

The Ph.D. Degree and Research

Toward Improving Ph.D. Programs. Ernest V. Hollis. Washington, D.C., American Council on Education, 1945.

Is the function of doctoral study in universities to advance the frontiers of knowledge or to provide students with the intellectual attainments which they will need in their vocational lives? The author of this volume inclines toward the latter view of social usefulness in determining the content of graduate study and offers history, opinion, fact, and logic in support of his position.

His argument may be put bluntly. The American graduate school is in reality an advanced professional school. Sixty-five per cent of the recipients of Ph.D. degrees become college professors and 20 per cent industrial research workers. Productive research is more and more being conducted at the post-graduate level, in industrial laboratories, and by endowed research organizations. Why not face this reality and devise a program of graduate study which serves the vocational need of students?

One need have only limited contact with academic traditions to recognize this as an unorthodox viewpoint. And one need have only slight acquaintance with the degree structure of American higher education to recognize this as an attack upon a sacred anachronism of the academic world.

Mr. Hollis supports his contention that the vocational use of the Ph.D. degree is primarily professional by tabulating statistics of the present employment of 22,000 persons who received the Ph.D. degree in the decade 1930-40. He further offers as evidence the opinions of employers of Ph.D. recipients and of the recipients themselves, both of which groups display a confusion and inconsistency that can be pulled together only after considerable interpretation. Mr. Hollis does not support his contention concerning the relative unimportance of academic research by either fact or group opinions but rather by his own convictions, exemplified for example in the following quotation: "Life in government and industry has become too complex and too dependent on research to leave so vital a function to the off-hours of university professors and the amateur work of their advanced students."

The position of this volume is entirely misunderstood if Mr. Hollis' emphasis upon a vocational foundation for graduate study is interpreted to mean that he wants more narrowly professional courses in the graduate curriculum—more accountancy in the business school, more quantitative analysis in the chemistry department, and more cataloging in the library school. On the contrary, he abhors the very technical emphasis that often accompanies research specialization. In its place, he advocates a single integrated graduate school in universities which would aim at a broad scholarly product prepared to meet not only the technical but also the philosophical and social demands of professional life. Specialization would not be entirely abandoned. The dissertation would be retained but it would not be designed as an original contribution to knowledge but as a "... project that focuses attention on securing command of a variety of research methods and skills in critical appraisal of the work of others." Aptly he quotes Nicholas Murray Butler's aphorism, "a broad man sharpened to a point."

Librarians will raise two questions about the position taken in the book. Would the adoption of improvements in Ph.D. programs here suggested make any difference in academic library use and status? What significance has this viewpoint for graduate education for librarianship?

A broader program of graduate study would increase the use of library resources. This conclusion is not a pious hope but a logical consequence. It is inherent in the wider range of content to be dealt with. It is inherent in decreased dependence upon the special technical apparatus of subject areas. It is inherent in the orderly study of other scholarly works in the dissertation. Mr. Hollis recognizes this consequence when he contrasts the irrelevance of tests in foreign language ability for most graduate students with the importance of demonstrated ability to use library resources.

However, lest librarians derive undue comfort from this observation, a danger in the trend toward broader graduate study must be pointed out. Library organization displays the same weakness which Mr. Hollis criticizes

in the graduate curriculum. Materials are related to each other in terms of narrow specialization. To what extent does the organization of materials in libraries facilitate an understanding of the social results of technological process on the part of the graduate science student? To what extent does the organization promote the formulation of a philosophy of purpose on the part of the graduate social science student? To what extent does it aid the graduate library student in integrating subject content with the techniques of his profession? The shortcomings of library organization are apparent enough under the present system. They may reach the breaking point if additional educational demands are made upon the library.

There is also a connection between Mr. Hollis' thesis and graduate education for librarianship. In the past all professional fields have come in for a full measure of censure as legitimate areas for graduate academic study from such critics as Abraham Flexner and Norman Foerster. Here is an educator who not only maintains that professional fields are legitimate candidates for graduate status (if they can define a scholarly as distinct from technical content) but goes further and suggests that pure subject areas give greater attention to professional needs in their graduate programs. This involves the radical assertion that professional fields, no less than subject fields, present problems in research and practice which require high scholarly attainment for solution.

The academic world is organized into a hierarchy in terms of specialization. Status of an individual or a discipline is measured

by degree of specialization. In the sense of the material dealt with, librarianship is not a specialization but a generalization. This has been the source of its difficulty in becoming established among academic disciplines. Actually, the most crying need of the academic world, and of the larger world of knowledge, may be synthesis which cuts across specialization—and the librarian may be one of the few agents of synthesis in the realm of scholarship.

Librarianship, then, is not ostracized from the circle of graduate discipline in the view of this book. But neither is it automatically a member of the circle. Like any field, it must present an intellectual content requiring broad scholarly preparation. This view, by clarifying the issue, hastens the day when that intellectual content must be defined. And by its emphasis upon a comprehensive program of graduate study, this view points librarianship toward an orientation for its content that may be summarily suggested in the phrase "the organization of recorded knowledge for use." One cannot help but play with the idea of graduate study in librarianship which would be directed by a university interdepartmental committee having such a title.

Mr. Hollis' call to new roads in graduate education lacks the force and originality to be found in recent calls in undergraduate education by Hutchins, Maritain, Wriston, and others. It does not even present a belated codification of a long-existing trend, as does the Harvard report. But it is what has been notably lacking in the literature of graduate education, an honest and reflective statement of purpose and method.—*Lowell Martin.*

The State University and the Humanities

A State University Surveys the Humanities. Edited with a Foreword by Loren C. MacKinney, Nicholson B. Adams, and Harry K. Russell. (University of North Carolina Sesquicentennial Publications, Louis R. Wilson, director.) Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1945. xi, 262p.

Reading *A State University Surveys the Humanities* is like strolling down the inviting avenue of an old city, say Boston or Charleston or Williamsburg. Here is an ancient residence, recently renovated; there, one, time-

worn and respectably weary but still tenanted; and yonder, across the street, a self-conscious new one, lately erected and bearing, we somehow feel, a shy embarrassment at having been placed in such a sedate and austere genteel neighborhood.

Our first reaction to this motley is to blame the city fathers for their failure to plan ahead. Are there no zoning regulations here? Unsatisfied, we criticize especially the mayor and his council. Failing there, we naturally find fault with the architects. Then, suddenly, we