

## A Coming of Age

Robert R. Leeper

THIS issue begins a volume that in a sense marks the "coming of age" of this journal. Volume 21 represents an important milestone in its history. We believe that the quality of the content projected for this year will measure up to that of previous volumes of this official organ of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

A "coming of age" always gives an excuse to review past progress and to try to project plans for the future. In looking at the past, what are some of the qualities that have characterized this journal?

*A sense of perspective.* Fred T. Wilhelms has sometimes defined the special contribution of the Association and of its publications as that of "a sense of steadiness." Through its willingness to be alert to new developments, to try to dig into issues and to clarify purposes and objectives, the Association has consistently furnished a climate of permissiveness. In such a setting, new ideas can be advanced for scientific study and for evaluation in practice.

*An emphasis upon humanness.* Throughout our years and our pages, we have stressed the human values and the qualities of humanness. We have been consistently open to the findings of human growth and development and to the application of these in the instructional setting. Our concern with improving the climate of instruction is a direct heritage of the early curriculum development

movement, with its modern origins in the field of mental health.

*A respect for scholarship.* In the area of teacher education and in the academic and the general education fields we respect and are proud of scholarship. We welcome opportunities to learn more about related disciplines and to help scholars in these fields to make available to teachers and pupils implications of their study and research. For example, the work of the ASCD Commission on Current Curriculum Developments shows the importance we attach to these relationships.

*A reliance upon research and experimentation.* Throughout the years, our pages have reflected the growing interest in and concern for development of a research methodology and rationale that would serve as our key to the future. This aspiration on our part has resulted in the creation and establishment of a research methodology in which both the expert and the practitioner can participate to the advantage of the teacher and the learner in the actual classroom setting.

*A thirst for better insight into learning.* The pages of our journal and of the other publications of the Association reflect the far-ranging and intense interest of our members in improving insight into learning. Knowing that solutions to professional problems often lie in areas outside of our own scholarship, we

have sought the help of many persons in other sciences and disciplines in gaining deeper insight into the complexities and the almost infinite potentialities of learning. Statements of these persons have woven themselves consistently into our thinking, our planning, and projections in recent years.

*An emphasis upon a cooperative way of working.* Closely joined with our philosophy of education is our commitment to a cooperative and democratic way of working. This belief pervades the ASCD service program, whether in relation to the conferences, state meetings or institutes, or in regard to the publications program. Through our regular procedures we study the needs of members and the resources we have for meeting these needs. Such an approach makes possible the gauging of services to the current and continuing needs of members.

#### Emphases for 1963-64

What of this year's journal issues? Growing out of members' suggestions, acted upon by the Publications Committee and authorized by the Executive Committee, the issues will be the following:

The theme for October is "Focus on Instruction." Articles in the issue were planned in line with an initial suggestion of the ASCD Research Commission that we should treat specifically, "The Research We Need." For this issue we asked persons well versed in research to look objectively at their fields and to say, "We have now made certain progress in this field. The leads and the findings so far seem promising. In order to project our thinking and our hypotheses far enough into the future, however, we are willing to state here some thoughts

concerning the *research we need* if we are to move forward."

Represented in this issue are accounts of needed research in the areas of mental health and cognitive learning, evaluation, critical thinking, pupil personnel services, programmed instruction. Certainly these are not all the important areas in which research and new directions for research are needed. This is, however, a beginning for such a statement.

"Supervision: Impetus for Growth" will, in November, present articles treating new developments in the special competence and function of a majority of our members.

"Working in Groups: How? For What?" is an attempt, in December, to reexamine our early and intense interest in group process. What are new possibilities in using group process in our working relationships with teachers, administrators and other supervisory personnel, with parents and others? We know that we are vulnerable when and if we let ourselves believe that we have "mastered" group process and therefore have little further to learn through this technique:

"Centers for Learning" will help us to examine, in January, the exciting possibilities that would arise "if every school had an effective library-instructional materials center."

February will show what happens when "The Staff Works To Improve." Involved here will be the essential differences between a centralized and a decentralized approach to in-service growth within a school or school system.

"Relating to Today's World" is the theme for March. Growing out of the work of ASCD's Commission on International Understanding, this issue will tie in closely with the theme of ASCD's

Annual Study Conference in Miami Beach next April, "The Individual in Changing Cultures."

April will look at trends and forces in our society that are today "Changing Childhood and Youth."

"Personal and Social Values" will be the topic of the May issue. With this number the "coming of age" volume will be completed.

—ROBERT R. LEEPER, *Editor*, Educational Leadership.

## The Nature of Instruction: Needed Theory and Research

James B. Macdonald

FOR well over a decade there has been a renewed effort to understand the nature of instruction. Sparked by intellectual curiosity and practical needs, and fanned by the winds of recent pressures, the scientific study of instruction has grown proportionately larger than most other research concerns in education during this period.

Supervision, teacher pre- and in-service programs, and administrator judgments about teachers are examples of educational concerns that are especially dependent upon our knowledge of instruction. The knowledge about instruction that we possess will be closely related to the adequacy with which we engage in these tasks; and there is considerable evidence and agreement that we do not yet have a great deal of common knowledge about instruction. Knowledge, in this context, refers to the information obtained by empirical or scientific methods which provide valid and reliable explanation, prediction and control of the process of instruction.

In order to clarify terms, a useful distinction can be made between curriculum, instruction, and teaching. Whether it is possible to hold these boundaries in actuality is another problem, but for the sake of sharpening our focus here a distinction will be made.

Of the three, curriculum has the greatest scope. Our understanding of

curriculum extends from the politics of legislative bodies through the curriculum setting and developing activities in the school year itself. Ideally, curriculum finds its fruition in student learning, but in actuality there is a considerable segment of what we talk about in curriculum that is prior to and/or removed from classrooms.

The concept of teaching is the most restricted of the three terms. Teaching may take place without related learning; that is, a person may be said to be performing the act of teaching whether or not there is resultant student learning. The teacher behavior in the classroom has been, can be, and is being studied as a separate function.

Instruction, then, would be the active process of goal-oriented interaction between pupils, teachers, materials, and facilities. This is meant to describe the ongoing classroom situation in its entirety, which includes teacher behavior and reflects curriculum decisions and activities.

### *Needed: Adequate Models of Instruction*

Instruction, like any human activity, is a complex phenomenon. In order to understand this activity it is necessary to conceptualize its boundaries and describe the relationships of the variables that have been identified. Some model of instruction needs to be used to locate

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