words and to read orally with very little emphasis placed on reading for meaning (Finkelstein, 1970; Mathews, 1966; Smith, 1965). For the first several years of school, children built a vocabulary from one or two books of words that they would later use in reading (Jackman, 1902a). When children did read connected text, their performance consisted of "routine, mechanical reciting" and "devitalized memorizing" (Hirsch, 1902, p.709).

In contrast to these sterile practices, Parker believed in the active involvement of children in the learning process. Underlying much of his child-centered philosophy was the belief that human nature was essentially good (Cooke, 1912; Johnson, 1974; Parker, in Giffin, 1906). The specific instructional practices Parker endorsed were grounded in this belief.

This report of historical research presents principles of desirable reading instruction and the teaching methods derived from such principles according to Parker. The literature describing these aspects of Parker's work is not extensive. Recent historical research has described philosophies that influenced his practices (Johnson, 1974) and his effect on New England education early in this century (Katz, 1967). Early in this century two of Parker's colleagues wrote articles about his work at the Chicago Normal School and the problems he encountered in trying to make his beliefs understood (Cooke, 1900, 1912; Jackman, 1902b). Observational research was conducted in Parker's Quincy, Massachusetts schools in 1881 which described actual classroom lessons, complete with dialogue between teachers and students (Patridge, 1885). Additionally, there is a short autobiographical sketch

by Parker included in a book describing schools in the 1850's (Giffin, 1906) as well as a rather complete biography of Parker (Campbell, 1967). Parker himself wrote several articles and books concerning his educational philosophy (Parker, 1894, 1900, 1902a, 1902b). Most of the literature depicts Parker's general educational philosophy and practices and the impact they had on the education of his day.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper is to describe Parker's point of view about beginning reading instruction as illustrated by his statements of general principles, by his recommended methods, and by the methods that were actually implemented in his schools. Specifically, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What did Parker see as the principles of teaching beginning reading?
2. What were the methods of an ideal beginning reading program that were derived from his principles?

Importance of the Study

Studying Parker's point of view about beginning reading instruction is important for at least two reasons. First of all, Parker's point of view can be

utilized as a model for evaluating present day practices. By studying the methods of this pioneer educator, a perspective can be gained on the current state of teaching reading. The distance of history allows a certain detached inspection of current practices with the possible outcome of clarifying priorities and philosophy.

The second reason for becoming familiar with Parker's point of view is that his position on teaching beginning reading can be taken as a guide for practicing teachers of today. A strength of Francis Parker's was practicality. His methods can be used as guidelines for conducting actual reading instruction.

Chapter II

FINDINGS

In order to present Parker's conception of the proper principles and methods of beginning reading instruction, the available literature will be reviewed in four sections. The first section will contain a brief biographical sketch of Francis Parker. The second will provide a context for Parker's work by discussing the common instruction of his time. The third section will discuss his principles for beginning reading instruction, and the last section will describe his methods that are based on the principles.

Biographical Information

Francis Parker, born in October of 1837, was the youngest child of older parents. His father was described as "never a well man" (Campbell, 1967, p.4) and died when Parker was six years old. An uncle was named guardian of the Parker children, and when Francis was eight the uncle found a farmer who would accept the small boy as an apprentice until the child was twenty-one. From Parker's own account, the years on the farm were happy ones, and he considered them to be vital to his education. He learned a great deal from studying

nature on his own, and this became the basis for his later insistence that the school curriculum relate to a child's real world (Parker, in Giffin, 1906).

Education apparently had been important in Parker's family, given the fact that his mother and maternal grandfather had been teachers and one of his uncles was on a school committee. Before his father's death, young Francis had attended the village school in his home town of Piscatauquog, New Hampshire, and he later attended the boys' academy there. During the five years that he actually stayed on the farm, however, he attended school only about eight weeks each winter because he was needed to work. Parker's mother had taught him to read at the age of three, so even though his schooling was little and of questionable quality, he read everything he could find on the farm. Everything consisted of the Bible, almanacs, Pilgrim's Progress, and Life of Judson (Parker, in Giffin, 1906; Cooke, 1938).

When Francis was thirteen, he left the farm against the will of his guardian and supported himself for the next three years while he attended an academy full time. He was determined to be a teacher, and he took his first teaching job in the winter of 1853 at

the age of sixteen. The students' parents did not expect the lanky boy to succeed because many of the students were older and larger than he; however, he did succeed, largely due to the "good will" of his pupils (Parker, in Giffin, p.120). He seemed to have had a way of dealing with young people that brought out the best in them.

In addition to the influences of his life on the farm and his early years as a teacher, Parker cites his Civil War experience as an officer in the Fourth New Hampshire Volunteers as one of the most valuable lessons of his life. According to Parker, "The army gave me some measure of self-control, not very much, by the way, but enough to steady me" (Parker, in Giffin, p.117). When Parker returned to New Hampshire in 1865 at the end of the war, he reported, "I was looked upon by my friends as a young man who had succeeded very well" (Parker, in Giffin, p. 125). Several non-teaching jobs were offered him, and Parker said it appeared that nothing was too good for him. Despite the opportunities to follow other careers, Parker was determined to teach school. He left the army at the end of the Civil War with the title of Colonel, which gave him some respect from school board members and

parents that he might have lacked at that point in his career when his education had not extended beyond age sixteen.

Parker's lack of formal education was an embarrassment to him several years later when he became a school administrator in Dayton, Ohio. For instance, his detractors actually called him an "illiterate man" and said that he had a poor education because of no college training (Parker, in Giffin, p. 129). Parker wrote that he in fact continually studied and planned for his work. He repeatedly found, however, that others in the teaching field did not study their professions, which in part triggered his decision in 1872 to study education in Germany. Parker stayed in Germany for two years and was greatly impressed and influenced by the work of Froebel in kindergartens (Parker, in Giffin, 1906) and also by the method of object teaching (Johnson, 1974).

Parker faced numerous problems when he accepted the position of Superintendent of the Quincy, Massachusetts schools in 1875 at the age of 37. Quincy had become industrialized, with the ensuing problems of an influx of more children plus the changing profile of Quincy from a majority of an educated elite to a

majority of immigrant workers. Although the cost of education had doubled, the 1873 public examinations revealed that the students could respond to only the lowest level questions with seemingly little understanding (Campbell, 1967). The usual procedure had been for the teachers to ask well-rehearsed questions, but that year, due to the problems of increasing budgets, the school committee did the questioning. The shock of the poor results plus the problem of finances and high truancy caused the committee to decide to hire a full-time superintendent (Katz, 1967, p. 6).

Parker was eager for the challenge in Quincy. He hired teachers as openings became available, and worked closely with them to put into practice the educational theories he had learned in Germany. Parker became famous after a few years as the originator of the "Quincy Method," as it came to be called, and thousands of people from all over the country came to observe the system. It was reported that 6,396 people came in just one year (Katz, 1967). Parker said that there really never was a "Quincy Method," as he believed a method should never be fixed or unchanging but constantly improving and changing to meet children's needs. The

best result in Quincy according to Parker was "the more humane treatment of little folks " (Parker, 1902b, p. 240).

Despite the fame Parker gained in Quincy, he still was plagued by criticisms. Questions were asked such as, "The children are amused and happy; they love to go to school; but do they learn? Can they spell? And so on" (Parker, 1902b, p. 241). The answer is found in the examinations conducted by the Massachusetts state board of education in 1878, three years after Parker had begun his work in Quincy. The children of Quincy were found to be superior to the students in the other towns of the county in every area but arithmetic, the last area of change undertaken by Parker. The state examiner noted the great difference in scores and commented on the possibility of the superiority of the methods used in Quincy. In addition to the higher scores, other signs of improvement were the doubling of attendance at the high school and the decrease of truancy (Parker, 1902b; Katz, 1967). Nicholas Murray Butler, when speaking at the twenty-fifth anniversary of Parker's work in Quincy, said, "These things he has done in the name not of any theory, or school, or sect, but of childhood" (Butler, 1902, p. 242).

After five years in Quincy, when the school board refused not only to raise Parker's salary but the salaries of his teachers, Parker decided to accept a position as one of the six supervisors of the Boston schools. Once again he met opposition, particularly from the teachers and principals. The root of the problem was that Parker felt strongly that teachers must continue to study their profession in order to remain effective (Parker, in Giffin, 1906).

Parker demonstrated his belief in teacher training when he accepted a job offer in 1882 as principal of the Cook County Normal School in Chicago. When he took command, the institution was a training school for high-school and elementary-school teachers. It later became strictly for the training of elementary-grade teachers. The training of student teachers was put to the test in the practice school which consisted of eight elementary grades and four high school grades (Campbell, 1967). The elementary grades were in only one room when Parker arrived at the Normal School (Parker, 1902a). In Chicago he encountered a school building in need of great repair, very little equipment, a rudimentary library, and some incompetent teachers who gained their positions because they were

political appointees. The Chicago press was against the training of teachers, and the other principals and teachers did not go out of their way to be friendly. It was said that the Normal School was largely ignored by the board of education (Bright, 1902, p. 273). Parker fought and won the battle to control the appointment of teachers. Once a week the faculty met to discuss their methods and to give reasons for their teaching. Parker believed that a normal school should do more than train teachers: "It should be a laboratory, an educational experiment station, whose influence penetrates, permeates, and improves all education and educational thinking" (Parker, 1894, p. 752).

Although the first fifteen years were reported as very difficult, students came to study at Cook County Normal School from all over the United States and from several foreign countries. There were one hundred graduates each year, some of them experienced teachers who wanted to study with Parker (Lane, 1902). By 1898 the facilities had changed tremendously with renovations of the buildings and the addition of a gymnasium, a printing department, a well-stocked library, and new furniture. An important addition was

the group of teachers Parker had gathered. Some of them had been recruited and many had been trained at the normal school. One observer described them by saying,"It is safe to say that no more earnest, efficient, and devoted body of teachers ever worked to carry out the purposes of an inspired leader" (Bright, 1902, p. 274).

Parker stayed at the normal school until his resignation in 1899 to become president of the Chicago Institute, a private school endowed by a wealthy Chicago woman, Anita McCormick Blaine. Freed from the problems of scanty school budgets, Parker dreamed of making the Chicago Institute a model school for children as well as for teacher trainees. However, his health began to fail in 1899 and continued to worsen with the strain of a merger of the Chicago Institute with the University of Chicago in 1901. Parker eventually died in March of 1902 at the age of 64 (Campbell, 1967).

Reading Instruction During the Late 1800's

Francis Parker was painfully aware of the problems in the schools of his time. In 1900 when speaking about the general atmosphere in the schools in the previous twenty years, he said, "In school the child

had too often a separate stream of thought, or a stagnant pool, totally separate from his real life" (Parker, 1902b, p. 240). This description seems from writings of the time to be fairly typical of American classrooms during the last half of the nineteenth century. One observer reports of reading lessons in which children plodded through learning letters, then words, and finally, when they had the words, they asked, "Do we go up?" (Minshall, 1914, p. 568). Minshall expressed no surprise, given this reading material, that "The child did not love to read" (Minshall, 1914, p. 568). Another observer spoke of "poverty-stricken, skeletal text-books" (Jackman, 1902a, p. 748), while Parker described most school reading as "desultory, promiscuous, and unrelated to the subjects taught" (Parker, 1894, p. 220).

The emphasis in beginning reading in that period of time was on word recognition and identification rather than on meaning (Finkelstein, 1970). Instruction included repeating letter sounds after the teacher, then syllables such as ba, ca, da, and pa, and finally words (Smith, 1974). Many sources describe the mechanical, routineness of the school day, the listlessness of the children, and the formal and rigid

atmosphere of the classroom (Finkelstein, 1970; Rice, 1969; Wingo, 1974). Finkelstein described teachers of the day as either "overseers" or "drillmasters," neither position requiring the teacher to clarify or explain ideas. Hirsch described school this way in his memorial address for Parker:

> And the pupil's part in this process was restricted to parroting, with prescribed sing-song, the textbook. History was a jungle of unconnected and bewildering dates and names. He who could mumble off the names without tripping and at the highest speed, was crowned with distinction. (Hirsch, 1902, p. 170)

Smith (1974), who produced a frequently-cited history of reading instruction, emphasizes the important place of oral reading in schools of this time. In fact, it seemed nationally accepted that reading was defined as reading orally. The teacher's role was to assign the reading and correct the pronunciation. Some schools were called <u>loud schools</u> because the teacher would have the students recite at the same time. Other teachers were compared to choir directors, leading their students in simultaneous oral reading (Finkelstein, 1970). Parker felt that the

insistence on oral reading, with its emphasis on pronunciation of words rather than gaining meaning, was one of the worst problems in schools of that time (Parker, 1894).

Parker's Principles for Beginning Reading Instruction

At the time of Parker's death a memorial service was held for him in Chicago during which many prominent people expressed their regard for the man who had "made a school that was at the same time a beautiful home" (Cook, 1902, p. 710) and whose "love for the child and childhood knew no limits" (Butler, 1902, p. 242). The generally expressed opinion of those who worked with Francis Parker was that he genuinely loved and respected children.

Given Parker's awareness of problems in the schools and his intense belief that children needed to learn to read well, his great concern for beginning reading instruction is no surprise. With respect to the goal of children learning to read well, Parker adhered to at least three principles of instruction: (a) children should be happy when learning to read, (b) reading should be for meaning, and (c) reading should be integrated with the central subjects (history,

biology, geography, etc.).

Happiness

The first principle of instruction was that children should be happy in order for learning to take place. Parker reports that he had observed little children studying "their A B C's, and doing their work, and they did not seem happy in it as I thought children should, and my question was, 'Did God intend this mournful process, that this mournful plan, should be the way of developing the embryotic man?'" (Parker, in Giffin, 1906, p.126).

In Quincy he advocated an emphasis on helping children realize that they had something to do for themselves, an end to sitting perfectly still, and an end to grading and punishment (Parker, 1902). Patridge observed the Quincy schools in operation and commented on how the teachers inspired the best efforts of the children. Over and over she mentioned the interest of the students in their lessons and their general happiness. On one occasion a teacher enlisted the help of a student to assist her in teaching a reading lesson. Patridge commented on "the delight the lesson gave the children" and the way they went "smilingly" back to their places (Patridge, 1885, p. 126). Rice

visited the Chicago Normal School and noted that the kindergarten children used the park for their games when the weather was warm and did "much of their work" outside (Rice, 1969, p. 216), which seemed to promote happiness among the children.

When asked once why he liked to teach school, Parker replied, "It is because I love to see things grow" (Parker, in Giffin, 1906, p. 133). Parker may well have been the first reknowned American educational reformer who actually liked children (Katz, 1967). Patridge commented that when Parker died the children of this country would lose their "warmest friend, ablest champion, and wisest benefactor" (Patridge, 1891, p.xxi).

Meaning

Parker's second principle underlying beginning reading instruction was that all instruction should be meaningful. That is, all instruction should be within the child's realm of interest and understanding. He denounced the then current practice of teaching children to read words with little or no attention to the meaning (Patridge, 1891). Instruction with little meaning to children was the norm at that time with the stress on mechanics, rate, and intonation. To

illustrate, one superintendent reported at a state convention in 1845 that the first reading lessons should excite the interest of children, but instead "mental inactivity and indifference have been kept up so long, upon the alphabet and spelling columns, as to become a fixed habit" (Mathews, 1966, p. 58). Parker believed that if children began to think that they could read just by pronouncing words, they might never form the habit of using words to think (Parker, 1894). He advocated reading in connection with other subjects such as history and also reading a great deal of the students' own writing (Rice, 1969, p. 213). In these ways Parker believed children could obtain meaning from reading.

Integration

The third principle of Parker's which directed beginning reading intruction was to integrate reading with other subjects, making it a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Parker, in Giffin, 1906; Cooke, 1912). He believed that reading should be taught when it was needed for studying the central subjects and that reading should be connected with writing. To reach this goal hundreds of pages of the children's own writing were printed at the Chicago Normal School every

year to be used for reading lessons as well as for study of the central subjects. Before the school had a printing press, "The work in the Normal School was almost at a standstill for the reason that no natural connection could be made between the experiences of the children and the books with which they could be supplied" (Jackman, 1902a, p. 747). Parker frequently spoke of the importance of the printing press at the Chicago Normal School. The press was used to print reading lessons dictated to the teacher about science experiments, field trips, and other units of study by the children. To Parker reading that was integrated with the central subjects and with writing was essential because "The lessons in the text-book did not enter the child's apperception" (Parker, 1902a, p. 778).

Parker's Methods for Teaching Beginning Reading

This section presents the methods of reading instruction Parker either recommended or actually implemented. These methods are derived from and illustrate the general principles of instruction described in the preceding section. Six topics are considered: (a) comprehension, (b) reading materials, (c) classroom organization, (d) evaluation, (e) word

recognition, and (f) oral reading.

Comprehension

The first and perhaps the most important topic for beginning reading instruction was teaching comprehension. Since Parker's definition of reading was, "Getting thought by means of written or printed words arranged in sentences" (Patridge, 1891, p. 26), how did he advocate getting those thoughts?

First of all, he advised capitalizing on moments of intense interest for children (Parker, 1900). He discussed this technique in Talks on Pedagogics, "When the thought is being developed, when the interest is most intense, the printed words or their effects in consciousness may be associated with the greatest ease, that is, --unconciously associated" (Parker, 1894, p. 202). He advised his teachers to carefully observe their students and to be ready to provide a word orally and written on the board at the moment the word was needed (Parker, 1894). An observed classroom example of this method is included in Patridge's Quincy Methods Illustrated. She observed a reading lesson in which the teacher used a much publicized circus for motivation. Her first step was to draw a picture of the star attraction, Jumbo the Elephant, on the board

and lead a discussion about elephants, using the children's excitement about going to the circus. She asked the children a question and then wrote a sentence quickly on the board. For example, she stated, "This is something I want to know," and then wrote, "Are you going to see the elephant Jumbo?" The teacher called on a child to read the sentence, and then she repeated the sequence. After several sentences such as these, the teacher ended the lesson with a joke about Jumbo's trunk being put on board the train. Patridge noted that the group had read intensely and with excitement for the whole lesson (Patridge, 1885, p. 159-160).

When asked what children should study, Parker answered, "That knowledge which is related to what he already has and what he needs for immediate use. Such knowledge alone is nutritious" (Parker, 1900, p. 12). This concept of prior knowledge was vital in Parker's theory of reading. His basis for the importance of this idea was that a reader thinks his or her own thoughts and that the mind determines how printed words are interpreted. With this in mind he considered the little child, coming to school with a mind full of experiences and events, and challenged his teachers to use that existing knowledge to teach. In the preface

to Playtime and Seedtime Parker observed, "Reading should be first of all, interesting to the learner; and in order to be interesting it must come close to and enter into the child's stream of thought" (Parker and Helm, 1902, p. iv). To continue building on this first-hand knowledge of the world, Parker encouraged a great deal of contact with nature and frequent field trips in connection with topics being taught (Harper, 1902).

Another important part of comprehension to Parker was that children learn to automatically associate words with ideas (Patridge, 1891,) That is, a word should immediately trigger a picture or thought and the child should be free to read on. Totally against having children learn words simply to gain a vocabulary, Parker stated in Talks on Pedagogics, "In reading, when the word has performed its function, it is of no more immediate use" (Parker, 1894, p. 199). He felt that learning to read words apart from meaning was made "long and tedious" (Parker, 1900, p.13).

Other methods of teaching comprehension are found both in Parker's writings and in Patridge's observations in Quincy. One of these methods was having the children retell in their own words a story

they had read. At times this was done immediately after reading a story, and at other times the children were asked to retell a story from the previous day.

Another method was to use prediction as an aid in comprehension by presenting vocabulary words, discussing the picture, and motivating the children to predict what the story might be about. Another way prediction was used was in having the children provide words for a story on the board when the teacher paused for their input.

Materials

Another component of a beginning reading program that Parker emphasized was the use of reading materials. His primary choice of materials was the children's own compositions (both dictated to the teacher and written themselves), stating that in the first three years of school this was a better source than any number of supplementary books (Patridge, 1891). The underlying worth was "to enhance the child's thought" by letting children see their own verbalized thoughts written in words (Parker, 1894, p. 205). He was clear that the students should read everything they wrote. Writing about the central subjects was probably at the top of his writing list.

Students' own observations when studying botany or geology were to his mind "an inexhaustable source of pleasure and interest" (Parker, 1894, p. 201).

Teachers in Parker's last school, the Chicago Institute, provided examples of this method in their monthly lesson plans which were published in the Elementary School Teacher and Course of Study. The first grade lesson plans for reading showed time for placing words in the children's own dictionaries, writing Christmas stories to be used for reading lessons, as well as dictating descriptions of experiments with crystallization to the teacher (Atwood, 1900). By second grade the students were recording their science observations as well as getting information from the library on a topic of interest and presenting it to the class in some form (Atwood, 1900; Hollister, 1900). Directions for cooking or making Christmas gifts were also displayed in the rooms. Rice (1969) noted in his observations at the Chicago Normal School that each child was responsible for a number of plants in the school garden and kept a notebook to record their growth. Children's written products, printed in the school printing shop and used for reading lessons, were called "leaflets" or reading

slips (Jackman, 1902a; Atwood, 1900). Three examples of these student-generated leaflets are Lesson on Stones, Description of the Visit to the Farm, and Description of the Mayflower (Atwood, 1900; Hollister, 1900). Cooke told of investigations of the best soil for a garden in which the children dictated their discoveries to the teacher or wrote their findings themselves if they were able. Their conclusions were sent to the printer, and subsequent reading lessons were spent discovering if the class members had had the same results.

It is interesting to note that the mode for recording children's thoughts was from script to print, not vice-versa as is the practice today. Script was the writing style used by school children in those days, and it was taught to the youngest students as their introduction to penmanship. Manuscript writing, or printing, was not introduced in this country until the 1920's, and even then it was taught mostly in private or laboratory schools (Hildreth, 1960). Consequently, 19th century children who were used to first reading what the teacher wrote faced a problem. When the children were introduced to the printed page for the first time for reading, a transition had to be

made from script to print.

Parker advised teachers to begin reading instruction with lessons on the blackboard during which the teacher would use script to write. When the children toward the end of the first year of school were to be transferred to print and begin reading in books, the advice was not to let them know they were doing anything difficult. Patridge observed such a lesson in Quincy, and in recording the lesson noted the teacher's note to herself on the lesson plan, "Be sure not to let the children think they are going to do anything difficult or unusual; and try very hard not to think so myself" (Patridge, 1885, p.121). In this particular lesson the teacher had the children working with her from a printed chart. She chose a bright and confident boy to read, planning that by his example the other children would follow suit. The children did and with no apparent concern that they were reading print and not script.

As far as books were concerned, Parker had been surprised to find few books published for young children when he went to Dayton in 1868 to begin his work (Parker, in Giffin, 1906). Cooke echoed Parker's dilemma of finding appropriate materials for reading

when she mentioned in 1900 the difficulty of getting good reading for little children (Cooke, 1900). There seems to have been some misunderstanding about the value Parker placed on books, which he addressed at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Quincy Method. He stated that they had not banished text-books in Quincy but had added to them (Parker, 1902). His colleague, Flora Cooke, explained that Parker believed books could never replace observation, but that they did stimulate thinking, and he was certainly not against them in school (Cooke, 1938). By 1899, when writing about the Cook County School, Parker told of the library which contained "thirteen thousand volumes, the largest school collection of pictures in the world; and a very large cyclopaedia of newspaper clippings" (Parker, 1902a, p. 778). Lane, telling of the Chicago Normal School, stated, "Many books furnishing information were brought into the schoolroom, and the children learned to use them. History, no longer memorized by the page, was made a delight to children as they read stories of the children of other lands" (Lane, 1902, p. 702). Thus, Parker promoted active involvement of children with actual objects and situations, but he also realized the value of reading appropriate materials

when objects and situations were not available.

One of Parker's central philosophical beliefs, that of tying school work to a child's real life, was to him realized by having children study nature and human nature through the central subjects. His reasoning was that all school reading should be to enhance "the thought involved by the study of the subjects" (Parker, 1894, p. 219).

One possible conflict between Parker's stated philosophy and school practice was his strong assertion that children should read only the best literature. He stated that reading material, "should cultivate the child's feeling for the true, the good, and the beautiful" (Parker, 1902, p. v). In beginning reading was it possible for children to read fine literature? Once again the Course of Study from the Chicago Institute gives some insight into reading materials of the first two years of school. First grade plans include the following stories for reading lessons: Aesop's The Ant and the Grasshopper, The Wind and the Sun and The Donkey and the Salt (Atwood, 1900). Second grade plans for December show "stories of shepherd life and Christmas stories" (Hollister, 1900). Although literature such as Aesop's fables were used, the plans

are heavily weighted in favor of reading slips of the children's own writing, very likely a function of necessity in dealing with their beginning reading levels.

Classroom Organization

Organizing for instruction was dealt with briefly by Parker in his writings. He did, however, mention that the students at the Chicago Normal School were changed from class to class and group to group at their teachers' discretion. The students were also consulted about their own placement. Parker admitted that this took careful judgment by the teacher but that the process helped the students feel more a part of their placement in school (Parker, 1902a). Patridge reports in Talks on Teaching that the first reading lesson should begin after the teacher had grouped the students "according to their mental strength" (Patridge, 1891, p. 56).

Patridge also notes several instances of teachers' efforts in Quincy to deal with different ability levels and ages in their classrooms. For example, the day one teacher began reading instruction she chose as a helper one of her pupils of the previous year. The helper and his group were "sitting in their seats absorbed with

some pasteboard animals, which they" were "tracing on their slates" (Patridge, 1885, p. 124). One lesson describes the work of five simultaneous groups of students. One group was copying a sentence from the board onto their slates. The next group was drawing vertical lines a foot long and an inch apart on the board. Another group was taken by the teacher's aide (called the trainer) to the back of the room for a "language lesson upon a picture" (Patridge, 1885, p. 156). The fourth group was copying and solving a word problem from the board. The last group was taken by the teacher to the board for their reading lesson (Patridge, 1885). The concept of "busy work" was relatively new, and teachers in Parker's school seem to have taken pride in having interesting activities for children to do independently. This is in contrast with most schools where students were expected to stay in the same position all day and prepare themselves for their brief recitation before the teacher (Finkelstein, 1970).

Student Evaluation

Traditional methods of dealing with the fourth component, evaluation, brought out Parker's ire, and he set out definite ways to evaluate and ways not to

evaluate a student's progress. He felt so strongly about not giving report cards that he reportedly once tore up cards in front of a class of children whose teacher had disobeyed his order to not give report cards (Campbell, 1967). Parker wrote about schools sending telegrams to neighboring towns after the periodic state or county examinations telling their percentages and asking the scores of the rival towns. He said in his autobiography, "The whole plan of the schools was to learn words and recite them, and then write them down in the examination stiff and strong" (Parker, in Giffin, p. 127).

Parker believed that tests made many children nervous, and that examinations should find out what a child knew instead of what a child did not know. He believed that examinations were one of the biggest problems of teaching at that time. Upon asking a teacher he knew why she did not try methods used in the normal schools, she told him that she was not able to because her students were to be tested in a few months and that "We have not one moment of time to spend in real teaching!" (Patridge, 1891, p. 155).

Parker's method of evaluating students was to save from the whole year samples of a child's work such as

models, drawings, and writings. These were eventually sent to the parents as proof of a child's progress (Jackman, 1902b). Parker also believed that oral language could be used for evaluation (Patridge, 1891). For example, Parker suggested that teachers ask pupils to tell all they knew about their current subject of study such as the battle of Bunker Hill. He believed it would be obvious to the reader whether or not a student had merely memorized facts or had done the necessary research to understand the topic in question (Patridge, 1891). One of Parker's goals at the Chicago Normal School was to abolish traditional grading. He wanted to cut out competition and to encourage individual growth and control (Parker, in Giffin, 1906). In the speech he made at the celebration of the Quincy Method, Parker stated the outcome of his grading procedure in Quincy: "We learned that children may be happy, may love to go to school, may never have a prize, reward or per cent, and still learn" (Parker, 1902, p. 241).

Word Recognition

The fifth component under consideration is word recognition. Believing that most children come to school with good language ability, Parker observed that

the "sum and substance" of learning to read consisted of associating ideas they already knew with written or printed words (Patridge, 1891, p. 27). The responsibility then was on the teacher to present words to learn that were interesting to the children in the class. Parker suggested starting with the favorite words of the children, stressing that "every word and sentence should bring up a bright and interesting picture" (Patridge, 1891, p. 55). The important thing was the act of association between the object and the word, so the teacher was instructed to hold up the object and write the name instead of speak it. The rule was the fewer words the better, and to let the chalk do most of the talking (Patridge, 1891). Other guidelines were to teach a whole word and to always write the word with an article.

Patridge observed the first reading lesson of a group of first year students in Quincy in which the teacher wrote a hen on the blackboard and drew a picture of a hen. The teacher told one of the children that the picture of the hen could be hers. She then asked another student to capture a hen. When the child put his hand on the picture, the teacher reminded him that it had been given to someone else. She asked him

to find another hen. The boy realized that the words must also be "a hen," and so he captured them. The word was learned, and when the teacher then quickly wrote the words, a hen, all over the board, they were captured without any problem by the other members of the reading group (Patridge, 1885, p.121).

In defense of the whole word method of teaching reading, Parker illustrated his point by giving an example. A teacher wrote a word on the board and then erased it. She then asked the students to write the word from memory. If the children could do it, they wrote the word without knowing the names of the letters or how to analyze them. They therefore had learned a word in the same way they had learned to talk -- in the natural way (Parker, 1894).

Although Parker wrote that many methods could be used effectively to teach word recognition or decoding, he preferred the whole word approach with some emphasis on phonics which he called "slow pronunciation" (Patridge, 1891, pp. 53-54 and 62). Parker was afraid that children would become bogged down in parts of a word and lose the word's meaning. He also feared that children would believe they were reading when merely pronouncing words and not learning to use words for

thinking (Parker, 1894; Patridge, 1891).

He suggested teaching phonics in four steps: (a) train children to hear the sounds of words by pronouncing them slowly but naturally; (b) train the students to pronounce words themselves by imitating the teacher; (c) after several words are practiced, write a word on the blackboard and articulate each sound as it is written; and (d) have the children slowly pronounce the words the teacher writes.

Although Parker believed strongly in reading for meaning, he was willing to use methods simply to teach isolated words, such as demonstrating patterns in words like rat, cat, and fat. He wrote that this came under the law of analogies or "a coming together of like to like" (Patridge, 1891, p. 50) which he believed children would learn on their own if the word method were used. Parker stressed that the more important law was learning words as wholes, but that teaching words in phonic order (such as rhyming words) made use of "mental activity in the most economical way" (Parker, p. 51).

Oral Reading

Oral reading was another aspect of teaching about which Parker felt strongly. To Parker oral reading was

"a mode of expression" that "comes under the heading of speech" (Parker, 1894, p. 188). Oral reading also was termed "the vocal expression of thought that is gained by written or printed words" (Patridge, 1891, p. 28). The main reason for oral reading according to Parker was to let the teacher know how well a child could read the words and "whether the thought is in the mind of the reader" (Patridge, 1891, p. 38).

Although he considered oral reading most appropriate for evaluation, he did grant it a limited role in instruction. He advocated teaching oral reading by the teacher always modeling the best reading and at times having the students repeat short sections after her, and by having children read their own writing while it was fresh in their minds. He taught his student teachers to never let children guess at words or to allow careless reading. And finally, he cautioned against formal, elocution-type lessons in inflection or expression. His theory was that if children had the thought vividly enough in their minds, their expression would be acceptable (Patridge, 1891; Parker, 1894).

In her observation of Quincy classrooms, Patridge noted how well the children read orally. Some of her

comments on several reading lessons were, "The reading is remarkable: distinct in utterance, conversational in manner" (Patridge, 1885, p. 379); "The girl reads with all the grace and ease of childish talk" (Patridge, 1885, p. 382); and "she reads as fluently as she would talk" (Patridge, 1885, p. 384). In directing a child to read orally one of the teachers gave this instruction, "Tom, talk the next paragraph to us" (Patridge, 1885, p. 542).

Parker considered silent reading, when used to study, as more intense than oral reading. "In study the thought gained may be clearer and more complete than in mere reading" (Patridge, 1891, p. 29). He advocated giving students time to read their books silently before being asked to read orally. Two important aspects of Parker's method of teaching silent reading were giving a purpose for reading and holding the students accountable for their reading, for example by having them retell the story (Patridge, 1891).

A Final Word

It seems fitting to end this chapter on methods with a few comments about Parker's beliefs about change. He believed that teaching school was a constantly changing profession. Parker did not seek

disciples because he did not believe that he created a theory that could be clung to. Parker treated every day as a new beginning, and he always felt free to take a new point of view. "In his schools the methods varied, not only with the different teachers but with each teacher they changed from day to day" (Jackman, 1902, p. 233). Parker broke up the monotony and routine that teaching had become by being a "magnificent ferment, stimulating activity everywhere" (Hall, 1902, p. 710). Parker insisted that his teachers be able to explain a method in terms of its value to the children. Cooke told of a young teacher's defensiveness in being asked to come to Parker's office after he had observed a lesson in her classroom. The teacher felt indignant but explained the reasoning for her lesson. Parker replied that he had thought the lesson was rather good and asked, "Why are you being so cross about it? I wanted to hear why you were doing it. You ought to be glad to explain. It clarifies your thinking" (Cooke, 1938, p. 149). John Dewey, who called Parker the "father of the progressive educational movement" (Dewey, 1930, p. 204), spoke of Parker's belief in "the unrealized possibilities of the art of teaching" and claimed that Parker's inspiration

in working with teachers came from "the possibility of a fuller development" (Dewey, 1902, p. 706). Parker, who believed that no teaching approach was ever finished, said that the secret of his enthusiasm was "my intense desire to see the mind and soul grow" (Parker, in Giffin, 1906, p. 133).

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section is a summary of the information contained in Chapters 1 and 2. The second section presents a discussion of the findings, and the third contains suggestions for future research.

Summary

Colonel Parker was a person who achieved success in his chosen field, education, despite difficult circumstances early in life. Part of his impact on the educational community of his day was due to his personality, described as strong and enthusiastic. Another explanation of his success in influencing people was his sincere interest in the welfare of children. His sincerity seems to have focused his efforts and maintained his energy. This guiding principle was unwavering to the end of his life.

The school climate of Parker's day was rigid and stifling, with little accommodation to children's interests and happiness. Beginning reading instruction consisted of memorization and an emphasis on learning isolated words. Parker changed this situation in each of his schools, whether his role was as teacher or

administrator.

The principles that were the basis for his methods in beginning reading instruction were happiness, meaning, and integration. Parker believed that children's happiness was essential for good learning. In addition, he was adamant that reading should always be for meaning rather than for rote recall or simply to display mastery of reading mechanics. Parker also believed that the best use of reading in school was to study the central subjects.

Parker's methods for teaching beginning reading were discussed in regard to six topics -- comprehension, reading materials, organization, evaluation, word recognition, and oral reading. The methods illustrate how Parker's principles of beginning reading instruction could be implemented.

Discussion

What are the implications of knowing Parker's principles and methods of beginning reading instruction for today's educators? What value is there in studying Parker's educational philosophy and practice? The two primary implications of this study, which were mentioned in Chapter 1, will be detailed here. Specifically, the implications are (a) Parker's

principles and methods can be used as a standard for judging today's practices and, (b) Parker's principles and methods can be used as a guide for practicing teachers. Following the presentation of these implications, suggestions for future research are offered.

Evaluation of Current Practices

Current schooling practices can be compared and evaluated in light of Parker's stance on education. For example, current testing and evaluation practices can be examined from the perspective of Parker's attitude toward testing. A current concern is the extent to which tests --standardized tests as well as competency tests -- direct instruction. Some educators are worried that because standardized tests are able to evaluate only certain testable skills, other important skills are not taught (Frederiksen, 1984). In this sense testing would influence instruction. Salmon-Cox (1981) disagrees with the idea that teachers teach only the skills assessed by standardized tests, at least at the elementary level. She found through interviews with teachers that for a variety of reasons standardized tests influence their instuctional decisions only slightly. The interviews revealed that

teachers rely much more on their observations of students than on standardized test scores in order to adjust instruction (Salmon-Cox, 1981).

Parker shared the concern voiced by Frederiksen that formal tests measured memory of disconnected facts and that this format influenced instruction. Contrary to Salmon-Cox's findings, Parker strongly believed that tests did influence what teachers taught because there was so much pressure placed on them to increase students' scores. He supported naturalistic observation by teachers as a better method of evaluation than formal tests.

Testing has been used in the United States as a gauge of the effectiveness of institutions as well as the achievement of individual students. Resnick and Resnick (1985) spoke of the tradition of testing as a means of setting standards in education by monitoring institutions and individuals. They assert that most formal testing in this country has functioned as a monitor of institutional productivity better than as a monitor of individual achievement. Parker's viewpoint is in agreement with that of Resnick and Resnick because he believed that much of the pressure for children to do well on tests was a result of

competition between schools. He also realized that parents and the public demanded quantifiable evidence of a school's value, which resulted in the continuation of testing. Parker fought this use of testing and evaluation because it led to practices that contradicted his principles of happiness, meaning, and integration.

A final area of testing to be discussed is competency testing. Competency testing is currently used in some schools for grade-to-grade promotions and as a standard for high school graduation. Resnick and Resnick (1985) observed that these tests do affect instruction because they are used to monitor individual students. The reason for this monitoring and affected instruction involves the legal implications of denying a student promotion or a high school diploma on the basis of a competency test. Unless the content of the test was actually offered in instruction, the student is legally able to sue the school.

Haney and Madaus (1978) point out the serious implications of minimum competency tests for school curriculums. If basic skills are stressed on the tests, then those are the skills that will be taught in schools, even though studies have shown that it is the

higher-order skills that have declined in recent years. It is important to realize that Salmon-Cox interviewed teachers who taught in districts that did not mandate grade-level expectations on standardized tests or mastery scores on criterion-referenced competency tests.

Parker was adamantly opposed to the form of competency tests that were available in his era. He believed that teachers who observed students on a daily basis were the ones who should make the decision about promotion to another grade. At the Chicago Normal School even the children were allowed to participate in the decision of their grade placement.

Parker advocated the end to tests and grading because of his belief that the ultimate goal of the public school was to develop character which manifested itself in self-control. Underlying his work in education was the belief that children should from the beginning of school be given work that promoted happiness, the acquisition of meaning, and the integration of school subjects. If this requirement were satisfied, Parker believed that external monitoring was unnecessary and that children would learn because of their own goals and motivation.

Guide for Practicing Teachers

Practicing teachers can find guidance in almost a workshop format in *Talks on Pedagogics* (1894) and *Talks on Teaching* (1891) on practical reading topics such as phonics, applications of reading principles, bad habits, and examinations. Model classroom instruction relative to combining reading and language in one lesson as well as insights into the way grouping was handled can be found in *Quincy Methods Illustrated* (Patridge, 1885). Cooke's articles on the Chicago Normal School and the Chicago Institute highlight Parker's philosophy and give examples of reading instruction in the two schools. Indeed, this paper has reviewed several methods of beginning reading instruction espoused by Parker. Teachers who accept Parker's principles of instruction should find the methods he articulated to be helpful when planning instruction. Parker gave concrete suggestions for implementing the principles he maintained.

An important area of guidance for school administrators today is Parker's support of the teachers in his schools. He encouraged them to try new things and praised even rough attempts at innovative methods. He believed in personal growth, even though

at times growth appeared to be inconsistencies in philosophy. Today's educators can be encouraged by Parker's example to experiment with new methods, to continue to study their profession, and to resist allowing routines to harden into tedium.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research into Colonel Francis Parker and beginning reading instruction might undertake several comparisons. One might compare the principles and methods of beginning reading instruction presented by Parker with that presented by more recent influential educators such as Kenneth Goodman, Russell Stauffer, and Jeanette Veatch. The purpose of such comparisons would be to gauge what the recent educators have added to the knowledge base underlying beginning reading instruction. This might clarify the progress that has been made and point out gaps in the field that deserve attention.

A second research suggestion is to compare Parker's educational principles and practices with those of John Dewey. Dewey considered Parker the father of progressive education. With Dewey's work continuing beyond Parker's lifetime, what of Parker's philosophy did Dewey embrace and what changes did he

advocate? This might clarify Dewey's contribution to reading education.

The final suggestion for further research is to compare Parker's methods for teaching reading comprehension with current suggestions and actual classroom practices. Developing students' reading comprehension abilities is a common goal of beginning reading instruction, and one that currently is receiving a great deal of attention in the professional and research literature. Again, comparing Parker's principles and methods with current ones might help clarify the progress being made and the gaps that exist.

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