

Indifference— The Major Crime

WE live in a period in history characterized by rapid change, an explosion of knowledge and interaction of many cultures both at home and abroad. Curriculum workers and teachers who fail to build a curriculum designed to prepare pupils to live in a plural culture in a rapidly changing world are indifferent to the demands of our time.

Rapidity of Change

Throughout the history of mankind, change has occurred but at such a slow pace that the world has seemed to be very stable. A person could depend on the future's being much like the past with minor variations. Yet since 1900, the pace of change has constantly increased and our anticipation is that it will continue to do so. The past 20 years, for example, have seen the development of the atomic bomb, television on a widespread basis, space exploration, unbelievable speed of transportation, and a shift in the living patterns in the United States from rural to urban. Although the individual cannot know what society

will be like tomorrow, he can be certain that tomorrow will be different from today.

What does this rapidity of change mean for giving people a sense of direction, security and stability? How does one learn to become a member of his society?

Our education must develop the skill to live in change. A top priority must be placed on fostering an emotional orientation which accepts change as a desirable way of life. High on the list must be the ability to collect information and analyze situations, to formulate and explore a range of alternate courses of action which seem appropriate, to select one to implement, to make judgments about the effectiveness of the course chosen and to replan in terms of the evaluation. A sense of continuity and direction will depend upon having clearly defined values and goals which give a basis for judging results of the action chosen.

Explosion of Knowledge

According to best estimates available, knowledge that had been accumulated prior to 1900 doubled in the 50 years after 1900, doubled again in the ten years between 1950 and 1960, and will double again in the seven years between 1960 and 1967.

The rate of increase of knowledge is accelerating so rapidly that it is estimated that by the year 2000 there will be 2000 times as many facts to know as there are at present. The explosion of knowledge has redefined the task of the school.

Coverage of all knowledge is no longer possible. It never was, yet many have followed the illusion that this was desirable and could be achieved. Even an attempt to "cover" the information in a discipline

such as chemistry or physics is not desirable due to the rapid modification of a discipline produced by new knowledge.

Top priority for teaching must not be the mastery of a field but the development of the skills of investigation which enable the pupil to continue to educate himself: must not be the explaining of a series of facts to a student, but helping him acquire the skill to organize and interpret these facts by himself. Teachers serve their function as they help people cultivate the skill to continue to educate themselves.

Skill in investigation and self education can be developed in many areas of knowledge, but some curriculum workers have made the mistake of assuming that intellectual power can only be produced by a study of the traditional disciplines. They have devoted their efforts and resources to describing the structure of an approved discipline and to outlining a way to investigate it that will develop skill in inquiry. The resulting emphasis on the process of a student's attaining concepts, already held by the teacher, at the expense of developing skill in the formation of new concepts, has been largely ignored. Although the persons who have prepared and promoted the new structure of the discipline courses claim that they are effective in promoting intellectual power and the ability to deal with the explosion of knowledge for the upper half of the students in the schools, few, if any, claim that in their present form the new materials are suitable for the lower half.

We can no longer remain indifferent to the intellectual needs of the lower half of the school population. The one million dropouts a year represent only a small part of the problem. The curriculum is unsatisfactory for at least 15 million more, the pupils from the tenth to

the fortieth percentiles. What knowledge is important for them? How should it be organized? The watered down versions of disciplines prepared for the gifted fail to meet their needs or even arouse their curiosity. It is high time curriculum workers acknowledge this fact and begin to select from the vast reservoir of knowledge some that has relevance and significance and give these deprived pupils an opportunity to acquire skill in investigation by working on content that challenges rather than bores them.

The World Situation

Three world conditions, constant interaction among peoples, possibility of instant destruction, and the rise of new countries, call for major changes in the curriculum.

Constant Interaction Among Peoples

It is possible to communicate world wide instantaneously by radio and television. A person can go around the world in a few days. The 1800-miles-an-hour jet, a few years away, will increase travel and the time between people will be decreased. Major shifts of population are occurring within our nation. In one year, 1957, one out of eight children moved across a county line. As many more changed homes within counties. One out of 40 moved from one section of the country to another, and two out of 40 across state lines.

Schools must prepare people who are able to live in many communities in their lifetime. It is no longer enough to help a person know the values and the mores

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of his own region; he must understand what people believe and think in other states and other nations throughout the world. The emphasis cannot continue to be on understanding the culture of his community and state, but must be placed on a comparative examination of many cultures.

Education as to what is right and wrong will no longer be sufficient if it is attempted without reference to the interpretation of these abstractions in other societies. The "other directed" person, as described by Riesman, a person who attempts to live by what others think is right, is going to find himself in great difficulty in the emerging world because he will move from one set of external standards to another. The only way a person will be able to have a sense of direction or integrity will be through the development of his own priority of values which have been tested by a comparison with many other sets of values.

School must begin to reinterpret learning to live together. It is no longer enough to know how to be polite, courteous, and to follow the pattern of living of those around you. Although this may have been sufficient preparation for living in a world in which people did not travel much, were not confronted by conflicting values from other cultures, it is no longer adequate.

Rapid mobility and instantaneous communication make it necessary for people to learn to live with diversity. The only type of security that a person has is to learn the techniques of living with people who are different, of contrasting values, without becoming defensive or offensive, of being willing for another person to follow a different pattern of living without attempting to convert or compel him to conform.

The conformist is a "social cripple" in

our world. He does not know with which set of external standards to conform. He is constantly buffeted by the demands of the differing sets of mores, unable to make decisions or to exert leadership. It is no longer safe to have a teacher attempt to get a youngster to accept the teacher's values because conforming acceptance will inadequately prepare the individual for living in the world of diversity.

For the school to educate for today's world requires helping students to become aware of the multiple sets of standards and values, to contrast, to compare, to select, and to establish priority of values for themselves.

Possibility of Instant Destruction

The world faces the possibility of instant destruction. At least two countries have in their arsenal of weapons the power to destroy life in this world. This one fact should cause the school to change its orientation with regard to human relationships.

Typically, a person in the past has been most concerned about the feelings and welfare of persons within his community, followed by his state, his region, his nation, and lastly, by what happens to people in the rest of the world. With the possibility that all human beings may be destroyed together because of difficulties in the relations of people at opposite sides of the earth, international relationships are basic human relationships. Relationships within the community and state are under fair control; means have been devised by which differences can be contained and resolved. The world situation is less satisfactory; means of controlling the use of power for selfish purposes are sketchy and unreliable. To maintain life on this planet,

it is essential that schools give top priority to studying ways of fostering international understanding and to discovering ways of securing adequate methods of control and decision making on a worldwide basis.

The Rise of New Countries

The political structure of the world has undergone a major transformation. Whereas in the past a few major powers have dominated the situation and international relationships and politics were the problems of working with the other major powers, this condition no longer prevails. Over 100 countries participate in the United Nations. Many represent extreme difference in point of view and customs and cultural background from our own. All participate in United Nations decisions and constitute the court of world opinion in which leadership of the major powers is judged.

No longer is it satisfactory for American schools to teach culture as the actions and products of the Western European and North American countries. As much emphasis must be placed on the history and development of the countries of the Far East, Latin America, and Africa as on Western Europe. A realistic look at the curriculum of the American schools reveals what a major shift in our thinking this new world reality demands.

Plural Values in the United States

A child growing up in the United States is barraged with many attempts to convince him of what he should believe and value. His parents demonstrate a way of life and espouse some beliefs. In fact, each of a child's parents may advocate a different set of goals and standards

of behavior. The TV shows he watches may present other values. The church he attends may ask allegiance to still another code. When he goes to school, the adolescent may find the English teacher recommending one set of criteria by which to make value judgments, the physical education teacher another, the science teacher a third, and the social studies teacher a fourth.

An individual growing up in a plural culture with the continuous interaction of groups and the many means of communication that exist today is confronted by many different advocates of conflicting values. If he attempts to satisfy the many proponents, he will lose his identity and his integrity. No one can be all things to all people.

A person growing up in a plural culture acquires a number of values by his association with persons from many cultural groups. When he encounters a person he respects, a person whose friendship and support he wants, "a significant other," he accepts some of the values this person holds. In the process, the individual growing up in a plural culture acquires allegiance to competing and conflicting values and beliefs. Typically, he will live with many sets of values until in a given situation two come in conflict and a choice between them must be made.

The problem of forming a code to live by is one of determining the priority to be given to the values held. Which is the fundamental value? Which is next in order of importance?

A sense of direction for the individual comes from knowing what his priorities are. So does a sense of identity, integrity and effectiveness. If an individual is not sure of the priority among his values, he is indecisive and ineffectual. He must continually debate with himself the

choice among alternatives presented or seen.

Teachers cannot tell pupils what to believe or value. Neither can they tell them what their priorities should be. All anyone can do for another is to make explicit a number of values, attempt to analyze why a person would hold each value and the possible consequences of accepting each. Yet the choice will always be that of the student.

A Test of Priorities

The teacher can also help a pupil discover the values he holds that conflict with each other and see the effect upon his personal effectiveness of not seeking to resolve the conflict.

Further, teachers can be a "significant other" if they are not hollow men. Teachers should stand for the basic American values that enable a person to live effectively in plural cultures.

They should stand for the continuation of the human race. If human life is blotted from the face of the earth, there is no point in discussing other values.

They should be for the development of the potential of each human being. Simply maintaining mankind is not enough. The value of the human being over other living matter lies in his potential for development, and the only justification for making maintenance of human existence the primary value is dedication to providing the environment and education that will enable men to fulfill increasingly their potential for constructive and creative activity.

They should make the inclusive approach, accepting all men as important. They should work to develop a single moral community in which all possess the same fundamental rights and obligations.

They should value an inclusive approach that will assign all men the same rights without insisting that they live by the same light.

They should stand for freedom of thought, worship, press and speech. Unless individuals have the opportunity of stating their values and letting them stand in the common marketplace, all opportunities for improvement of the present situation will be lost.

They should see difference and the exploration of it as the doorway to new insight, not as a threat to our cherished values.

They should see the interaction of peoples as the mutual seeking of more and better insight.

They should become more open rather than more protective. They must really believe that our cultural values are worthy enough to stand in the market place of open examination. Our desire for inquiry must be coupled with the readiness to undergo unrestricted objective comparison.

They should be optimistic. They should believe that the future can be better. They should see change as progress because they can make intelligent choices and each action as a move in the direction of our destiny. Unless a given step is final, each advance can increase our vision and make possible more intelligent planning of our future.

The Impact on My Action

Indifference is the major crime—more serious than rape, robbery or even murder. Indifference enables the enemy to breach the wall and ravish the city. If we are not indifferent in 1964 it seems to me each of us must ask himself the following questions.

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California educators, in each issue the CASCD president points out current concerns of CASCD members.

The Pennsylvania ASCD now publishes *SCRIBE*, an abbreviation for "Supervision, Curriculum and Research Initiative Better Education." Editors are Howard F. Jack, West Jefferson Hills Schools, and Floy Penn, Mt. Lebanon Schools. This quarterly publication is sent to all members of Pennsylvania Department of Supervision and Curriculum. Annual subscriptions to nonmembers are available at \$2.00 from the Department of Supervision and Curriculum, PSEA, 400 N. Third Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

In February 1964, Minnesota ASCD began publishing *Curriculum Leadership*, which will appear in February, May and October. This publication contains articles of general interest and much information about ASCD'ers in the state. One of the regular features is a summary of actions from the State Department of Education.

The latest ASCD state periodical to reach this office is Wisconsin's *Curriculum Leadership*. One of the outstanding features, in addition to articles by well-known educators, is the review of resource units and study guides produced by school systems in the state. If this is a continuing feature in this publication, this will be extremely helpful to curriculum leaders who must keep informed about the major developments in the various subject matter areas and who will benefit from information about Wisconsin schools. Future publication plans are available from Rebecca Watson, WASCSD president, 400 North Grand Avenue, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

—MARGARET GILL, *Executive Secretary, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*

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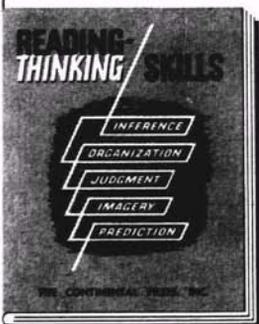
Indifference—Wiles

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Have I challenged the concept that education is coverage and memory and recall of facts? Have I proposed teaching for skill in inquiry? Have I pointed out the deadening effect of drill without purpose? Have I advocated teaching for concept development? Have I supported teachers who nourish creativity?

Have I asked the curriculum projects to seek content for the less able as well as the most gifted? Have I dared to say the new programs should not be required of all children? Have I been willing to risk saying that all youth should not be studying the same literature, music or mathematics?

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Have I asked the curriculum committee to change the courses of study to include much more of the culture of the new nations?

Have I demanded that structure of discipline and structure of knowledge be defined before I accept them as important in curriculum work? Have I stood for what I know about the individual's unique perception and structure of knowledge? Have I helped teachers to recognize that individuals organize knowledge around their purposes and values?

Have I advocated that schools accept helping the pupil clarify his values as one of its major purposes? Have I talked with teachers about my priority of values? Has my behavior manifested the priority I proclaim? Have I been honest in examining with teachers the value system of the school in which I work?

Politics—Van Dorn

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mine the relative merits of competing professional candidates would be sheer folly.

In a truly integrated system, the mayor should appoint school board members subject to confirmation by the city council. He is in a much better position than is the average voter to pick citizens qualified for this highly important office. Terms might be overlapping to insure continuity of policy. Yet regardless of the method of selecting a school board the basic objective should be the coordination of the educational function with all the other functions of community government. Only thus, in the author's opinion, can we achieve the efficient, scientific and progressive government which is the aim of all good citizens and all dedicated officials.

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