

Curriculum Developments

Column Editor: Melvin W. Barnes

Contributor: Herbert A. Thelen

"One Small Head . . ."

HERE in this vacation spot, overlooking the East shore of Lake Michigan, my eye is continuously intrigued by the variation of rhythm in the waves. My ear is alternately lulled and alerted by the counterpoint between individual waves and rolling surf. The capricious wind, agent of motion, alternately cools and warms the September scene; and makes itself known to the leaves and branches of trees and shrubs intent about their own business.

It is 1962, and the individual waves are children in the Lake's classroom; the rolling surf is the onward thrust of the class as a whole; the capricious wind, alternately warming, cooling, cajoling, pushing—is the teacher driven by the interplay of public and private forces, trying his darndest to keep the whole shebang in motion. The leaves and shrubs, quivering in their own orbits, are the parents, the administration, the taxpayers associations, the youth welfare groups—all the parts of the community sensitive to educational crosscurrents. A persistent wind, however gentle, molds the landscape.

Yet it is of the teacher in the classroom that I would speak. I may begin by joining the worthies in the long ago poem who wondered "that one small head could carry all he knew." For the teacher knows about his subject matter, the individual pupils, the classroom group; he

has ideas about emotion, thought, and action; he is exposed to at least some brands or parts of psychology, sociology, politics, economics, and strategies of manipulating other people for their own good. Yes, the teacher knows a lot.

Three Viewpoints

How can one small head hold so much, and, if there be different "hows," what are their consequences? There are three viewpoints on this:

First, the head is a tank and ideas are impenetrable objects, separate and discrete like colored marbles. These get piled in the tank on top of one another, and the idea that is used at any time is whichever one gets shaken to the exit gate through jostling of the tank. In other words, when the teacher gets into a quandary, he "thinks of something," but the "something" depends on how badly the teacher is "shook up," i.e., on his emotional state at the time. Different emotions and their kindred needs call forth different ideas. Conversely, the input to the mind is governed mostly by the interest at the moment. When the same interest recurs later in some classroom episode, the ideas tucked away during its earlier occurrence come trippingly forward. . . . The organization of ideas is *eclectic*.

Second, the head is a filing case, a pi-

geoholed honeycomb. Ideas get routed to one or another pigeonhole, and make themselves more or less comfortable with other ideas already there. In advanced stages, these pigeonholes have names; their basis of categorization is known to the teacher. Categories are such things as: the subject, interpersonal relations, group management, evaluation, bright deviates, difficult deviates, teaching method. As ideas are classified, so are situations in the classroom. One situation calls for the dominance of "interpersonal relations"; another requires "classroom management"; yet another is dominated by subject information, (not so) pure and (not so) simple. Such remarks as "I would love to use subgroups and to have more independent study, but I am afraid my kids would go out of control" signify the compartmentalization of ideas. Ideas are used according to the principle of *complementarity*, which allows that although all aspects are present in a situation at any given time, one aspect must be made dominant and the others suppressed.

This second organization is probably the modal type in the heads of most teachers today. They have limited theories about interpersonal relations, learning, discipline and the rest. . . . The theory they do not usually have, however, is one which would tell them how to decide *which* of their theories should dominate at each moment in the classroom.

Third, the head is a house with many rooms. The rooms are added and expanded as required to develop and maintain a style of life. Each room has its own central functions, and the furniture is carefully studied before being "bought" for the room. But each room also contains an open-shelved cupboard of design ideas for possible new furniture; here are the recorded memory traces of experi-

enced emotion and perception. The person moves freely through the many chambers, and the thing that guides his motion is not the like or dislike of particular pieces of furniture, not the demands of particular rooms, but rather the realization of a life which must be lived as a pattern of experiences distributed among the various rooms. Not the marble, not the pigeonhole; rather the life style is the guide and goal.

What is this grand conception, this way of life, on whose behalf the house of the teaching mind is furnished? What rationale of teaching organizes all its aspects in a single conception that can illuminate and give meaning to the subparts and limited theories? What is the overarching point of the sequence of activity in the classroom? What are the principles that tell us in each activity what activity should be set up next? What image of teaching, of classroom life, can show us the places where we can make choices, and the alternatives to choose among? What view of educative process can furnish the critique for new innovations, and can fit these within an integral productive flux of classroom experiences?

Hidden Rationales

Teachers may or may not be able to put an overarching rationale or purpose into words, but the fact is that teachers *act* as if they do indeed have such a rationale. In other words, teachers, like parents and bosses, act with consistency. What are some of these hidden rationales that may be inferred as the overarching determiner of behavior in the classroom? Here are four that I have bumped into during intensive study of 28 high school classrooms:

1. The overarching purpose of the class

is to be exploited by the teacher. What the teacher seeks ever and always is love, respect or fellowship. The students quickly learn not to give him any feedback that would make the teacher see that he is not, in the students' eyes, the lovable person, the expert or the delightful "one of the gang" that he wants to be. The teacher's ego ideal seems to be the autocratic boss, the kindly grandmother, the cute adolescent; almost anything, in fact, except an educator.

2. The overarching purpose of the class is to be comfortable. Don't rock the boat; avoid all conflict; there is no need to be unpleasant. During those first few weeks while the class is getting "shaken down," a process of negotiation is going on; the teacher agrees not to make uncomfortable demands on the class provided the class will give up their wish to learn anything. The dominant activity in this class is an agendaless discussion—a running bull session. This is fine for adolescents in their own clubs—but in classrooms?

3. The overarching purpose of the class is to be toilet trained into such values as punctuality, quiet, orderliness, and respect for adults. The class exists to be quiet, punctual, and all the rest—not as conditions required for productive educative activity but as ends in themselves. The teacher in this class has *two* theories to guide him: one, a theory of classroom management; the other, a theory of learning. He is the chap I have already referred to: First I must manage the class, and only then can I teach it. Somehow he never quite gets around to teaching it.

4. The overarching purpose of the class is to "achieve," as the public and administrators commonly understand that term. The class perpetually reenacts the achievement ritual: the reading of the

sacred text; the daily catechism over the assigned parts; and the confirmation ceremony through which the elders, by suitable rituals of examinations, decide who are the true believers ("A" students). The learning outcome depends a good deal on the spirit in which the ritual is followed. The spirit can be enthusiastic, warm, incisive—or it can be indifferent, hostile or meandering. It is probable that the learning is determined by the spirit rather than the ritual. That is, the enthusiastic incisive teacher would get better results than the other kind no matter what procedures they used.

Of course most teachers are not purely dominated by their own personal needs, fears of inadequacy, punitiveness, or dependency on traditional techniques. Most of us are a blend of the ham, the host, the moralist, and the technician. And I ask again, where is the educator? What overarching purpose, what rationale for teaching would be dominant in the educator? What is this mental house of many rooms, the teaching mission that builds the house and is maintained by it?

From Room to Room

First, the overall principle that guides the movement from room to room: facilitation of educative learning by students. This is the *raison d'être* of teaching.

Second, the means of locomotion through the rooms: by changing one's own behavior as a participant in classroom activities. In order to do this, one must be aware of the fact that choice is possible. A good habit is that of listing all the alternatives one can see in every situation.

Third, decision as to what room to go into next: accurate description of what is going on in the class and diagnosis of the effectiveness and appropriateness of

EDUCATION IN THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

KENNETH D. BENNE, in this seventh Bode Memorial Lecture, examines the problems confronting modern man in his attempt to achieve both individual freedom and community with his fellows. Educators, the author maintains, have a distinct responsibility in this quest.

\$1.00

College of Education THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Publications Office

242 W. 18th Avenue
Columbus 10, Ohio

free catalog
• quantity discounts

these goings on as learning experiences. This is based on:

Fourth, Room 1: a mental model of the course of educative learning. This is what the courses in Educational Psychology and Sociology have signally failed to develop. And one sees little of it in present classrooms. Therefore one has to look elsewhere: to instances, wherever they exist, of spontaneous, motivated inquiry. Think of some hobby you really wanted to master, and of the different steps you went through. Consider the whole sequence of development of thought and attitude a committee goes through as it moves through awareness of a possible situation requiring action, analysis, hypothesis, action feedback, etc. These sequences are not unlike; in fact they are sufficiently universal to become a model of the processes of educative learning to be facilitated by the teacher.

Fifth, Room 2: knowledge of the vari-

ous properties of different conditions of social organization. What sort of processes are best facilitated by individual private study? by collective individual response (as to a movie or lecture)? By peer group committees or subgroups? by teacher-pupil consultation? by the various sorts of discussion possible in a class with the teacher? Also, what sort of mental processes are possible when different materials are used? What can one do with a book, with 50 different formats for exercises, with eight different structures for reports?

Sixth, Room 3: thorough internalized knowledge of the subjects one teaches. What are the five basic prototype problems with which all of physics deals? What are the several equally valid historical approaches that can be taken to the records of the past? What is the relationship between knowledge of structure and communication of thought and feeling in English? What are the basic themes through all social studies? What are the recurring questions that pop up over and over in the development of knowledge in your subject field? These are the sorts of questions that develop the themes the student can use to reflect against his own experience in class, and to "structure" his own inquiry in long-range and, progress-revealing terms.

Seventh, Room 4: awareness of the different *basic methods of gaining knowledge* through alternative ways of dealing with situations: (a) analysis of the "elements" in the situation and how they go together and recombine under different circumstances; (b) statement of the basic principles assumed to be operative and study to see how far and in what ways they are operative in the situation; (c) diagnosis of one's own preliminary reactions to see what the problem is that one will try to solve by changing the situa-

tion; and, finally, (d) definition of what we shall mean in this situation by our various terms, and then establishment of relationships among the terms in this situation. These basic approaches must be understood so well that the teacher can see in each student's groping a primitive, incomplete, and vague tendency in line with one or another approach.

Eighth, Room 5: understanding of the relationship between consciousness and educative self-direction. What things must the student be conscious of in order to inquire effectively, and what things would only be distracting? What consciousness of his own activities and choices must a student have in order to gain consciousness of principles and methods in the subject? Here are located our ideas about teacher-pupil planning of class and self-directed activity.

Ninth, Room 6: architectural and construction headquarters for continual conscious planning and modification of the whole structure. This holy-of-holies is a place where the teacher's own developing theory and rationale of education undergo continuous modification. This is where the progression from room to room is consciously noted and assessed; where experimental sequences are thought out; where teaching policies are legislated from reflected-on experience. This room bursts with orderly enthusiasm; and in this room the teacher brings his creative and dignified self.

A high wind churns the lake tonight. Dead branches are falling, and along with them, acorns. The configuration of the beach is changing too slowly to be seen, but tomorrow morning it will be different. Teaching *could* be a potent *educative* force. Will it be?

—HERBERT A. THELEN, *Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.*

Preparation

(Continued from page 162)

devote the major portion of his time. At the secondary level, the word "specialization" is intended to apply to a teaching field or fields and, at the elementary level, to refer to academic courses in teaching fields which prepare for supervisory leadership in the elementary area.

Guideline 7: The program for the prospective supervisor should include an emphasis on research and appropriate statistics.

Work in this area should assist the prospective supervisor in gaining greater insights and skills in the use of techniques of action research, and in designing and carrying out research projects. Included in the program should be adequate opportunities for experiences to provide knowledge of significant educational research, its implications and its use.

Completion of program: The fifth-year program of preparation should entitle one to the master's degree. When a sixth-year program is involved, the institution should grant appropriate recognition for completion of program.

Recommendation of institution: Each candidate for a certificate must be recommended by the appropriate college official. The recommendation must certify that he has completed the program for the preparation of supervisors (master's degree level or sixth-year level) and it must be accompanied by a transcript of credit.

Authorization of service: The supervisor's certificate authorizes the holder to be a supervisor of instruction in elementary and secondary schools, but area of preparation should determine his field of work.

Copyright © 1962 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.