WHAT is a good classroom? That is, what are the essential characteristics of a modern learning situation? If one asked this question of a hundred teachers, administrators and consultants, he would receive as many different responses. These responses would vary from that showing concern with the orderliness of the arrangement of pictures on the bulletin board to that showing concern for a learning environment in which opportunities were provided for growth in self-direction, the development of values and social action. Nor is this great variability alone confined to verbal judgments. The quality of the classroom practices remains one of considerable magnitude. To a large extent the realization of this task depends upon the effectiveness with which programs designed to develop understandings of modern classroom practices on the part of the teacher are carried out in the school.

Some Essential Characteristics

Several noteworthy materials have been developed for the purpose of bringing to teachers and administrators suggestive lists of characteristics that are essential aspects of a modern learning situation. Toward Better Teaching, the 1949 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development lists seven aspects thought to be especially important. These are: fostering security and satisfaction; promoting cooperative learning; helping pupils develop self-direction; fostering creativity; helping pupils develop values; providing opportunities for social action; and helping pupils evaluate learnings.

Each of these seven factors was developed in detail in the Yearbook. This volume provides excellent material to be used in teacher study groups to bring about an awareness of some of the desirable features of a salutary learning situation.

In contrast to the brevity of the Yearbook list is the Ohio Teaching Record—a thirty page record form "intended for use in a cooperative inquiry carried forward by teachers . . . whose purposes are concerned with the improvement of teaching." This too can be used effectively in discussion groups to bring about deeper insight into the characteristics of a good classroom.

A MODERN CLASSROOM GUIDE

While working with teacher groups on the general problem of improving classroom practices the writers felt the need for an instrument that could be used to focus attention on the more important characteristics of a modern classroom. Proceeding on the tenable principle that adequate preparation of children for effective living in a democratic society necessitates democratically organized schools, they culled the literature for pertinent ideas from which to make a fairly complete list of essential aspects. This list was presented to groups of graduate students of education for discussion and revision. Ten major ideas were derived. These were arranged to form the Modern Class-
room Guide—A Guide to the Essential Characteristics of a Desirable Learning Situation—and sent to fifty leaders in education concerned with the general problem of the improvement of instruction. In response to the request for suggestions, seventy per cent of the people offered specific ideas for improving the Guide. Most of the suggestions were concerned with minor points but two new major ideas appeared. These two ideas were added to the original ten ideas. These twelve principles of good classroom practice were built into booklet form, together with brief statements of the Philosophy of the Guide, the Uses of the Guide, and the Development of the Guide, to form the Modern Classroom Guide.

The twelve aspects of a desirable learning situation included in the Guide are:

- Class, group and individual purposes are determined cooperatively by pupils and teacher.
- Learning experiences and procedures are determined cooperatively by pupils and teacher.
- Learning materials are planned by pupils and teacher together.
- The quality of the learning experiences is evaluated cooperatively by pupils and teacher together.
- The growth of the individual is evaluated by pupil and teacher together.
- Standards of desirable behavior are determined by pupils and teacher together.
- Cooperation rather than competition among pupils is emphasized.
- Pupils are free to communicate with each other.
- Pupils feel free to question the teachers’ statements.
- Pupil-teacher relations are warm, accepting but objective.
- There is continuous effort made to explore and clarify values.
- Continuity of learning is achieved by relating learning to other experiences, to life in the community, and to other people.

Use of the three materials mentioned above and other similar materials in teacher study groups can bring about a deeper understanding of the essential aspects of a modern learning situation and in time this knowledge will tend to decrease the great variability in classroom practices in the schools. When asked “What is a good classroom?” we should then hear less often statements evidencing concern about the housekeeping ability of the teacher and hear more often statements evidencing concern about the more important aspects of a good learning situation.

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