

curriculum revisions, but the most important of these skills should be that of knowing what is going on in the world.

The person who should lead in curriculum revisions is he who knows how to comprehend and interpret social change. This person should be something of a philosopher who combines two varieties of wisdom: that which comes from the knowledge of scientists and that which derives from the experience of the folk.

It has often occurred to me that perhaps one of the most effective methods for a continuing process of curriculum revision would be to have in every community a panel of representative citizens who would meet regularly with teachers and administrators and thus, in joint conference, arrive at suggestions leading to experimentation. By

"representative" citizens I do not mean those who have consistently meddled in school affairs. On the contrary, I mean citizens who in their lives represent the widest range of interests, occupations, formal educational experience, and income; in short, citizens who represent the community's democratic spirit.

Such a group of citizens might even, upon occasion, save the school administration from some of the inane curriculum changes which are forced upon the school by pressure groups. A curriculum leader working with such a group would soon have at its disposal a reservoir of knowledge and wisdom upon which he could place a far greater reliance than he might give to the specialist who thinks only of curriculum matters. Perhaps what I am striving to say is that curriculum affairs should not become a vested interest.

Our Values, Our Decisions, and Our Action

EDWARD KRUG

Readers of **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP** will remember the splendid statement last October by Edward Krug advocating a more vigorous academic freedom. We welcome this second article which gives concise guides to applying our values in democratic action in order to meet effectively the conflicts and controversy in schools and society at this crucial time. The author is associate professor of education at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

WE HAVE COME BACK to our teaching jobs this fall in a world more than ever torn by social controversy and conflict. We will have to make decisions

and take action in relation to these realities in thousands of American communities. It is our responsibility to base these decisions and actions on the values

cherished by us, the whole American people—the values of the democratic way of life.

There are three possible objections to this. One is that our democratic values are verbal and that we contradict them in actual practice. A second is that democracy is too poorly and vaguely defined to serve as a guideline for action. And a third might point out that we have kicked the term “democracy” around until it has become commonplace and worn out, a matter of ridicule, a term used to describe anything ineffectual in the way of group behavior.

In response to these objections it can be urged first of all that although our democratic values are not always practiced, they still provide a framework acceptable to us as a whole people and, therefore, a good starting point for action and discussion. On the second point, if democracy is poorly defined, it becomes our responsibility to clarify, enrich, and strengthen the definition. On the third, if many of our attempts at democratic action seem weak and ineffectual, we must strive to do a better job with our democratic-action techniques.

Looking at Our Schools in Society

Our school faculties, therefore, would do well in this crucial academic year of 1948-49 to devote much time and effort to a cooperative study with the lay community of our democratic heritage. Such a study could provide needed guidelines to our decisions and actions on such matters as academic freedom, the nature of the school curriculum, and the role of the school in social conflict.

We must start somewhere with a

suggested framework we can enrich, expand, or redefine. John Dewey¹ provides a possible framework in the following observation:

Democracy also means voluntary choice, based on an intelligence that is the outcome of free association and communication with others. It means a way of living together in which mutual and free consultation rule instead of force, and in which cooperation instead of brutal competition is the law of life; a social order in which all the forces that make for friendship, beauty, and knowledge are cherished in order that each individual man become what he, and he alone, is capable of becoming.

The Commission on Secondary School Curriculum of the Progressive Education Association reinterpreted this poetic statement into a three-item listing. According to their conception,² democratic values consist of: (1) respect for personality; (2) mutual group and individual responsibility and effort; and (3) free play of intelligence in the approach to social problems.

Learning Through Living

Respect for personality, the first and most important of democratic values, insists that all human beings are equally entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—regardless of race, ethnic origin, social class, religious background, intelligence quotients, academic abilities, or other factors over which the individual has no control. In the western world we have derived this value of the supreme dignity of the

¹ “Education and Social Change,” *The Social Frontier*, Vol. III, May, 1937, p. 238.

² Thayer, V. T., Zachry, Caroline B., and Kotinsky, Ruth. *Reorganizing Secondary Education*, New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., p. 68-75.

individual from our Hebraic-Christian tradition.

The school teaches this value best by living it. In such a school, teachers emotionally accept every child as worthy of their best efforts. Faculty and administration insist on equal participation, opportunities for all students in school-sponsored social life—parties, dances, clubs, sports. Administrators respect the personalities and efforts of teachers by involving their participation in basic decisions of school policy. Teachers avoid gossiping about and undermining their administrators in the community. Students exercise self-discipline instead of forcing the faculty into a police role. Such a democratic school environment provides maximum opportunity for all to realize some measure of belongingness, participation, status, and security.

Making Group Processes Work

Mutual group and individual responsibility and effort is needed to balance off any possibility that the importance of individuals may lead to unrestrained and licentious individualism. It is from our American frontier tradition that we have derived this feeling for working together, for sharing responsibility and authority. Today we are calling it "group process" and we are finding many opportunities to extend its applications in education, in labor-management relations, in family life, in community life, and in international affairs.

But this group process calls for skills—definite and difficult skills of group discussion and group planning. This means that the school curriculum must provide for activities which give op-

portunity for practicing and learning these skills. In our democratic school, question-and-answer recitations for the most part have given way to interaction-type discussion processes. Teacher-student planning, to some degree, is practiced in all aspects of student-activity life in every classroom, not in the sense of asking students "what they want to study" but in the sense of sharing responsibility for defining goals and activities necessary in working toward them.

Thinking Through Our Problems

Free play of intelligence in the approach to social problems has always been an abomination to the totalitarian mind. Mussolini is said to have characterized rationalism as an eighteenth-century superstition, while Hitler's youth leader, Baldur von Schirach pronounced, "We think with our blood." But we believe that the common man—meaning us—has intellectual power and can use it. We recognize that much of our behavior is irrational, but we see this as involved in our tangled emotions and not as indicative of human stupidity. We have faith that reflective thinking—on an individual and on a group basis—is a better approach to our human problems than the approach of violence and conflict, bloodshed, hatred, and prejudice.

A school which lives its democratic faith testifies daily to its belief in the free play of intelligence. Administrators, teachers, and students carefully think through the need for school regulations. There is a minimum of blind acceptance of authority for authority's sake. Furthermore, the problem-solving approach characterizes the classroom

activities in a good part of the formal instruction program. This does not mean that "everything has to be a problem," but rather that there is room in many instances for activities involved in defining problems, gathering and evaluating data, formulating and testing hypotheses, and applying conclusions. For these are skills which must be learned through practice the same as the skills of any other human activity.

Giving Reality to Our Values

Teachers and administrators in a school which lives its democratic values are in the best position to apply these values as guides to their decisions and actions on matters of social controversy and conflict. For these values will be part of their everyday thought and action pattern, not something which merely sounds good or which serves as window-dressing.

It is important, for example, that teachers play an active part as citizens in helping to evaluate proposed social changes or solutions to problems. A time of conflict brings forth many proposed changes, some of which are desirable and some of which are not. Proposed lines of social change should be regarded as desirable and praiseworthy only to the extent that they are consistent with our democratic values.

But it is not enough for teachers to sit back and wait for an opportunity to evaluate changes proposed by others. We must, along with other citizens, raise questions and issues involving these basic democratic values—questions and issues in such vital areas as community health, housing, race relationships, recreational opportunities. Our democratic values can provide us the tool

with which we appraise current social practices and conditions as a basis for raising questions and issues. We must use this tool as a means of making ourselves especially alert to the need for continued improvement in all aspects of human relationships.

Furthermore, it is our responsibility to promote group process as a means of involving wider and wider community participation in the study of basic problems and issues. It is only when the majority of the community is passive or inert that an articulate minority can make its particular pleading sound like the voice of the whole people. We make the mistake of sometimes accepting an undemocratic line of action on the basis that it is "what the people want," when in actuality it is wanted only by a small number who take the trouble to be heard.

Accepting the Inescapable Fact

The relationship between democratic values and academic freedom is direct and inescapable. Academic freedom is here defined as:

- freedom of political action by teachers as regular citizens of our communities and of our nation
- freedom of inquiry and research
- freedom to raise questions for discussion in and out of class
- freedom to express views on controversial issues, provided the classroom is not used as a rostrum for the urging of these views
- freedom to promote full and unrestricted use of the reflective thinking process on the part of students.

Teachers today must exercise academic freedom as a responsibility they assume with the acceptance of their teaching

certificates. It is not a matter of individual preference; it is part of every teacher's job. On the other hand, teachers in such a school need not develop "chip-on-the-shoulder" attitudes in exercising their "rights." There is no room for the persecution complex in this pattern of democratic action.

Our schools can exercise their function in modern society most fully by being committed to democratic values

in every phase of their human relationships, in every phase of their instructional programs. Only in such an environment will children and youth develop the qualities of behavior needed for the maintaining and extending of our democratic tradition. Only in such an environment will teachers gain the daily insight into democratic processes which they need for their actions in our wider areas of social conflict today.

What the Polls Show

HELEN CROSSLEY and GEORGE KERRY SMITH

Surveys reveal former pupils' lack of knowledge and interest in public affairs. Some survey results are given here by Helen Crossley, on the staff of the Opinion Research Center, University of Denver, and George Kerry Smith, chief of the Information and Publications Service, U. S. Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, Washington, D.C. It is their contention that the problems in "areas of ignorance" will be easier to approach and solve when they are first clearly defined.

ONE DAY LAST SPRING a radio interviewer went around the streets of New York asking passers-by whether they had any "scruples."¹ Numbers of people replied that they'd had some last week but were all out now. Others referred the interviewer to the delicatessen down the street.

There is much evidence that the average American will give a public-opinion interviewer almost any kind of answer rather than admit his ignorance. And the opinions he expresses are not necessarily based on any knowledge of a given subject.

How Much Do We Know?

A tabulation was recently made of the answers to opinion poll questions asked during the last five years by national polling organizations. On the average, less than fifteen percent of the respondents said they had no opinion on the controversial questions put to them. During the same period, those who could not answer correctly questions indicating factual knowledge of various kinds amounted to nearly fifty percent of the sample populations.

Since no comprehensive study has yet been made defining just what constitutes public "ignorance," it would be difficult to say just how much more

¹ Allen Funt, "Candid Microphone," Broadcast, May 20, 1948.

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