Personal and academic qualifications of a special religious education teacher

Gertrude Peterson

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THE PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS
OF A SPECIAL RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION TEACHER

by
Sister Gertrude Peterson, O.S.B.

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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This research paper has been
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of the Cardinal Stritch College by

Sister Colette Dunn, O.S.F.
(Adviser)

Date Feb. 25, 1971
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CHAPTER I

The mission of the Church is to bring all men together as the people of God, through an ever-growing life in Grace. Growth in this life takes priority over everything else in the life of the Church. Therefore, every possible accommodation must be made in the ritual and practice of the Church, to ensure each retarded member's maximum growth in Christ.

During the last few decades more and more people have become concerned about the Christian Formation of the retarded. With the growth of the parent organization, "The National Association for Retarded Children", parents became more aware of the needs of their retarded children and many expressed concern that parishes offered no Christian Formation program for the retarded. Concerning this Hahn and Raasch say:

The more severely retarded cannot take part in many of the church's activities. Some type of special Christian instruction will be necessary for them.

1 Rev. Richard A. Kiernan, I Am, Chaplain for Exceptional Children (Atlanta, Georgia: Archdiocese of Atlanta, Our Lady's Association for Exceptional Children, April, 1969), p. 11.

2 The National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) "This organization is dedicated to improving the general welfare of all mentally retarded persons. While local units give parents the satisfaction of doing something directly for their loved ones, the national organization achieves great forward movements through the strength of an ever increasing membership. This expansion, under expert leadership, includes people of all professions. The aid which they are able to give to each other and to children with mental retardation is invaluable. The NARC has improved social attitudes toward the retarded, developed acceptance, fostered recognition of the need for skillful diagnosis, and promoted effective treatment based upon current research." Sister Mary Theodore, O.S.F., The Challenge of the Retarded Child (Indiana: Abbey Press, 1969), p. 169.
Impetus for such instructions comes from many quarters. Most commonly, individual parents of the retarded ask their church for help. Parents of the severely retarded often recognize the inappropriateness of the regular church-school classes for their child, but they too want the church to offer some form of religious instruction that will benefit their children. With this concern, they seek help in training their child through the director of Christian education, the Sunday school superintendent, or the pastor.

With new programs come new problems and Special Religious Education is no exception. First of all we must locate the retarded in the parish or area and decide who will be in each class.

Regarding this Hahn and Raasch say:

Each congregation needs to make a study to determine the number of retarded among its membership and take whatever measures are necessary to bring God's Word to these members of the household of faith. Here are some means by which a congregation can publicize the Church's interest in ministering to the retarded and finding out who they are:

1. Announcements from the pulpit and in the Sunday bulletin and other publications.
2. Questionnaires distributed to the congregation asking members to inform the pastor of retarded who may need special help.
3. Frequent examination of the Sunday school registry in consultation with teachers. (Are there children who appear to be having difficulty in learning? Might any of them be candidates for a special class?)
4. Checking with members of the congregation who have retarded in their families. Parents of a retarded child often know of other retarded children in the congregation or community.
5. Ongoing contact with local or state association of parents of retarded children.
6. Notifying the local newspapers and radio and television stations of any specific plans for forming classes for the retarded or otherwise ministering to them.
7. Regular contact with public and private schools with special education programs to discover children who might also profit from special religious

---

1Hans R. Hahn and Werner Raasch, Helping the Retarded to Know God (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 44.
educational programs.
8. Informing the agency in the community that coordinates mental health services for the retarded.¹

Hahn and Raasch² feel that after finding the retarded the pastor must win congregational support for the program. He can do this through his preaching, by posting descriptive literature on retardation on the church bulletin boards or inserting this literature in the church bulletin. He might show the filmstrip, "Christ's Love Enfolds All Children," which discusses many of the considerations and steps necessary in setting up special religious education classes. This is available through Concordia Publishing House. The pastor may also suggest that members of his congregation visit classes for the retarded at other churches.

Karl³ suggests that "the class for the retarded can be held at the same time and place as other classes, giving the persons the feeling of sharing, of belonging to the living." If this is impossible the pastor should make other arrangements.

Curriculum is also a problem. Referring to this, Dunn says:

The slow-learning child whose education is the concern of this study is not ready for religious themes at the same chronological age appropriate for the normal child. Although the retarded child usually begins school at a later age, he often lacks life experiences necessary to understand and appreciate religious themes at that time. To be fair to the child, parents and educators must supply the necessary basic human experiences required before there can be an appreciation of religious experiences. One can designate these basic human experiences as life-

¹Ibid., p. 46.
²Ibid., pp. 47-48.
themes, necessary foundations upon which future religious experiences depend.¹

Teachers must be found and trained. Just what qualities a special religious education teacher should possess is something that is being considered by most persons involved in religious education for the handicapped.

Although all the above mentioned problems are worthy of consideration, this study will deal only with the personal and academic qualifications of the catechist of the retarded. The researcher chose this topic because at the time this paper was being written finding and training special religious education teachers was a major concern in her diocese.

Summary of Chapter One

In the present chapter the growing concern for religious education programs for the retarded was recognized. Several problems that arise when setting up a special religious education program were cited and it was stated that this study would deal with the personal and academic qualifications of the catechist of the retarded. Chapter II reviews the literature concerned with teacher qualifications. Chapter III discusses the results of a questionnaire sent to leaders in the field of special religious education. It cites some recognized relationships between the younger programs' directors and the older programs' directors. Chapter IV summarizes the study, discusses some implications of the study and offers suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter the writer attempts to discover the personal and academic qualifications necessary for special religious education teachers.

A survey of literature has been made in four areas:

a. the personal and academic qualifications considered necessary for the regular classroom teachers

b. the personal and academic qualifications considered necessary for the special classroom teachers

c. the personal and academic qualifications considered necessary for the catechists

d. the personal and academic qualifications considered necessary for the special religious education teachers

Because of a lack of literature on the special religious education teacher a questionnaire was composed and distributed to leaders in the field attending the first convention of the NAMR (National Apostolate for the Mentally Retarded)\(^1\) held in West Hartford, Conn., in August of 1970. Tabulations of these findings will be reserved for Chapter III.

\(^1\)The purpose and goal of the National Apostolate for the Mentally Retarded (NAMR) "The purpose and goal of the National Apostolate for the Mentally Retarded is to:

1. Promote an authentic participation in the life of the Church and

The Regular Classroom Teacher

Regular classroom teachers, special classroom teachers, catechists and special catechists have many needed qualifications in common.

A good regular classroom teacher is objective and enthusiastic. She is a person who makes decisions and then accepts the responsibility for these decisions. She gives her best to the child regardless of parental interest and isn't threatened by the different child.

Concerning the regular classroom teacher Simpson states:

In view of the great emphasis appropriately attached to the development of knowledge in the pupil, it seems reasonable to assume that the teacher himself should give major consideration to his own knowledge, including its current status and particularly its growth. The problem faced by the modern teacher in keeping his knowledge current is particularly challenging.

Special Classroom Teachers

When speaking of the special classroom teacher, Tenny suggests that they need the qualities desired in all teachers. He goes on to say, however, that there should be emphasis on certain of these qualities and in addition other very special attributes.

In working with student teachers Meisgeier cites:

To accomplish the purpose of identifying and quantifying characteristics which contribute to successful student

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teaching of the mentally and physically handicapped children, five dimensions of human behavior were investigated. Three characteristic patterns of successful student teaching experiences emerged from the investigation. The successful student teachers (a) were well adjusted, emotionally stable, and able to encounter difficult classroom situations; (b) possessed physical energy, vitality, and enthusiasm necessary to meet special classroom demands; (c) obtained high scores on measures of scholastic achievement and ability.

Wallin, Bode, Rothstein, Tenny, and others stress the necessity of the special classroom teacher being accepting. He must be genuinely interested in the mentally retarded and must be accepting of his limited capacities.

Slaughter, in discussing the personal qualifications of a special class teacher, stresses something barely mentioned by other authors. Slaughter feels the special teacher should be an active member of the community. He needs to be known as an individual who is interested in the community and its members. By talking to the right people at the right time and place he can influence attitudes. Through such dealings with the community he can more readily help the retardates approaching adulthood to be accepted into this same community.

Originality and creativity are very important qualities for the special classroom teacher to possess. When discussing this topic

4 Tenny, op.cit., p. 567.
Slaughter notes that the teacher should be able to devise new and different ways of presenting materials. When following a prearranged curriculum the teacher is required to adapt it to fit more nearly the needs and interests of the students.

In summarizing the personality characteristics needed by special-class teachers Wallin says:

Among the personality traits that are particularly desirable in teachers of the mentally deficient and slow learners are the following:
- Genuine interest in and sympathy for children
- Patience and perseverance
- Optimism, companionableness, tact
- Self-control
- Emotional maturity
- Adaptability, plasticity, resourcefulness
- Imaginative insight
- Scholarship
- Understanding of interpersonal relationships
- Loyalty—to lofty personal ideals, to the highest ideals of the profession, and to co-workers, pupils, and superior officers (unless they forfeit the right to it.)

In discussing academic qualifications of special teachers Blatt states:

We have rediscovered—but so much more closely now—that teaching requires sustained intellectual discipline, continuous self evaluation, control of one's prejudice, sheer undefinable artistry, and the humanism that we all must have. As one seminar student so sensitively put it, 'We are wrestling here with our own retardation to cope ultimately, with the retardation of others'.

According to Rothstein

The teacher should know the story of the pioneer efforts which were made on behalf of these children. He should know about the work of Itard, Seguin, Montessori, Decrally,

1Ibid., p. 8
2Wallin, op. cit., p. 224.
and others whose experiments and techniques of teaching brought about a change of attitudes toward the mentally retarded. He should have a knowledge of current literature and research dealing with the mentally retarded children and their training. The teacher should have a knowledge of association and organization whose purposes are to promote an understanding of the mentally retarded as to plan for their education.

After making these general statements about the special classroom teacher Rothstein\(^2\) goes on to list distinctive competencies desired in every person responsible for the education of the mentally retarded children. These competencies have been grouped under four broad headings:

1. Understanding the characteristics of the mentally retarded child and his place in society.

2. Developing a functional curriculum through relating broad personal and social needs of the mentally retarded.

3. Understanding and applying pedagogical procedures based on an understanding of the known learning characteristics of the mentally retarded.

4. Selecting, developing, and using appropriate instructional materials and equipment in teaching mentally retarded children.

From the above findings it is evident that special classroom teachers need proper training before beginning teaching careers as well as in-service training later on. Bode\(^3\) indicates that "as a teacher obtains a wide background of experiences it is necessary to supplement and increase her efficiency through in-service training."

\(^{1}\)Rothstein, op. cit., p. 529.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 529.

\(^{3}\)Bode, op. cit., p. 264.
Catechists

It is difficult to put an order of importance on the qualities of a good religion teacher. Shaping the minds of students and directing them to good habits—helping them to respond to our heavenly Father's love with their own expression of love—involve your whole person as it involves the whole child.

As stated so well above, it is difficult to list the qualities of a good religion teacher because of the tremendous task entrusted to him. O'Shaughnessy in discussing the role of the catechist says, "A more exact manner of expressing the role of the religion teacher is to say that she is to afford her students opportunities for personal encounter with Christ in their life situation."

With a task like this entrusted to a person, the attitudes of that person become very significant. O'Shaughnessy indicates that an educator can evaluate his attitudes and behavior in three areas of the teacher-student relationship: his sense of concern for his students, his spirit of service, and his reverence for the individual student.

If the catechist possesses these attitudes it would seem that he would have to have a well-balanced personality. McBride says the catechist has much to learn from the maxim of McLuhan "the medium is the message." He goes on to say that the catechist is a medium through

3Ibid., p. 234.
whom the gospel message is received. He as a person is communicating regardless of what he is saying. He cannot not communicate. Even when he is saying nothing there is communication going on.

The catechist must also be a person of prayer if he is to be as Gabriel Moran\(^1\) sees him "always subordinate to the Holy Spirit in the catechizing of the child." Moran sees catechesis as not an event between the catechist and the students, but between God and the student. He tells the catechist to think of himself as a voice through which Christ can speak to his members. Moran goes on to say:

A teacher has neither the right nor the power to determine the religious life of another. However, it is precisely through recognition of his limitations that the catechist can see the greatness of his mission. He will not try to achieve many tangible and visible results, but will trust that his words and his life's testimony do affect the student at a deep level.\(^2\)

Ronald Goldman\(^3\) describes the catechist as a person who is able to express his love and concern for his students. It is necessary for a child to feel secure if he is to learn to trust and eventually learn to love. A catechist who possesses this quality will have the most lasting influence on his students.

O'Shaughnessy\(^4\) stresses the necessity of a catechist being a person of his time. One "who is in harmony with the social needs, cultural trends, theological approaches, and academic and scientific


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 117.


advances which are shaping the world of the present and which will be important in the future." The catechist should be alert to the movements, growth, and other needs of Christianity especially in his own locale.

McBride believes "the catechist stands between God's message and man, as a prophetic mediator between the two." He sees the program as being three fold: to inform, to form, and to initiate.

In order to carry out such a program the catechist must have some training. Collins suggests the catechist have the following:

1. Knowledge of content of religion course.
2. Some special training in theology, philosophy, sacred scripture, and liturgy, or take advanced courses in the field of Christian doctrine.
3. Self-training of the catechist.

Rood summarizes the qualities of the teacher of Christianity as:

- A person, like the learners, "Needing and seeking dialogue", "center of constantly changing relationships", "a learning being".
- An enabler, a catalyst, an assistant.

The teacher of Christianity must be prepared to:

- Like students.
- Take the trouble to know his students. "Know his pupils as different from himself, know his pupils like himself."
- Like the content.

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like teaching.

- develop and exercise his special talents.

- love God in the group situation.

Special Religious Education Teachers

The oft-quoted saying that the teacher is 90 per cent of the curriculum was never more true in any situation than in work with those who are retarded. Because the retarded person is limited in academic skills, in reasoning, and conceptual ability, he must depend largely upon direct contacts with others for learning. This makes peculiar and large demands on the adults responsible for his learning and growth. They know that the person who is retarded can profit little or not at all from printed materials. Because his contacts with other persons are limited, more responsibility falls at the door of parents and group leaders to function as the guides for much of the retarded persons growth and learning.¹

Ricci,² Channels,³ and Wordeman,⁴ along with several other writers indicate that the handicapped need a great deal of love and understanding if they are to develop to the fullest as persons and as Christians. Concerning this Ricci says:

To the teachers Pope Paul VI says, 'Your dynamic love can contribute to the good development of their personality. That personality is spiritual as well as physical. That is why we teach. We contribute to the value, dignity and loveliness of a human being formed in the likeness of God.'


⁵Ricci, op. cit., p. 115.
Mesny and Obran\(^1\) state that "The responsibility for creating a community belongs to the catechist who must know how to make himself loved by all."

If the retarded are to experience this community of love the teacher must radiate friendliness. Sister Mary Theodore\(^2\) believes that "friendliness radiated by the teacher goes a long way toward helping the slow learner. . . ." Sister Mary Theodore indicates that there are "countless gestures of friendliness" that help to establish a relationship of love and trust between the religion teacher and the students. Two of the examples given by Sister are greeting the children personally with a smile and talking to them about things they are really interested in.

Gestures of friendliness toward the retarded will be very difficult unless the teacher is able to accept the students as they are and be sensitive to their needs. Dunn\(^3\) states that "the success of his initial efforts to integrate life experiences and religion can rest upon the sensitivities of his teacher."

Being positive and consistent are two of the qualities necessary for the special religious education teacher which are stressed by Sister Othelia\(^4\) in an article on teaching self-discipline. Sister

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\(^3\) Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Mary John and Annunciata\(^1\) go on to say that "the teacher must 'always be the same', so that each child will feel free to bring his personal trials and questions, and know that always he will find the same attention, understanding, and warm human relationship.'"

In summarizing the personal characteristics desirable in a special religious education teacher and leading into the academic characteristics of these same persons a list put out by the Kentucky Association for Retarded Children\(^2\) has been chosen. These qualities are the following:

1. A person who is mature and stable in feelings and emotions.
2. A person who can share his faith and religious feelings.
3. A person who can show and share love and genuine interest in another person.
4. A person who has some background in working with children.
5. A person who has a sense of humor and can laugh at himself and the situations.
6. A person who can think of the child as a person first and last a retarded child.
7. One who is willing to work with this committee in formulating new plans and strengthening present ones.
8. One who will continue to study and learn in this special area.


\(^{2}\)Karl, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
McCarthy\(^1\) indicates that during the months of preparation the first step toward understanding what it is to be a catechist is the need "to prepare ourselves personally together." Father feels strongly that creating a "faith community" among the catechists is a must before they are able to impart the faith to their students.

Karl\(^2\) states the necessity of the teacher having a dual competence. First, he must have an understanding of theology and secondly, he must have an "understanding and knowledge about the pupils being taught."

Article Fourteen of the Decree of the Bishops Pastoral Office says:

Moreover, they should take care that catechists are properly trained for their task, so that they will be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church and will have both a theoretical and practical knowledge of psychology and of pedagogical methods.\(^3\)

Kowalski\(^4\) expresses the opinion that the retarded are open to contemporary approaches in catechesis but that "the success of these approaches depends, in large measure, on the effectiveness of the teacher, on her knowledge and use of the elements of catechesis."

Because the retarded use their senses to gain knowledge, Karl\(^5\) expresses the necessity of the catechist being skilled in teaching

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\(^2\)Karl, op. cit., p. 12.


techniques. Story telling, puppet shows, crayons and paste, and "Make-believe" play acting are some of the techniques he suggests.

Dunn in discussing teaching techniques says "the teacher must be judicious in selecting among many available visual resources and teaching strategies."

In summarizing the training and experience necessary for a special religious education teacher Bogardus lists the following:

Training and Experiences needed-

1. Ideally one who has had training and experience in special education.

2. Good to visit special classes and observe and talk with teachers.

3. Should do a lot of reading.

4. Should meet with other teachers. "She needs to use every opportunity for keeping the special class related to the rest of the program."

5. Must feel that what she is doing is important and significant.

The above mentioned academic qualifications have all been suggestions made by leaders in the field of religious education for the mentally retarded. How do the teachers themselves feel about academic qualifications?

Kowalski, in a study of the direction teacher-training programs should take, received the following information from a questionnaire sent out to some teachers:

1. Teachers want additional training in religious education.

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1 Dunn, op. cit., p. 13.
3 Kowalski, op. cit., p. 47.
2. Teachers feel they need additional background.

3. Teachers indicated a preference for workshops and consultation service.

Summary of Chapter II

In Chapter II the qualities needed by the regular classroom teacher, the special classroom teacher, the catechist and the special catechist were examined. It was seen that some of the same qualities were needed by all of them.

Because of a lack of literature on the special catechist, the researcher devised a questionnaire to obtain more information on the subject. This questionnaire will be discussed in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III
THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF ITS DATA

Because of a lack of literature regarding the qualifications of the special religious education teacher, a questionnaire was devised to investigate the personal and academic qualities which leaders in the field of special religious education desired in their teachers. This was given to diocesan consultants of special religious education who attended the NAMR convention in West Hartford, Conn., in August of 1970. Of the twenty-one questionnaires distributed, fifteen or 71.4% were returned.

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first section asked for general information such as how long the program had been in existence, how many teachers and students were involved, etc. The second section asked these directors to list the personal and academic qualifications they felt were necessary for a Special Religious Education teacher. In the final section of the questionnaire the researcher listed in random order the personal and academic qualities found in the review of literature and asked the respondent to number them in the order of their priorities. A copy of the questionnaire and the accompanying letter are found in the appendix.

The results of the questionnaire have been divided according to younger programs (1-4 years) and older programs (5 or more years). Seven programs have been in existence for 3 or 4 years, while eight programs have existed for five or more years. TABLE I illustrates these findings.
TABLE I
How Long Program Has Been in Existence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Program</th>
<th>Code Name for Center</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Younger Programs
Older Programs

The number of teachers involved in each of the programs ranged from 25-300. TABLE II indicates the number of teachers in each program.

TABLE II
Number of Teachers Involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Program</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>44, 44, 84, 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>30, 50, 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>50, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>30, 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to list the qualities they felt were necessary for a special religious education teacher the consultants listed the following:
A. PERSONAL QUALITIES

Several of the respondents of the questionnaire felt that the special catechist needs to have a well balanced personality. Three desired him to be patient, loving, and kind. Five mentioned the need for the teacher to be able to communicate with the students while three others desired that he have interest in and enthusiasm for the mentally retarded. Two respondents mentioned the need for the teacher to be creative and two others the necessity to be able to adapt. A few mentioned the desirability of personal holiness and being relatively comfortable with the changes in the Church. Other individual responses were: sensitivity to needs of the students, recognition of students' worth, awareness of weakness and reality of failure, serenity, calmness, initiative, integrity, and good health.

B. ACADEMIC QUALITIES

When listing the academic qualities nine consultants felt that the teachers should be willing to participate in training programs. Six expected teachers to be high school graduates and five expressed the needs of teachers having knowledge of modern theology and catechesis. Individual responses indicated the following desired qualities:

a. Have contact with the "average child" before teaching the retarded
b. Observe in special education classes
c. Have knowledge of the psychology of the retarded
d. Have experience in working with the parents of the retarded
e. Be good at publicity
f. Have a Christo-centric spirituality.

In Question 10 of the questionnaire the researcher listed in
random order personal and academic qualifications cited in the survey of literature. The respondents of the questionnaire were asked to number these personal and academic qualifications (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) in the order of their priorities. TABLE III shows the qualifications listed by the researcher and the order of priorities indicated by the respondents. (1 is indicative of first rank, 10 of lowest priority.)

**TABLE III**

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND PRIORITY RANKING BY CONSULTANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualification</th>
<th>Younger Programs</th>
<th>Older Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like children</td>
<td>2, 2, 3, 9, 5, 3</td>
<td>5, 2, 3, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine outgoing love</td>
<td>4, 5, 3, 4, 4, 1</td>
<td>1, 6, 7, 9, 3, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and appreciation of inherent worth of student</td>
<td>8, 6, 3, 3, 6, 2</td>
<td>4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>9, 9, 3, 5, 9, 9</td>
<td>8, 9, 6, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>10, 8, 3, 5, 9, 9</td>
<td>9, 7, 5, 5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well balanced personality</td>
<td>6, 4, 3, 1, 1, 4, 1</td>
<td>3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same faith as student</td>
<td>1, 1, 4, 10, 3, 10, 10</td>
<td>7, 5, 8, 2, 10, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and resourceful</td>
<td>3, 10, 1, 7, 2, 6, 4</td>
<td>10, 4, 3, 10, 4, 7, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humor</td>
<td>5, 3, 3, 8, 8, 5, 7</td>
<td>6, 4, 3, 8, 8, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special sensitivity toward the religious and moral development of the retarded</td>
<td>7, 7, 2, 2, 7, 7, 6</td>
<td>2, 3, 5, 10, 2, 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND PRIORITY RANKING BY CONSULTANTS

By requiring priority listings from the respondents, the researcher forced a choice of most cited personal and academic qualities. That is to say, the researcher intended through this technique to discover the criteria most valuable in screening and/or preparing potential catechists. Evidence from TABLE III and IV showed that respondents were most concerned about the teachers' well-balanced personality and their respect and appreciation of the students' inherent worth. Three of the younger programs' directors and two of the older programs' directors indicated a well-balanced personality as their first priority while one of the older programs' directors chose this as his second priority. Three of the older programs' directors chose respect and appreciation of the inherent worth of students as their first priority, while two of the younger programs' directors and two of the older programs' directors indicated this item as their second priority.
Two of the younger programs' directors felt that the most important personal quality was that the teacher be of the same faith as the student. Two of the older programs' directors chose this for their second priority. Since three of these directors are from the same geographical area their responses may indicate lack of ecumenical programs of the people in that part of the country.

Two of the younger programs' directors as well as two of the older programs' directors indicated special sensitivity toward the religious and moral development of the retarded as their second priority. One of the directors from the younger programs and one from the older programs felt that the most important quality was a genuine outgoing love. Since both sensitivity and genuine love have some elements in common, their high esteem by religious educators is a hopeful sign.

It is interesting to note that with all the stress on the need for special education teachers to be patient and understanding not one of the directors gave this as their first or second priority. Perhaps its presence was presumed in every educator. Three of the directors did, however, list liking children as their second priority.

Creativity was felt to be of great importance by two of the directors of younger programs. One indicated it as his first priority and the other as his second. None of the directors of old programs gave creativity this kind of recognition.

When considering the academic qualities, the responses seem to indicate that the directors desire teachers to have a knowledge of MR children and a knowledge of catechesis and theology. Two of the younger programs' directors and one of the older programs' directors chose knowledge of the mentally retarded children as their first
priority, while one of the older programs' directors indicated it as second in order of importance. Three of the other directors chose experience in working with mentally retarded children as one of their first two priorities.

Knowledge of catechesis had more priorities than any other single item. Three directors indicated this as their first priority while six others placed it second in order of importance. Three of the older programs' directors chose understanding theology as their first priority.

It would seem from the responses that the directors plan to have teachers obtain knowledge of mentally retarded children and knowledge of catechesis and theology through inservice education. Two of the directors indicated inservice education as first in order of importance and four placed it second. Both directors of older and younger programs were in substantial agreement regarding the high value of inservice education.

Knowledge in public relations seems to be of more importance to those in younger programs than in the older programs. This judgment is based on the fact that two of the younger programs' directors placed this item as first in order of importance and no one from the older programs listed it either first or second.

It is interesting to note that early in the questionnaire when the directors were asked to list desired academic qualities six of them mentioned that the teacher should be a high school graduate. Now when they are making a forced choice only one director chose this item as a second priority and no one listed it as primary.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This study was undertaken to investigate the growing concern for the Christian Formation of the retarded. Such programs must be concerned with (a) finding the retarded, (b) dividing them into workable groups, (c) deciding when and where the classes will meet, (d) finding and training teachers, (e) winning congregational support and (f) materials to be used in these classes. Although all the above mentioned problems are worthy of consideration, this study dealt only with the personal and academic qualifications of the catechist of the retarded.

Since theorists' recommendations regarding the personal and academic qualifications of catechists of retardates are few, a questionnaire was devised to obtain information from directors in the field. This questionnaire was distributed to leaders in the field who attended the first convention of the NAMR (National Apostolate for the Mentally Retarded) held in West Hartford, Conn., in August of 1970.

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first section asked for general information such as how many teachers and students were involved, etc. The second section asked the practitioners to list the personal and academic qualities they felt were necessary for a special religious education teacher to possess. In the final section of the questionnaire the researcher listed in random order the personal and academic qualities found in the research of literature and asked the respondent to number them in the order of
their priorities.

From the study it was found that greatest concern in regard to personal qualities of the special catechist is that the teachers have a well-balanced personality and that they have a respect and appreciation of the inherent worth of their students. If they have these two qualities it would seem to follow that they would possess a special sensitivity toward the religious and moral development of the retarded.

The greatest concern of the respondents in regard to the academic qualifications seems to be that the teachers have a good understanding of mentally retarded children as well as a good understanding of catechesis and theology. They seem to indicate that these academic qualifications could be attained, at least in part, through inservice training.

Implications

One obvious implication of the present study is that when recruiting special catechists directors often look for persons with well-balanced personalities. A person, no matter how well meaning, will not be a good teacher of the retarded if he or she has personality problems of his own. Unless the teacher has an appreciation of his own worth, it will be impossible for him to have a respect and appreciation of the inherent worth of his students.

It would seem that since so much stress has been placed on the teachers having knowledge of mentally retarded children and catechesis, some efforts should be made to provide educational opportunities for them. This could be accomplished through an inservice program.
Kowalski found, in a questionnaire given to catechists, that the teachers indicated a preference for workshops and consultation services as advantageous in getting to know the mentally retarded child's problems and potential.

Suggestions for Further Research

This investigation suggests several possibilities for further research. The questionnaires could be altered and given to the special religion teachers rather than to the directors. This would be done in an effort to discover whether or not the teachers and their directors agree on the personal and academic qualifications necessary for the special catechist.

Because it is often necessary for special religion teachers to have helpers assist them in their classes, a study could be undertaken to determine the personal and academic qualities necessary for these aides and compare how their desired qualifications would differ from those of the teachers.

An investigation of the inservice programs in the centers represented in the present study could be made. This study could bring together the good points of each program and possibly arrive at more comprehensive inservice programs.

Since few materials for inservice training of Special Religious Educators are available, it would also seem valuable to find and evaluate these and compare their effectiveness with various trainees.

Kowalski, op. cit., p. 47
Dear Special Education Co-ordinator,

As a candidate for the Master's Degree in Special Education at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I am writing a research paper entitled *The Personal and Academic Qualifications of a Special Religious Education Teacher*. To complete the paper I ask your assistance by sharing your opinions and experiences relating to the mentally retarded. Your comments will be valuable in obtaining a wide vision of teacher training.

Presently as diocesan co-ordinator of religious education for mentally retarded I am responsible for training teachers. With your cooperation in completing the questionnaire, the teachers will be benefitted from the results obtained from this project.

At this time of the year, I realize, that time is at a premium. Consequently my sincere thanks to you for taking time from an already filled day to answer the questions. I would appreciate having all returns by October 5th to enable me to compile the results.

Thank you again for your time. May your concern and interest benefit those in the field of special education.

Sincerely yours,

Sister Gertrude Peterson
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DIOCESAN CONSULTANTS OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGARDING QUALITIES OF A SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER

1. Name ____________________________
2. Diocese __________________________
3. Position __________________________
4. How long has your program been in existence? ________________
5. How many children are involved in your program? ________________
6. How many teachers are involved in your program? ________________
7. How do you recruit your teachers? ____________________________
8. How do you train your teachers? ____________________________
9. List the qualities you feel are necessary for a Special Religious Education teacher:

   Personal Qualities                  Academic Qualities

10. Number the following (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) in order of your priorities when selecting special religious education teachers.

    Personal                          Academic

___ Like children
___ Genuine outgoing love
___ Respect & appreciation of inherent worth of students
___ Patient
___ Understanding
___ Well-balanced personality
___ Same faith as student
___ Creative & resourceful
___ Sense of humor
___ Special sensitivity toward the religious & moral development of the retarded
___ High School diploma
___ Knowledge of MR children
___ Experience in working with MR children
___ Knowledgeable in public relations
___ Understand Theology
___ Inservice Education
___ Knowledge of catechesis
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


Bode, Fred B. as quoted in Fields et. al. "Who Makes the Best Teachers Of Mentally Retarded Children?" American Journal of Mental Deficiency, LVIII (1953), 251-267.


Unpublished Materials
