

interested in curriculum planning and are not devoted to a particular scheme or a particular set of methodological devices.

Cooperative planning also becomes important—within departments, between departments, and school-wide. This cooperative planning is important at almost all steps: in getting data, with teachers who have worked at different types of information pooling facts and formulating interpretations together; in attempting to set the over-all direction or objectives suggested by the facts; and certainly in weighing the unique contributions of each area toward these objectives to assure well-rounded emphasis and to avoid overlapping. If properly planned, this type of cooperation need not be a nuisance or an excessive drain on time and energy. It does not take unusually brilliant teach-

ers. Recent experiences of the author have shown her that the average teacher does respond to this kind of counseling and can undertake instructional planning of a commendable soundness.

Harmony Between Essentials and Needs

Perhaps by combining this generalized technique of curriculum planning and a conscious identification and application of educational principles and psychological knowledge at each step, we can also solve the perennial dichotomy of the "essentials," which assumes universality and local adaptation, clearly necessary if we take the needs theory and individual variations seriously. We may find the essentials in general ideas and generalized skills and be free to serve the local needs of groups and individuals by a judicious variation in content and in ways of learning.

Teachers Explore Basic Principles

SAMUEL EVERETT

Assistant professor of education at City College, New York, Samuel Everett is also general consultant in the Philadelphia Open-Mindedness Study.

*"The contributions that might come from classroom teachers are . . . an almost unworked mine."*¹

A group of teachers were meeting at the Philadelphia Board of Education building to discuss ways and means of promoting open-mindedness. They had responded to a request for volunteers made by the principals of eight elemen-

tary and secondary schools where they taught. But no one really knew just what it was all about.

The meeting began with a brief statement by the Associate Superintendent in charge of Curriculum. He talked about "the open and the closed mind," quoting from a challenging article by Samuel Fels, a distinguished citizen of the city. "Can open-mindedness be taught in the schools?" "To

¹ Dewey, John. *The Sources of a Science of Education*, New York: Horace Liveright, 1929.

what extent do we want to teach open-mindedness?" "What do we mean by open-mindedness?" No definite answers were available. But that there are many problems of prejudice and closed-mindedness in children seemed obvious. Could anything be done about it?

The challenge was clear. This group of teachers would meet regularly every Saturday morning for two and a half hours at the Board of Education building. Each would be paid a small sum for the extra service. They would come together to discuss, to plan ways and means of combatting closed-mindedness in classrooms and schools. Study would be required and some experimentation, together with periodic reports to the Curriculum Office. An administrative assistant was furnished and consultants were to be made available from time to time. The action was up to us.

PRACTICAL OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

A number of sound working principles of in-service education seem to be involved in the opening session and the many work sessions which were to follow. They are of importance in many, if not all, cooperative, in-service teacher education projects.

► *Teachers at all educational levels work together.* We tend, in education, to be too highly specialized. Elementary teachers work with elementary teachers and secondary teachers with their own kind. Research workers and administrators have their separate spheres and disciplines. Each group often forgets, unless the groups work closely together, that all have a common task.

► *Teachers volunteer to do extra*

professional work. Coercion is hardly a good educational principle to follow. When a creative job is to be done the interest and willingness of teachers to participate is of primary concern. Problems can best be solved by those who desire to solve them.

► *Extra work is recognized in the payment of an honorarium.* Many extra hours are needed in working on special problems in an educational program. Busy teachers appreciate a token pecuniary payment in recognition for extra service. Such payments represent a small outlay in a program of in-service teacher education.

► *Teachers decide for themselves what to do and how to do it.* An in-service group should be challenged to do its own thinking, to outline its own problems and procedures. "Can open-mindedness be taught?" "What is open-mindedness?" These and other pertinent questions were to be thought through by teachers. Because they were to take time to consider all aspects of the problem, they had the opportunity to develop a basic understanding of the experimental work they were to do.

► *A representative of a central administrative agency participates in group thinking and experimentation.* Teachers should not be turned loose to work through, as best they can, a problem which is as yet undefined. The representative should have experience in group thinking, as well as a general knowledge of the problem to be considered. It is his function to discover, develop, and use leadership as well as special competence within the group.

The real test of his leadership is the degree to which the group progressively functions without his direction. In Philadelphia the practice is often followed of releasing from the classroom "a collaborating teacher" who gives leadership and represents the curriculum office.

► *Specialists are provided when needed.* A cooperative job carried on by teachers will, from time to time, require expert knowledge which the group itself does not have among its own members. Special competence should, therefore, be made available when needed.

► *Minutes of meetings and periodic progress reports are made available.* There is an obligation on the part of an operating group, within a larger administrative unit, to keep records of procedure and progress. The excellent minutes kept throughout the Open-Mindedness Study have helped to establish a developmental pattern of work. Other periodic reports have also been made. Responsible officials in the Curriculum Office, and other interested departments of the school system, have always known what has been going on. Because records were available these officials could make intelligent suggestions, or at any time exercise controls, from the point of view of the well-being of the whole school system.

BASIC PHILOSOPHIC PRINCIPLES

► *There is faith in the competence of teachers to think through, and meet in practical ways, the problems of education.* Much has been written

about democracy in the administration and supervision of school systems. But basic to the whole democratic concept of in-service teacher education is the establishment of procedures which implement the faith that teachers have the competence to think through the problems they face in the task of educating children.

► *Trust in democratic participation in the educative process is present.* The democratic way to solve problems is the utilization of the intelligence of many people. In our illustration, teachers and a representative of the Curriculum Office were initially involved. Specialists were promised. The participative process was ultimately to involve principals, district superintendents, parents, and representatives of social and civic agencies who had something to contribute to the solution of problems as they arose.

► *Utilization of the problem-solving method moves forward.* Only a part of the first meeting of the Open-Mindedness group has been described. But enough has been said to indicate that the group began with a problem which had not yet been defined. We were challenged to define it and to implement its solution.

In the first meeting the stage was successfully set for what was to follow. The definition and redefinition of problems involved in achieving open-mindedness; the gathering and analysis of data; the setting up of hypotheses, or possible ways of solving various aspects of open-mindedness; moving into action; the analysis of results and beginning anew—these different aspects of

the problem-solving method were to be used repeatedly by both individual members and the group as a whole. This method was also to be used by teachers and children in their work together.

► *Responsibility goes with freedom.* To set a group at work on a problem, and then not to hold them responsible for what they do, reflects a basically inadequate conception of democracy. Such a procedure tends to divorce democratic theory from practice. When poor results are obtained, it makes people skeptical of the whole concept of democratic values and processes.

Many difficulties are involved in the successful integration of freedom and responsibility. It is inadequate for administrators to grant freedom, as was done in the Open-Mindedness Study, and then go off and forget about it. It is also inadequate to do too much interfering with the operation of a group once it gets underway.

It is this intricate relationship of values which makes the democratic way both difficult and intriguing. Perhaps the catalytic agent most helpful, when difficulties arise, is the employment of another democratic value, i.e., mutual respect on the part of the participants—those in administrative authority, teachers and pupils, parents and laymen.

Our experience in the Open-Mindedness Study seems to indicate that one cannot have real responsibility without real freedom. We feel that we have had a large measure of both. Difficulties have arisen, but they have been

ironed out in the process of friendly conferences and careful analysis of the values involved.

AN ADVENTURE IN LEARNING

The Open-Mindedness Study has continued for three and a half years. It has actively involved people from double the number of schools sending representatives to the first meeting. For those who have participated, the experience of working together has been nothing short of an adventure in learning.

Success in such a teacher education venture is not measured alone in better education for children, but also by what happens to the educational workers engaged in the process. In the Open-Mindedness Study all have learned better how to practice democracy through working democratically. A number of teachers have become principals. Teachers and principals now find it relatively easy to address school faculties and district superintendents' meetings. They are more resourceful and discerning in their work with children. They feel confident that they have a contribution to make, for they have done basic thinking as well as experimentation. They have greater sympathetic understanding of all that is involved in the educational task.

Freedom enjoyed by teachers to work on an important job is exhilarating. It releases creativity, energy, and enthusiasm for the educational task. It makes possible growth in sympathy and understanding. Where it is used intelligently, it makes finer people.



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