

The Curriculum Commentator

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Resource-Use Education and the Curriculum

DURING the past decade, increasing concern and interest in relating schools to community living have been evidenced both in action programs and in professional literature. This concern for improved living through education has been centered around developing community schools, developing the curriculum about problems of living, emphasizing conservation education, and developing a resource-use education emphasis. For decades, of course, there has existed a national interest in conservation education. This interest has paralleled to a great extent the national interest and action in the area of conservation of natural resources.

Within the past decade a movement with a focus different from that of conservation education has been emerging in schools, particularly in the South and Southwest. This movement attempts to focus upon the positive program of resource development and wise use of resources. This approach emphasizes the concepts that the school should be an integral community institution, that the school's program should help people see and understand both *what is* and *what can be*, and that we live in what is increasingly coming to be one world. This emphasis is quite clearly evident in some statements and proposals in what is traditionally called conservation education.

Emphasis On Improved Living

The extent to which this emphasis on improved living is now permeating approaches to conservation education

is evident in a recent Office of Education publication, *Better Living Through Wise Use of Resources* (Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, Bulletin 1950, No. 15. Price 25 cents.) This publication gives a brief account of the importance of our natural resources, a statement on resource destruction (not as pessimistic as Vogt's *The Road Ahead*), and suggestions as to how we may avert tragedy. The "true meaning of conservation" is then defined as consisting of "development as much as protection," of "renewal or restoration of resources, rather than indiscriminate consumption," and of "continuous effort to relate satisfactorily the methods and techniques of development and utilization of resources to advances in science and technology." The publication then gives teachers various principles of conservation education, suggests the kinds of pupil activities appropriate to this curriculum emphasis, and describes some materials available for use with children and youth.

In the Southern region particularly resource-use education has had great emphasis. During the past six years the attempt to point toward resource development through schools has received special impetus from the Committee on Southern Regional Studies and Education of the American Council on Education. Various state curriculum programs in the nineteen-thirties, the development of TVA, the Sloan Foundation Experiment in Applied Economics, and other types of regional

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collaboration and development have pointed toward or contributed directly to this educational emphasis of the committee. During the past six years staff members in state departments of education specifically concerned with resource-use have been appointed in most Southern and Southwestern states.

Many states have prepared materials on state resources for use by schools. Some states have set up resource commissions, while teacher education institutions have developed or expanded courses related to education and resource development. The Southern Educational Film Production Service has also been organized to produce films for educational institutions. Several outstanding films have been released and one is now in process of production on the resources of North Carolina.

Most recent publication describing developments in the South and propos-

ing guides to action is *Learning by Living* (subtitle, *Education for Wise Use of Resources*), a cooperative project of the Committee on Southern Regional Studies and Education and the Southern States Work Conference. The publication is distributed through the State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida. It develops a point of view regarding resource-use education, suggests methods and techniques for building school programs, points out appropriate methods of evaluation and describes some programs of action.

A distinctive feature of this publication is that it includes chapters devoted to administration of school programs for the intelligent use of resources and to the education of teachers and administrators for participation in resource-use education programs. A major difficulty encountered in many school situations is the traditional framework

within which the curriculum usually is organized. Teachers generally are expected to add to the existing courses of study, rather than to reorient the instructional program. This problem is here treated as a challenge to and a responsibility of cooperative leadership. Included for guidance of the administrator are various suggestions on curriculum organization, procedures for encouraging in-service growth and methods of cooperating with community agencies.

The chapter devoted to teacher education similarly analyzes the responsibilities of colleges, ways whereby courses in colleges may help to increase the competence of teachers, and procedures for introducing pre-service teachers to action programs. This publication represents the culmination of a period of five years of study, experimentation and action.

Materials for Children

Teachers concerned with relating their teaching to resource development constantly face the problem of finding appropriate materials. While materials are available on resources and their development, such materials are generally written for use by adults. In most of these materials the vocabulary would seem to be too difficult to permit wide usage with children. Commercial textbooks, written for national use and at the same time related primarily to local, state, or regional problems, have not as yet been successfully produced. While this condition has been generally recognized for some time, apparently only sporadic efforts have been made to provide solutions.

Within recent years, local school systems, state departments of education and of health, and other organized

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groups have moved toward at least partial alleviation of this scarcity of materials. In connection with the Sloan Experiment in Applied Economics, materials were designed and produced specifically to provide assistance on problems of living in local communities. *Kentucky's Resources*, and *Florida: Wealth or Waste* are illustrations of materials produced for state-wide use.

Exploring the South (Vance, Ivey and Bond, University of North Carolina Press, 1949) is a publication for use at the junior high school level. It uses a carefully chosen vocabulary and is the result of tryouts and of experimental introduction in many schools. The book first presents a point of view toward the South and its place in the nation and toward resources and how they can be used for better living. The major units are Man and Land, Using Resources in Agriculture, Using Other Natural Resources, Using Resources in Manufacturing, and Building a Better South. This book has an appealing style, is well written, treats issues and conditions objectively, and points to ways of improved living. This approach to resource-use education has great potentialities and will undoubtedly be adopted in other states and regions.

Many large school systems now recognize the importance of developing materials specifically related to the resources, services and needs of their particular service area. A good illustration of this trend is *Building Atlanta's Future* (Ivey, Demerath and Breland, University of North Carolina Press, 1948). Designed for use at the junior high school level, this publication is divided into four parts: Raw Materials of Cities, Cities Serve People, Meeting Group Needs, and Guiding City Growth. Other large school systems have produced or are in process of producing similar materials for local use.

Another publication specifically for children is *Muddy Water*, by Henrie Andrew Howell. This book is the result of a contest sponsored by the Committee on Studies and Standards of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Published in 1949, the book may be secured from the Project in Applied Economics, University of Florida. *Muddy Water* is a fictional account of a family's efforts to reclaim a farm that was already "worn out." The story's human interest appeal, its portrayal of the young boy Chuck, and its forward-moving nature combine to produce a delightful publication.

NEWER CONCEPTS OF METHOD

Learning and Instruction. (49th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, G. Lester Anderson, Chairman. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1950.) The purpose of this yearbook, according to the chairman, is "to focus the relevant data and concepts from the psychology of learning upon the problems of instruction in the elementary and secondary schools." In carrying out this purpose, the authors set four tasks for themselves:

1. Stating how learning proceeds as a psychological process and how children are motivated to learn.
2. Describing how certain aspects or categories of behavior (such as motor skills or attitudes) are learned.
3. Pointing out the implications for instruction of accumulated knowledge from the field of learning.
4. Redefining instruction in terms of the school as a laboratory for learning.

The point of view set forth is that "the classroom must cease to be a lesson-hearing room and must become a learning laboratory." Instruction, according to the authors, is "guidance of learning

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By Roderick Peattie, *Ohio University*

"I think this book will be of great help to those of us who are trying to make geography the important core subject of a curriculum suitable for 'one world'". Sidney E. Ekblaw, *University of Kansas City*

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—a process of bringing about behavioral changes by selecting and organizing content or activities and stimulating the interaction of pupils with the content or activities." Educational method, they write, must be thought of in terms of the child and how he learns.

This yearbook, therefore, symbolizes a newer concept of method as the process of directing children's learning rather than as the application of techniques designed merely to impart information.

The Improvement of Practical Intelligence. (R. Bruce Raup, George E. Axtelle, Kenneth Benne and B. Othanel Smith. Harper & Bros., N.Y.C., 1950.)

This book, first published in a limited edition under the title, *The Discipline of Practical Judgment*, defines in terms of basic pedagogical principles the central task of education for

every level, from kindergarten to college. That task, according to the authors, is so to exercise the student's intelligence that he can make wise practical judgments in both his personal life and the larger social problems of living in a democratic society.

The authors emphasize that the proper exercise of intelligence or judgment is not a simple "intellectual" act, but a process which involves the whole person in terms of desire, understanding and the will to act. In short, the central task of education is to develop in every individual a dynamic relationship between knowledge and action. How that task can be approached effectively is the basic concern of this important book that merits the thoughtful attention of all educators.—*Charles R. Spain*, Dean of Instruction, George Peabody College for Teachers.

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