

The History of Government-
Sponsored Correspondence.
Education in Nova Scotia.

A Thesis written in partial
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ABSTRACT

Government-sponsored instruction by correspondence in Nova Scotia had its beginning in 1916. Since that time, correspondence courses have been used by a wide range of learners: teachers to improve their professional qualifications and to enhance the content of the courses they themselves taught; young persons unable to attend school and also those in schools which did not offer particular courses they needed; military personnel; and inmates in federal penitentiaries.

Since its beginning, the Correspondence Division has consistently expressed concern over shortcomings in guidance given to students at or after course registration. Deficiencies in guidance led to high student mortality, particularly among high school students during the first three decades of the Division's history. The forties and early fifties witnessed attempts at improved guidance procedures as well as the appointment of local supervisors for children living in remote areas. In the last two decades, care has been taken by the Correspondence Division to insure initial and continuing counselling services for its students.

The Correspondence Division has also been attentive to the standards of correspondence courses. During the history of the Division, these standards have paralleled the standards set for public school courses. The writer has noted some evidences of high standards as well as some limitations and inherent difficulties in the nature of correspondence instruction. His conclusion is that the strengths clearly overshadow the limitations.

In the final chapter, the writer makes some observations and proposals regarding the two areas of concern in foregoing chapters, namely, guidance and standards. The writer also suggests some priorities for today's Correspondence Study Service. Because of its adaptability, effectiveness, and economy, correspondence education has enjoyed more than six decades of successful history in Nova Scotia and promises to continue to be a viable alternative to in-school education in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Correspondence study has a definite place in any comprehensive system of national or provincial education. Its function is to carry by mail the benefits of education to those who for social, economic, or geographical reasons are unable to attend classes or lectures. Correspondence teaching is based on the premise that when a student knows what he¹ wants, he can reach his goal by private study and the careful direction and advice of an instructor or tutor. Education by correspondence requires self-discipline on the part of the student. Home-study courses are not "get-wise-quick" courses. If they give much to their students at little cost in money, they demand from the students much in the way of thought and effort.

The technique and scope of instruction by correspondence have been improved with experience and research, and each year more subjects are being studied by mail more successfully. It is essential to note, however, that the Correspondence Study Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education has never endeavoured to rival or supplant the classroom. It simply

¹Where the context so requires or permits, the masculine gender shall be read as if the feminine were expressed and included.

attempts to fill the gap caused by some students' lack of access to classroom instruction.

Need and effective response are implied by the Correspondence Division's more than half century of successful history, which is reviewed in Chapter One of this thesis.

Chapter Two is devoted to the problem area of guidance¹ in the development of the Correspondence Division. Documentation is provided in this chapter to furnish the reader with evidence that the Correspondence Division has experienced persistent problems with guidance procedures since its inception in 1916.

The critical aspect of standards is examined in Chapter Three. The content of this chapter is divided into two major headings: Evaluation of Outcomes and Course Content.

In Chapter Four the writer makes some observations and recommendations in the two aforementioned areas of concern in the development of the Correspondence Division, i.e., guidance and standards. In addition, the writer also suggests some priorities for today's Correspondence Study Service.

A library search has failed to yield any significant research which has been done on the history of government-sponsored correspondence education in Nova Scotia. Therefore, the writer has taken a basically historical approach.

¹The term "guidance" refers to the initial and continuing counselling of correspondence students as well as to the explanatory notes, etc. found in individual lesson assignments.

The writer has been associated with the Correspondence Study Service in the capacity of course writer and marker since 1972.

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

The purpose of Chapter One is to provide a general overview of the history of correspondence education in Nova Scotia; a closer examination of specific facets of education by correspondence will be provided by later chapters. Another objective of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the role which the Correspondence Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education has played and the specific needs it has met in the field of education. This role has continually undergone modification due to the changing educational needs of Nova Scotians. However, one constant has remained for the past sixty odd years¹ - the work of the early Correspondence Division as well as that of today's Correspondence Study Service comprises two major divisions: public school correspondence course offerings and, on a lesser scale, vocational correspondence course offerings.

As early as 1916 the Department of Education of Nova Scotia decided to make experimental use of the correspondence

¹With the exception of the years between 1916 and the mid-twenties in which vocational correspondence courses predominated.

method of instruction. The center chosen to conduct this experiment was the Nova Scotia Technical College where the President, Dr. F. H. Sexton, had a highly qualified and competent staff giving vocational training to war-disabled soldiers. It was the policy of the government at that time through the Technical Education Branch of the Department of Education to offer night school classes in homemaking, mining, industry, and business. It was thought these classes would serve the larger centers of population, but that the smaller centers must not be neglected. Consequently, the content of all the evening school courses was put into correspondence form and made available to residents of Nova Scotia at a nominal fee. The time chosen, however, was not an opportune one, for work at high wages was plentiful, but thirty-two students enrolled in one or other of the seven vocational correspondence courses offered. There are few records of the students, but that the experiment was not a notable success is shown by the decision to abandon it in 1917 until the end of the Great War. A picture of the statistical development is afforded by Table 1.¹

In 1921, however, the program was reactivated and has been functioning ever since. The evening school courses and the correspondence courses represented an extension function of the Nova Scotia Technical College, which reported directly to

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TABLE 1

A COMPARISON OF PUPIL ENROLMENT IN
PUBLIC SCHOOL COURSES¹ AND GOVERNMENT-
SPONSORED CORRESPONDENCE COURSES²

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PUPIL ENROLMENT</u>	
	<u>IN</u> <u>GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED</u> <u>CORRESPONDENCE COURSES</u>	<u>PUBLIC SCHOOL</u> <u>COURSES</u>
1916	32	109,189
1920	181	108,096
1925	1232	112,352
1930	813	113,860
1935	1125	116,798
1940	1538	117,167
1945	1805	116,587
1950	1171	130,398
1955	2895	145,490
1960	1772	177,121
1965	1931	199,095
1970	2477	219,794
1975	3247	211,364
1977	3010	205,974
1978	3614	194,067

¹The above figures were obtained from the student enrolment records kept by the Youth Education Research Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

²The above figures were obtained from the student enrolment records kept at the central office of the Correspondence Study Service.

the Technical Education Branch of the Department of Education in all matters regarding such courses. Hence, one will note that at the start the entire correspondence education program in Nova Scotia was vocationally slanted.

In the late twenties and early thirties, free high school correspondence courses were introduced to assist teachers in improving their professional qualifications. From the practice of issuing these correspondence courses free to teachers grew the practice of offering them gratis to grade eleven students who were unable, for one reason or another, to attend high school classes. The conditions are set forth in the following excerpt from the 1934 edition of the Journal of Education.

Alternatively, pupils in a section with an ungraded rural school may receive the services of the Correspondence Division in preparation for the certificate of Grade XI, free of charge, but only where no instruction in any of the subjects of Grade XI is given in the local school...In sections where, in the opinion of the Inspector, the teaching of Grade XI would seriously interfere with the work of the lower grades, only correspondence courses shall be offered.¹

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Grade XI in Rural Schools", Journal of Education, Vol. V, 4th Series, 1934, p. 634.

Shortly thereafter, as a result of public pressure, the Correspondence Division was compelled to translate into correspondence form public school courses in the elementary grades for children who, for several reasons recognized as legal under the Education Act, were unable to attend school. Therefore, in the early thirties, the Correspondence Division of the Nova Scotia Technical College was not only offering technical and homemaking courses by correspondence, but also the entire public school program as well.

Early in the thirties, the Correspondence Division added yet another dimension to its role of meeting specific educational needs not met by other existing educational agencies. The Division provided vocational correspondence courses to be used as teaching outlines for course content in an apprenticeship training program which was organized through the joint cooperation of the Provincial and Federal Departments of Labor.

Nova Scotia has also contributed to correspondence education in other ways. During the Second World War, the Correspondence Division served a great many servicemen, and it is remarkable that this additional burden was taken on with no additions in staff. This represented a great sacrifice by both office and instructional personnel. An important vehicle for the dissemination of such correspondence courses was the Canadian Legion Educational Services, which listed several

correspondence courses prepared by the Nova Scotia Correspondence Division.

From June, 1947, onwards, the Correspondence Study Division was known as the Correspondence Study Branch of the new Division of Vocational Education. Its head now carried the title of Supervisor rather than that of Superintendent. As a consequence of the expansion of the Vocational Education Division, vocational correspondence course registrations fell off for a short time because of improved classroom facilities throughout the province. At the same time there was a tightening of procedures of application and approval of enrolment in an attempt to diminish the relatively large number of dropouts from vocational correspondence courses.

Late in 1947 the Correspondence Division performed an additional function by loaning to teachers in rural and village school sections vocational correspondence courses as well as public school correspondence courses to be used as teaching aids.

The Correspondence Division offered another auxiliary service in 1948 when it was decided in cooperation with the Department of the Attorney-General to make correspondence courses available to inmates of federal penitentiaries whose domicile was deemed to be Nova Scotia. The nominal fee in each case was paid by the Department of the Attorney-General. The achievement of these students was most praiseworthy.

It is significant to note that in the late forties many provincial schools offered little or no instruction in grade twelve public school and vocational subjects. Hence, in 1949, grade twelve public school and vocational correspondence courses were made available on a "free" basis in somewhat the same manner as grade eleven correspondence courses had been, i.e., for the purpose of adding to the existing curriculum. This change was effected to assist grade twelve students living in areas far removed from other grade twelve facilities.

An interesting development of the late forties was the Correspondence Division's contribution to an agreement which was concluded between the provincial and federal authorities. The agreement provided that the provinces would receive financial aid from the Federal Department of Labor enabling them to offer vocational correspondence courses to all residents of Canada, whereas previously such courses had been restricted to residents of the sponsoring province.

The late forties witnessed a decreased enrolment in public school correspondence courses for grades nine to twelve, owing to the fact that pupils in these grades were increasingly attending the various rural high schools throughout the province. The advent of rural high schools was part of the continued consolidation which took place in rural areas, aided by the constant expansion of the conveyance system. Nevertheless, the

continuing shortage of teachers, although possibly less severe than in previous years, continued to cause a substantial demand for public school correspondence courses.

During the late fifties the public school phase of the work was still a major operation of the Correspondence Study Branch. In the early sixties the demand for correspondence instruction for students of school age decreased sharply. It is significant to note, however, that the demand for public school correspondence courses from the adult members of the Nova Scotia population was steadily increasing.

Early in 1960, the report concerning public school correspondence courses became part of the Annual Report of the Director of Vocational Education. In 1963 the Correspondence Study Branch was made part of the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. In addition to issuing public school correspondence courses and vocational correspondence courses as in the past, the Correspondence Study Branch began to provide correspondence courses in technical subjects at the technician level, i.e., at a more advanced level than the vocational correspondence courses. In 1969 another change in administrative arrangements occurred: the Correspondence Study Branch became the Correspondence Study Service which was made an integral part of the Adult Education Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

CHAPTER II

GUIDANCE: A PROBLEM AREA

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce to the reader the critical problem area of guidance¹ in the development of the Correspondence Division, and to examine the strategies, or lack thereof, employed by the Division to deal with this problem area. The failure of many students to cope successfully with correspondence courses has been attributed by the Division to shortcomings in guidance at or after course registration.

The extent to which the Correspondence Division made provision for a guidance function and the subsequent role of this guidance function was and is an issue critical to education by correspondence in Nova Scotia. In the main, the Correspondence Division has always attempted to ensure that the work of correspondence students was supervised by a competent staff of instructors.

Students are urged to make the fullest possible use of the opportunity afforded them of obtaining expert advice from their instructors, not

¹As noted previously, the term "guidance" refers to the initial and continuing counselling of correspondence students as well as to the explanatory notes, etc. found in individual lesson assignments.

only in their studies, but also with respect to their daily work and plans for the future. Within reasonable limits courses are modified to meet individual needs and the increasing number of letters for advice, together with visits from out-of-town students indicates that the offer of individual personal service is much appreciated.¹

However, the available literature seems to indicate that the advice received by prospective correspondence students was based solely on the information found on student application forms. No other criteria for student evaluation and placement seem to have been used.

Because some parents were unable to help their children, especially the parents of children attempting the work of grades one, two, and three, for whom the correspondence courses were still in the experimental stage, the concept of helping teachers to supervise the work of children living in isolated areas arose. A small number of helping teachers was appointed in the late twenties. The 1933 Journal of Education records the correspondence course enrolment for grades one, two, and three, as being one hundred forty-nine with one hundred thirty-two

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1922, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1923, p. 145.

course completions. With such a small number of helping teachers, it appears that the final result was due in large part to the encouragement given to these students by their parents.

During the twenties and thirties, there were many dropouts in grade eleven correspondence courses due in part to deficiencies in guidance given to pupils prior to registration. Not only was this damaging to student morale, but it also entailed considerable expense. Indicative of this situation are the following statistics from the 1934 Nova Scotia Education Report:

Grade XI correspondence course enrolment = 138.

Grade XI correspondence course completions = 37.

Even allowing for the fact that students were given up to two years to complete correspondence courses, the ratio of course enrolments to course completions was very poor. The view was expressed in the annual reports that more effective counselling of prospective students, as well as closer supervision of work at home, would help reduce the disparity between course enrolments and course completions.

Another factor entered into this dilemma of high mortality among grade eleven correspondence students. Some inspectors recommended that teachers enrol their pupils with the Correspondence Division long after the school year had begun with the result that many students became disheartened

from the start and soon dropped by the wayside. It was strongly recommended by the Correspondence Division that instructions be issued to inspectors and teachers alike that no pupils for grade eleven correspondence courses be registered after October 31st in any school year. It is significant to note, however, that the high dropout rate of grade eleven correspondence students continued in the late thirties.

The mortality rate is still high and the procedure of sending out courses to a large number of students who do not profit by them is very expensive. Plans are under way to reduce this mortality further.¹

This problem of unwise course selection was not peculiar to the children and youth following correspondence courses. In the late thirties, adult students were very prone to make unwise selections, due to ignorance of the content and demands of courses and the amount and kind of preliminary knowledge or training required. To meet this difficulty, an application form was devised which made it easier to determine whether or not the course selected in any particular case was a suitable one; if it was not, the prospective student received guidance

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1938, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1939, pp. 188-189.

in selecting a different course of study and advice as to the best way of carrying it through. Instructors spared no effort to render help to individual students where the need was evident. It was not uncommon for an instructor to write a two or three-page explanation to a student.

Beginning with the school year 1940-41, the Correspondence Division made available to students in grades nine and ten, vocational correspondence courses, on condition that the school was organized on a departmental basis and the following requirements were met:

Local guidance facilities must be provided through an advisor who may be the supervisor or a teacher selected by him from the local school staff. Systematic interviews between student and advisor should reveal whether or not the student has the ability required to do satisfactorily the work of the course and whether the student intends at present to qualify for the Grade XI provincial examinations. The parent or guardian of each student must clearly understand the nature and purposes of the courses and indicate, preferably in writing, a willingness for the student to enter upon the study of the course. A work station in a suitable room is to be assigned to the student, who will work under the supervision of a teacher, but that teacher will have no responsibility for helping the student. This arrangement is for the purpose of checking

attendance, the work attitudes of the student, and rendering assurance that the necessary time is spent on the work.¹

Beginning in the early forties, the Correspondence Division employed local supervisors in remote areas and school sections where there were several children but no school building nor teacher available. Frequently the supervisor was a person of grade ten or grade eleven standing, of good personality and character, and recommended by the county inspector. He may have been a local resident, a person who had been a teacher or one possessing a combination of other suitable qualifications. The results were generally good. During the war years, chiefly as a result of a request by the school inspectors in conference, the service was expanded from five supervisors in 1940-41 and relatively few students, to seventeen supervisors in the 1943-44 school year with an enrolment of seventy students. The statistical breakdown by counties was as follows:

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Conditions for vocational courses by correspondence for high school students" Journal of Education, Vol. XI, 4th Series, 1940, p. 406.

<u>Counties</u>	<u>Number of Supervisors</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
Antigonish	1	3
Cape Breton	4	24
Lunenburg	5	15
Shelburne	1	2
Pictou	3	10
Queens	1	3
Victoria	1	3
Yarmouth	<u>1</u>	<u>10</u>
Total	<u>17</u>	<u>70</u> ¹

Of the students enrolled, twenty-four completed courses, four discontinued, and forty-two continued. The Division considered this a gratifying record and the service was further increased during the following school year. A variety of procedures developed. In some cases, supervisors met the students at a school for periods varying from a few hours to a few days each week. In other instances, they visited from house to house, and in still others, students went to the supervisor's home.

In 1940, new application forms for vocational students were put into use. These forms comprised a considerable range of guidance factors, which permitted more competent counselling

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1943, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1944, p. 171.

in the selection of courses. Even with the advent of these new application forms, it remained a cause for concern that so many young people from rural schools applied for admission to grades nine, ten, and eleven vocational correspondence courses, only to show, after a trial period of five weeks, a lack of willingness to work or a deficiency in educational background. An improvement in the student retention rate was reflected in the 1942 Nova Scotia Education Report.

We have been trying for some time to increase the number of effective students and to minimize the importance of enrolling large numbers who do not complete courses and some results are showing. More careful guidance given to applicants has, no doubt, been a factor in this result...Next year with more time to give to the work through a rearrangement of duties, the superintendent of the Division will give more personal attention to the guidance of students, aiding them to select courses appropriate to their interests and abilities, aiding immature pupils to budget their time, detecting shortages in educational background before they result in absolute failure and making continuous follow-up surveys throughout the year.¹

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1941, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1942, p. 174 and p. 179.

Acting on the intention to help students budget their time more effectively, plans were made in the early forties to send to grade nine, ten, and eleven students, form time-tables with instructions on their use. In 1944, the Correspondence Division improved its follow-up service by a systematic check of all students who were in arrears with their lesson papers. Two results were immediately observed. First, a considerable number of people began to send in lessons and second, the Division's files were cleared of many who, for one reason or another, had let their enrolments lapse. The large number of cancellations reduced the number of active students from nine hundred fifty in 1942-43 to seven hundred twenty in 1943-44.¹

In the mid-forties, the number of student graduates in trade, industrial, and commercial courses was not encouraging and there were indications that more guidance given to people enrolling from the armed services would improve the situation. To help combat the high failure and dropout rate, plans were made to institute a more rigorous screening of those whose prospects of success were not encouraging. It must be remembered that when the Canadian Legion Educational Service was first organized, adequate guidance could not be given to all who applied for correspondence courses, but advisement through

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1943, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1944, p. 200.

educational officers was improved with the result that many servicemen unsuited for such studies were directed into other channels of study.

In the late forties, as was noted in Chapter One, the Correspondence Division, in cooperation with the Department of the Attorney-General, began to offer correspondence courses to inmates of federal penitentiaries whose domicile was considered to be in Nova Scotia. These inmates were and are interviewed and assisted in their selection of courses by representatives of the John Howard Society.

The present day Correspondence Study Service continues to ensure the availability of counselling services for users of its courses. A sincere attempt is made by the Correspondence Study Service to ascertain the conditions under which the correspondence student is working and in turn to adapt its tuition to the needs of individual students.

CHAPTER III

STANDARDS: A CRITICAL ASPECT

A critical aspect in the development of the Correspondence Division was that of the standards of correspondence courses.

A brief historical reference to the competence of correspondence course administrators and instructors will suffice. In its infancy, the Correspondence Division recognized the importance of forming a staff of competent administrators and instructors.

Prof. W.S Ayars, head of the department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of the Technical, was appointed the Director of Correspondence Study. He has had unusually wide experience in industry and also in carrying on both secondary and higher education in applied science.¹

Owing to the pressure exerted on the educational facilities of the Technical College by the demands for the vocational retraining of disabled soldiers, the Correspondence

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1916, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1917, p. 183.

Division had to be suspended in 1917. In 1920, however, plans were made to resume this activity and to expand it to greater proportions.

The first step was to secure Mr. A.T. Jewitt as Superintendent of this Division. He had thoro training and experience as a teacher in a wide variety of subjects and schools in England. He had taught in rural schools on the prairies in the West, and also in the city schools in Calgary. He acted as Secretary of the School Board in Calgary and for four years acted as Superintendent of cases with the Vocational Branch, Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, at Ottawa. He was selected for his exceptional ability in handling educational matters by correspondence, his keen desire to help other people, and his thoro acquaintance with a wide range of vocational instruction.¹

The instructors chosen by the Correspondence Division were also of a high calibre:

The success of any system of teaching depends mainly upon

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1920, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1921, p. 132.

the efficiency of the teacher, not on texts or courses. This is particularly the case with regard to the correspondence method, and the greatest care has been taken in forming a staff of competent instructors. This work has been lightened by the interest shown by men of outstanding ability in their professions or trades in the city, who have either offered their services or recommended instructors. It is not too much to say that every instructor is very keenly interested in the success of the Division as a whole and is not only prepared to give that personal touch which is the soul of all good teaching, but also gives service to those of his students studying along the lines of their occupations, on the difficulties met with in their daily work.¹

The instructors placed considerable emphasis on the establishment of high standards for the successful completion of correspondence courses.

A high standard of efficiency
is required before students

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1920, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1921, p. 133.

are considered to have satisfactorily completed a lesson or course.¹

The preceding paragraphs have dealt with the Division's concern for competence in its administrative and teaching staff; the balance of this chapter is divided into two major headings - one entitled Evaluation of Outcomes and the other entitled Course Content.

Evaluation of Outcomes

As to the determination of whether established standards were reached, the Correspondence Division has always closely paralleled the public school system in its use of final examinations for high school pupils. Today, the Division's policy on final examinations remains, to a great extent, unchanged. Mandatory final examinations are still set by the Correspondence Study Service for high school correspondence courses. These examinations must be supervised by a responsible person who is not related in any way to the student and who is acceptable

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Report of the Superintendent of the Correspondence Division", Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1920, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1921, p. 4.

to the Supervisor of the Correspondence Study Service.

Concern for standards is also suggested by other aspects of the early Division's promotion policies. Each course had to be completed within two years of its commencement unless exceptional circumstances intervened. The student assignments were graded as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Mark</u>
Excellent	95-100%
Very Good	85-94%
Good	75-84%
Fair	65-74%
Poor	50-64%
Unsatisfactory	0-49%

Upon successful completion (i.e., an overall average of 70%) of any correspondence course, a certificate was issued by the Correspondence Division under the authority of the Department of Education.

Today's Correspondence Study Service has also translated its concern for standards into clearly defined marking and promotion policies. The two year time limit on course completion is still in effect. Student assignments are graded by letter (as opposed to the earlier numerical grading) according to

the following schedule:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Mark</u>
Excellent	A
Above Average	B
Average	C
Passing	D
Failure	E

Submitted assignments receiving a mark of "E" must be done again and they can receive no mark higher than "C" on the second attempt. Assignments marked "Incomplete" are to be completed and returned for correction. To obtain a certificate in any correspondence course at the grade one to nine levels, students must complete all the course assignments with an average mark of at least "C" (as opposed to the earlier minimum average of 70%) with no mark below "D" and with not more than one-third of the assignments repeated. The last two provisions apply to high school correspondence courses.

Upon successful completion of each correspondence course a certificate is still issued by the Correspondence Study Service under the authority of the Department of Education. The certificate, while not a diploma, is of distinct value, as it provides proof that the holder has studied a definite course under competent direction and has demonstrated satisfactory

proficiency.

In reviewing the Division's marking and promotion policies, the writer has described one yardstick by which one may estimate the Division's commitment to standards. Another evidence of correspondence course standards is suggested by the apparent success of many correspondence course graduates.

A typical example follows:

Two men who completed the course in Surveying have obtained the Provincial Land Surveyors' Certificate and one student who took the Advertising Course obtained a good position on a local paper and is exhibiting marked ability with every prospect for success.¹

Because of a variety of factors, one being the achievement of countless correspondence course graduates, the Correspondence Division had by the mid-twenties proved to be a viable educational agency throughout the Province. The organization had become standardized to a great extent and both research and experience provided proof that numerous correspondence course graduates

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1921, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1922, p. 128.

had reaped benefits from the methods employed. Many students who had followed high school correspondence courses showed marked ability upon university entrance. Therefore, another barometer of the standards of correspondence courses was the decision of Acadia University, prompted by the competence of entering high school correspondence course graduates, to add a correspondence study department to its activities in 1926 and to begin to offer correspondence students credit toward degrees.

Another indication of the sound standards of correspondence courses was the fact that, in the late twenties and early thirties, at the request of the Council of Public Instruction, the Correspondence Division began to provide, free of charge, high school correspondence courses for teachers. On completion of a correspondence course, a teacher could apply for an examination which was set, not by the Correspondence Division, but by the Department of Education. Credits gained at these examinations ranked equally with those obtained at the provincial examinations held annually in June, but candidates had to reach a higher standard of achievement.

An indication of the high quality of the work done by the students is that of 74 teachers examined for High School Certificates up to and including Grade XI, 65 passed. These examinations are

set by the Education Department of the Province and written under rigorous supervision, the pass mark being higher than that required at the annual Provincial Examination.¹

The pass rate indicated (65 out of 74 candidates) is 87.8% as opposed to the 1932 high school overall pass rate of 71.4% at the provincial examinations.

The fact that these high school correspondence courses for teachers were demanding of their time and the fact that the Supervisor closely monitored their progress, is suggested by the following quotation:

Generally speaking the active teacher has no more than sufficient time for one course. It is upon this premise that the Supervisor will normally refuse to approve the enrolment of an active teacher in more than one course. If a teacher does very well in the first quarter of the first course, a second one may be granted in special cases upon the receipt of a well founded request. Each

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1932, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1933, p. 128.

lesson will normally require eight to ten hours work and study for adequate accomplishment.¹

One of the best ways to insure uniformity of standards between correspondence and intramural courses is to have both types of courses in the same subject supervised and examined by one person. In fact, this is what happens in Nova Scotia. In most cases, persons engaged by the Correspondence Study Service to write and mark any given correspondence course, are also responsible for teaching that same course intramurally.

Course Content

Now that we have examined the standards of correspondence courses as reflected by course outcomes, let us turn our attention to another dimension of the standards of correspondence courses, namely, their content.

The Correspondence Division has always made an effort to tailor its courses to the needs of the individual student, keeping in mind differences in maturity, native ability, prior preparation, etc. It was and still is the opinion of the

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Free Correspondence Courses for Teachers-For Study of Grades XI and XII", Journal of Education, Vol. XIX, 4th Series, 1948, p. 99

Correspondence Division that the highest standards possible will be achieved by offering to the particular student particular courses which will enable him to learn to the full measure of his ability.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Correspondence Division has attempted to tailor its courses to the needs of individual students, the courses have also matched the specifications of courses prescribed by the Department of Education. Many public schools could not offer certain courses, particularly in high school subjects, because of a lack of qualified teachers. Therefore, students were issued correspondence courses in these subjects to be completed under the guidance of local supervisors. This use of correspondence courses indicates a recognition of the adequacy of the standards of correspondence courses.

Another indicator of the quality of correspondence courses has been the Division's attention to careful planning in the design of its courses. The following example may be considered typical. In September, 1936, the Division began to offer a correspondence course in Art and Handwork for teachers. The purpose of this course was to help teachers acquire a thorough knowledge of the fundamental principles of Art so that they might teach the elements of the subject effectively. This course met the requirements of the Department of Education for its public school course in drawing and color work, but no

attempt was made to teach the Manual Arts such as moulding, weaving, sewing, etc. The thoroughness and careful planning of the course are suggested by a short course description which follows:

Contents of Course: Lesson 1, Lines; Lesson 2, Object Drawing; Lesson 3, Perspective; Lesson 4, Object Drawing (Cube); Lesson 5, Object Drawing (Cylinder); Lesson 6, Object Drawing (Composition); Lesson 7, The Human Figure in Illustration; Lesson 8, Lettering (Block Letters) Lesson 9, Lettering (Roman Letters); Lesson 10, Lettering (Layouts); Lesson 11, Lettering (Old English); Lesson 12, Colour; Lesson 13, Colour Harmony; Lesson 14, Colour Application; Lesson 15, Design (The Development); Lesson 16, Design (Rhythm); Lesson 17, Design (Balance);Lesson 18, Design (Harmony); Lesson 19, Posters; Lesson 20, Composition (Landscape.)

The student will require the following equipment for the course:

<u>Article</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
1. Drawingboard 20"x28".....	1.....	\$1.75
2. Metal edge ruler 12".....	1.....	.10
3. Thumb tacks.....	12.....	.05
4. Drawing pencils-3H.....	2.....	.15
5. Compass-pen and pencil.....	1.....	.50
6. Drawing pencils-3B.....	2.....	.15
7. Drawing pencils-6B.....	2.....	.15
8. Water proof ink.....	1bottle....	.25
9. Penholder.....	1.....	.10
10. Penpoints-Gillotts 170, 290, 303...	12.....	.12
11. Ink eraser.....	1.....	.05
12. Art gum.....	1.....	.05
13. Crayons.....	1box.....	.05
14. Speedball pens.....	24.....	1.25
15. Colour set: 5 show card colours;..	1.....	2.50
10 tubes water colours;		
2 brushed, No. 3, No.6		

16. Paper		
Watercolour-9"x12".....	24sheets.....	.40
Pen and ink 30" wide.....	2yards.....	.10
Drawing-white 9"x12".....	24sheets.....	.12
Drawing-white 30" wide.....	2yards.....	.10
Drawing-cream 9"x12".....	24sheets.....	.05
Tracing-24"x36".....	1sheet.....	.10
Cutting 9"x12" (assorted colours)	50sheets....	.20
Construction 12"x18".....	12sheets.....	.15
		\$8.44
		1

Today's Correspondence Study Service remains very much concerned with standards in the planning of its courses. A monitoring of quality is achieved through the use of a set of definite procedures and precise objectives in course construction and through the use of frequent tests which measure the performance of correspondence course objectives. The following Instructional System Design is in general use by the Correspondence Study Service course writers. The major steps are: (1) Preparation of training objectives, that is, tasks and component skills; (2) Sequencing the objectives of the system; (3) Selection of components and procedures, that is, what kind of practice, what media of presentation, what materials for practice of knowledge and performance; (4) Coordination of components and procedures; (5) Evaluation of the system. The design is

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Correspondence Course in Art and Handwork for Teachers", Journal of Education, Vol. VII, 4th Series, 1937, pp. 524-525.

evidence of the Correspondence Study Service's commitment to quality and consistency in its offerings.

The Division's historical concern for standards may also be inferred from its reluctance to include in its offerings vocational correspondence courses which were not suitable for particular subject areas. For example, only carefully selected vocational correspondence courses were offered to high school students at the beginning of the 1940-41 school year. No attempt had previously been made to evaluate these courses in terms of high school credits. The Division felt that it had to be selective and mounted only those vocational correspondence courses which would approximate the work of a regular school subject for a term of one year.

But even with a selective offering of vocational courses, problems apparently arose. In 1941, high school vocational correspondence courses and local supervision were the subjects of several discussions between the Correspondence Division and high school principals, and the consensus reached was that (1) the offering of such courses was worthwhile for certain students; (2) some courses were not well adapted to the high school level; (3) closer supervision must be exercised, and (4) more sympathetic dealing with students by subject specialists was desirable. As a result of these discussions, several vocational correspondence courses were revised in

consultation with high school principals and a serious attempt was made to supervise more closely the work of correspondence students.

Nevertheless, in 1942, vocational correspondence course offerings to high school students were withdrawn. There was some evidence that students looked upon these so-called "practical courses" as an easement from the more rigid demands of academic subjects. Moreover, the available literature suggests that the standards of several vocational correspondence courses fell below the standards of corresponding public school courses. It might be helpful to note that at that time many people, teachers and non-teachers alike, saw intramural vocational courses as inferior to intramural academic courses. Thus, the perceived difference in standards may not have been due essentially to the correspondence factor.

Another factor relevant to the standards of correspondence courses was the fact that a number of those courses were subject to the Trade Schools Regulations Act, which was enacted in the late forties. The Act provided that

no person shall operate a trade school or conduct courses by correspondence or home study unless he is in possession of a certificate of registration issued in accordance with the

Act. The purpose of the Act is to insure that the courses offered are of a high standard, that the teachers are properly qualified to give instruction, and generally to protect the interests of the students enrolled in such schools.¹

Experience has suggested that it is erroneous to assume that correspondence courses must, of necessity, be regarded as an inferior substitute or makeshift for intramural courses. Except for the method of instruction, no discrepancy need exist between a correspondence course and an equivalent course given in the classroom. Indeed, many reasons might be advanced to support the thesis that in some respects students who take correspondence courses are better trained and actually learn more than they would under classroom instruction. That the standards of correspondence courses are equivalent to the standards set for their intramural counterparts is suggested by the following observations. It is true that universities in Nova Scotia do not allow the candidate for a professional certificate or degree to obtain all the necessary credits by correspondence study. This is not to be interpreted as indicating a lack of confidence in the standards and effectiveness of correspondence education. Rather, it is simply a reflection of the fact that certain types

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1955, Halifax, N.S., Queen's Printer, 1956, p. 152.

of learning, such as that occurring through laboratory work or group discussion, cannot be effected through correspondence education. Corroborating the view that the universities do respect correspondence course standards and effectiveness is the fact that there is total acceptance of grade twelve correspondence course credits for the purpose of university entrance.

In summarizing this historical review of correspondence course standards, the writer has noted these evidences of high standards: (1) the formation of a competent staff of administrators and instructors in the Correspondence Division, (2) the clearly defined marking and promotion policies of the Correspondence Division, (3) the apparent success of many correspondence course graduates, (4) the tailoring of correspondence courses to individual student needs, (5) the provision of high school correspondence courses for teachers who were subject to examinations set by the Department of Education, (6) the use made by the public school system of correspondence courses, (7) the thoroughness and careful planning which is evident in the design of correspondence courses, (8) the Division's concern for offering only selected vocational correspondence courses which approximated the work

of their intramural counterparts, (9) the fact that some correspondence courses were and are subject to the Trade Schools Regulations Act, (10) university total acceptance of grade twelve correspondence courses as well as partial use of correspondence courses at the university level.

The writer has also noted some limitations and inherent difficulties in the nature of correspondence courses. For example, (1) the lack of final examinations in elementary and junior high school correspondence courses, (2) the fact that correspondence courses, because of their nature, do not address themselves to laboratory work, group discussion, etc., (3) the fact that some vocational correspondence courses were of a lower standard than that expected at the high school level in the early forties, just as the standards of some intramural high school vocational courses compared unfavourably with the standards of some high school academic courses.

In the final analysis, after making an examination of correspondence course standards, the writer believes that it is reasonable to conclude that a mixed picture has emerged in which the strengths clearly predominate.

CHAPTER 1V

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the writer has noted two major areas of concern in foregoing chapters, namely, guidance and standards, in the continuing development of correspondence education in Nova Scotia, this chapter will be concerned principally with making some observations and subsequent proposals in these areas.

Historically, the counselling of correspondence students has always been a concern of the Correspondence Division. At times this concern became especially noticeable, as for instance in the early forties when detailed suggestions concerning the systematic counselling of grades nine and ten vocational correspondence students were made in the Annual Report.¹

¹Province of Nova Scotia, "Conditions for vocational courses by correspondence for high school students", Journal of Education, Vol. XI, 4th Series, 1940, p. 406.

In the early fifties, deficiencies in guidance led to unwise course selection by many children, youth, and adults. To cite a specific instance, the dropout rate for grade eleven correspondence students during the above mentioned period of time was very high, due mainly to weaknesses in the screening of prospective students. From statements made in the early fifties, notwithstanding earlier attempts to improve the guidance procedure, students were still being placed in courses solely on the information found on student application forms. If student placement in appropriate courses is to become more of a reality, provision must be made for obtaining more complete data on the prospective correspondence student, both self-reported data on the application form, and information from third parties such as teachers. Counselling on the basis of this expanded body of data should be provided through qualified counsellors both before registration and throughout the student's correspondence career. Acting on its predecessor's 1943 guidelines¹, today's Correspondence Study Service should institute a closer follow-up of enrolled students in all categories, so that those who fail to send in lesson assignments for a period of three weeks, for example, would receive an inquiry as to the reason (s) for late assignments and encouragement to follow their

¹Province of Nova Scotia, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended July 31, 1943, Halifax, N.S., King's Printer, 1944, p. 198.

declared purposes.

In correspondence courses the preparation of a well organized set of course outlines is essential to good results and is of more importance to the student than an imposing array of textbooks. If by careful forethought the various points to be considered in each lesson are clearly presented and appropriately illustrated, the average student in preparing his assignments will obtain an organized grasp of the material. In general, the course material should be designed to proceed in short steps, and to provide for maximum student response and feedback.

The practice of asking students to read several chapters from selected texts, without comment or without instruction to the student on how to proceed or what to note particularly, may not disconcert the superior student, but it usually confuses and weakens the interest of the less gifted student. Furthermore, to ask students to write comprehensive essays on general topics is neither a kindness to them nor sound pedagogy.

The student should be given advice and directions on

how to attack the problem, and suggestions which help the student to test his own knowledge should appear in the form of leading questions. The more explicit and comprehensive the text and the notes are, the more help they will provide for the student who has to work his own passage to a clear understanding of the subject he is studying. Illustrative material, teaching aids, self-tests, guides for self-evaluation, models, examples, and explanatory notes on difficult sections of the text should be freely supplied. For example, in mathematics some programmed learning material should be provided. Selected school television programs should be recommended as aids to learning.

As a guiding principle, the student should always be complimented when he has done well, in whole or in part; he should be given encouragement and helpful suggestions about any work he has done poorly.

The writer has also examined certain facets of the standards of correspondence courses and the following recommendations are offered.

Since the standards of correspondence courses depend to

a significant degree on the quality of testing, it follows that lesson papers should require answers that are interpretative, descriptive, expository, or illustrative, rather than simply requiring the recall of factual material. They should call for a reshaping of a portion of knowledge, the solution of a problem, a statement of opinion with supporting reasons, the application of a principle to a new set of facts.

Because the corrections made, the grades assigned, and the commentaries appended to the students' lesson papers (it was and still is not uncommon for an instructor to write a two or three page explanation to a student) represent a key component of the teaching method in correspondence courses, it follows that the instructors who are appointed to mark correspondence papers should be fully as competent and as highly qualified and trained as the teachers for regular school courses. They should follow the lead of their early confreres in placing considerable emphasis on the establishment of high standards for correspondence courses. The early Correspondence Division considered the formation of a staff of competent

administrators and instructors as critical to its beginning and continuing development.

It is important to note that at present a large percentage of correspondence course writers also mark the student assignments for courses which they have developed. The writer believes that this policy should be continued and expanded as it is likely to strengthen the standards of correspondence courses.

Correspondence courses should not be permitted to be inferior alternatives to regular school courses. Particularly where wide gaps between the standards of certain correspondence courses and the standards of equivalent school courses can be identified, more attempts must be made to correlate correspondence courses with their intramural counterparts.

If correspondence education is to remain a credible alternative to schooling, the writer holds that all correspondence courses must continue to exhibit the following important characteristics: (1) clearly defined marking and promotion policies, (2) quality and consistency in their design, (3)

flexibility in providing individualized programs to meet a variety of objectives, (4) careful selection of appropriate texts, (5) mandatory final examinations for all levels and subject areas.

The principal recommendations for correspondence courses are presented above. Some supplementary suggestions are offered below.

The writer suggests that it should be a priority of the Correspondence Study Service to raise the public's level of awareness of the opportunities, advantages, and disadvantages of study by correspondence so that potential students will have an informed basis for decision. Furthermore, there should be some reconsideration of the Correspondence Study Service's advertising policy. By means of various media, the opportunities for education by correspondence must be brought to the attention of the public, just as they were, for example, by several well received radio talks concerning education by correspondence in the early fifties. The writer suggests that the Correspondence Study Service has an obligation to **make**

this educational service at least as widely known as similar private services which are operated for profit. In conjunction with the foregoing priority, the writer contends that the Correspondence Study Service must also raise the level of awareness of school educators concerning the contribution and potential of correspondence education; the Service must convince them that this is a significant opportunity and it must encourage a partnership in an integrated education system which involves correspondence education as well as schooling.

Owing to its versatility, effectiveness, and economy, correspondence instruction has proved to be a viable alternative for persons lacking ready access to in-school education. The growing student body¹ demonstrates that this form of instruction is continuing to meet with favourable public judgement.

¹See Table 1, p. 6.

The many new uses of correspondence education¹ reflect the increasing recognition of the value of instruction by correspondence in serving a wide variety of educational and training situations. With the constant broadening of the base of mass education, the possibilities of extending the scope and perfecting the technique of correspondence education appear to be unlimited.

¹The Correspondence Study Service now offers theory courses in Medical Technology, Electronics, Accounting, Drafting, Navigation, Welding, etc. The practical component of these courses is available through the extension services of the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. These new opportunities have come in the wake of a new administrative arrangement. On November 1, 1978, the Director of Extension Services of the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology was also made responsible for the activities of the Correspondence Study Service.

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