
One mark of a truly educative book is its utility for teaching without the actual presence of the teacher. This is such a book. It has a strikingly lucid style, a fascinating interweaving of the multiple strands that affect curriculum, and an organization that builds on principles, develops through procedures and comes to grip with the concrete details of practice that lead to that conclusion. To say that Principles and Procedures of Curriculum Improvement should be especially useful to the practicing curriculum worker, classroom teacher, or administrator is not to minimize its value to the teacher in training. In fact, its adherence to fundamental principles that are sometimes underemphasized by the prospective teacher in his concern for what to teach, rather than how and why, may give this volume a special place in his professional education.

The tenor of Dean Anderson's book may be described in two ways: first by briefly identifying the sequence of major ideas formally elaborated and second by listing some of the other basic theses to which he persistently returns.

The tightly reasoned argument of the book begins with a chapter which develops the idea that curriculum study is a means of improving the experiences of pupils. It closes with a demonstration, so far as it can be done verbally, that suggests that in the last analysis the bases of a teacher's evaluation of children's growth tell us what are the teacher's goals. In between, the volume develops five groups of ideas.

1. Curriculum improvement is a group problem. It takes place only through a change in people's behavior and consequently a change in their relationship—teachers, pupils, administrators and laymen. The circumstances of successful change include understanding and practice of the skills of group process.

2. The potential quality and direction of curriculum improvement rest on several factors: where the group starts; how well its members understand their own motivations; what social and cultural values they bring to the task; the depth of their understanding of the limits and opportunities for change set by the local community.

3. The ultimate outcomes of group study of curriculum problems depend on the degree of involvement in and acceptance of the problems not only by teachers and administrative leadership, but also by other citizens of the community. The best setting for creating inter-relationships favorable to change is the school workshop and the best technique for direct improvement and evaluation of classroom practice is action research.

4. Continuity in the school program should be conceived in terms of pupils' social needs and differentiated in terms of their individual needs (a) for healthy
and integrated growth and (b) for experiences which move them toward maturity. This may be contrasted with the continuity based on subject matter as sometimes seen in general education and upon a series of isolated courses as often seen in special education. Meeting such needs demands a richer learning environment materials-wise and a better educated, more insightful teacher-leader than does the subject matter approach. Organization to permit accumulation of resource materials and to provide opportunity for teachers to grow by cooperative planning is an administrative responsibility.

5. The critical focus of curriculum improvement is on the classroom. There the teacher skilled to discuss the capacities and traits of children, to help them discover the problems they need to solve, to lead them in cooperative planning and action for problem solving, to guide them in self-appraisal of progress carries out the final purpose of education. Such teachers are not created by edict; they are developed by processes very similar to the ones they use.

Dean Anderson states explicitly (page 17) the nine principles that undergird his discussion. To these principles the reader would add five recurrent ideas not specifically mentioned at this point.

1. Curriculum improvement has direction as well as purpose. The direction is generally from subject centered to experience centered teaching.

2. Curriculum improvement can happen only when the teacher makes up his own mind to have it happen and chooses to work on his problems.

3. Curriculum improvement can happen, to any considerable extent, only when the administrative head is involved in it and modifies administrative policy in keeping with curriculum needs.

4. Curriculum improvement takes time, and lots of it—time for teacher groups to define problems, to work and plan together, to try ideas, above all time to learn to communicate ideas to one another.

5. Curriculum improvement is not a philosophical exercise but a problem solving process.

Several characteristics of the book that indicate the author’s approach should be mentioned. It is action oriented; each chapter ends with a section suggesting “What steps can we take?” Ideas are expressed without the necessity of inventing a new vocabulary. The historical approach is avoided. Each issue raised is treated as a problem of transition from a less acceptable to a more acceptable practice. The samples of curricular statements included are adequate to illustrate ideas and means of carrying them out, but the book aims to clarify principles

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A thorough revision of a textbook that has been widely acclaimed as one of the most distinguished in the field. Brings fundamental principles and specific practices into intimate contact with the realities of the present-day school situation.

—Reviewed by WILSON C. COLVIN, coordinator, Junior High School Education, Newton, Massachusetts, Public Schools.


On August 6, 1945, the “Enola Gay” dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. With this monstrous catastrophe came a new era in international relations. Gone is the sense of security and freedom which our two protecting oceans furnished past generations of Americans. That we may have managed to retain an advantage in the atomic race gives us little comfort, for the possibility of utter devastation from the misuse of atomic energy by ourselves or others still hangs over the earth like a black cloud.

The gravity of the present situation makes the promotion of international understanding through the cooperation of education and other agencies a vital necessity. Since the explosion of the first atomic bomb, thoughtful educators have given increased attention to this topic. The volume International Understanding Through the Secondary School Curriculum, a cooperative effort of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, repre-
sents the latest and one of the best attempts to show in concrete, specific ways precisely how a secondary school faculty may best accomplish this objective.

Since the Commission on International Understanding believes that the responsibility for the teaching of international understanding does not rest with one course or one department but with the total school curriculum, the volume has been divided into chapters written by specialists in each separate curriculum area.

In the opening chapter Kenworthy, as editor, does an excellent job in establishing some of the over-all characteristics of an effective secondary school program in international understanding. The suggestions he enumerates deserve thoughtful study by teachers and especially by school administrators.

Two of the most obvious subject areas in which international understanding can be successfully developed are social studies and English. The ideas and suggestions of Professor Carlson in the chapter on the contributions of the language arts area are fresh and stimulating. The units he proposes, although they may cause some of the “sentences-to-be-diagrammed” and “classics-to-be-covered” English teachers considerable consternation, seem to this reviewer a significant contribution to the volume. Carlson suggests that one of the best patterns for teaching literature is to organize the material into units each having as a theme some basic problem of man and how it is solved in various cultures. A number of such themes are suggested and illustrative literature suitable for various school levels is cited briefly.

In the chapter on the contributions of the social studies curriculum to international understanding, Ward reviews the
research on how attitudes are formed and changed. It seems clear to him that knowledge alone will not develop acceptable attitudes toward international problems. The problem-solving approach in which students become personally involved in attaining the objectives seems to offer one of the most promising methods.

There is a tendency in this volume for the various subject matter specialists to become somewhat overenthusiastic concerning the contributions their fields can make to international understanding at the secondary level. "Of all the subjects in the school program, none lends itself more readily to the promotion of international understanding than art," writes the art specialist. Similar examples could be selected from the other fields.

One should not be too critical of the comparative meagerness of opportunity for teaching specific activities which will contribute to international understanding in the fields of foreign language, art, music, mathematics, science, and physical education. It is encouraging that the specialists are aware of the importance of the topic and are asking themselves what contributions their fields can make.

Although none but the politically naive would believe that even a well-integrated program of education for international understanding in the secondary school will by itself insure peace in a world whose voices are "harsh, jangled and out of tune," the experiences which American youth have in their schools during the next few years will help to determine whether they will live out their lives in a world at peace. This volume points to ways of strengthening and developing such a school-wide program.

—Reviewed by Robert G. Risinger, associate professor of education, University of Maryland, College Park.

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