

## Emerging Trends in the Social Studies

THE forces of change are more widespread and more insistent than ever before. The rush of events tests the ability of our political, economic, and social institutions to adapt and grow.

It is the nature of democracy that a widespread understanding of problems and issues must exist to ensure effective public policies. The capacity to bring the knowledge of the social sciences to bear upon these problems is of critical importance to the freedom and well-being of the American people. As yet the necessary adaptations in education have not been entirely satisfactory. A fateful lag exists between situations in which men and women must live and their preparation to do so wisely.

Only recently has it been widely recognized that the magnitude of these changes and the increases in knowledge and insights required necessitate new approaches to learning at every level of education and in all areas of the curriculum. It is ironic that the social studies, the area most vitally and directly concerned with social forces and trends, should be one of the last segments of

the curriculum to come under careful and systematic review. As a result, many students in the 1960's are still being educated according to the recommendations of the 1916 NEA report.

The social studies have a key role in the development of young men and women capable of living intelligently in a world characterized by pervasive and tumultuous change. Most educators expect the social studies to play a major role in the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to free men. Clearly, the more we can make the accumulated experience of mankind, as represented by the social sciences, available to students, the better. Such study has value not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of understanding the rich resources of pertinent wisdom available for dealing with contemporary problems. It is important, therefore, that attention be directed to the nature of recent developments in the social sciences, the influence of these developments upon current efforts to strengthen social studies instruction, and the emerging trends which stem from these efforts.

Recent years have witnessed notable developments in the social sciences. There has been a major reshaping of the

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well-established disciplines and substantial growth in the newer ones. The social sciences have developed a degree of sophistication and power which was unimagined a few generations ago. Such disciplines as anthropology and social psychology have not only evolved but are demanding that their techniques and findings be brought into play along with the insights provided by older fields such as history and geography. Political science increasingly turns its attention from description of institutions to analysis of process and to theory. Scholars are trying to adapt cybernetics and communications theory to the requirements of the social sciences. A search for common principles of human behavior and the increased possibilities of prediction are concerns of prominent social scientists.

These impressive developments in the social sciences bring within the range of elementary and secondary schools opportunities to create new and improved curricula which in turn will help students build a framework of basic ideas about human behavior and the nature of our complex world. There still exists a large gap between what the social sciences can do and what social studies in the schools now teach. Some mechanism needs to be devised to bring the dramatic changes in content and methods in history and the social sciences into social studies instruction. There are some encouraging signs. More and more scholars are beginning to move into this gap and seek ways of helping students to learn what social scientists know and do.

Let us turn to some of the things that are happening which may suggest emerging trends. It is a rich and varied mixture. A recent list of social studies projects<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A Directory of Current Social Studies Projects and Related Activities." Eight of the projects listed are supported by grants from the U.S. Office of Education.

compiled by John Michaelis includes 38 programs. Space limitations make it impossible to list all of these projects or to examine any of them in detail. However, even a cursory study of several of these efforts provides some clues to current trends and indicates directions in which thinking and planning are moving.

### Method of History

Among the projects are several which emphasize improvements in teaching a particular subject such as history. Recognizing that the mountainous accumulation of new documentation and encyclopedic coverage of a variety of topics and issues might overwhelm the teacher, many historians now urge that emphasis be placed on developing a feeling for history and the historical method. This is seen as the main contribution of the field, and represents a notable shift away from the traditional, chronological, ground-covering approach to study history.

History is increasingly viewed as a tool, not as a master. The Secondary School History Committee in Amherst, Massachusetts advocates such a position,<sup>2</sup> and has prepared materials which are designed to teach the method of history as well as history itself. Students are expected to derive their own generalizations on an inductive basis and test them deductively by applying them in new situations. To illustrate, let us view the first day of class contrasting an inductive approach with the traditional approach, wherein the teacher makes an assignment to read chapter one and write out the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. The following is a description of an inductively taught class in history.

<sup>2</sup> Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

At the first meeting the teacher immediately passed out a variety of materials on the prehistoric Indians of New York State. These included archaeological monographs, a historical atlas, and a textbook. After a short discussion it was decided to use a monograph because it contained raw material that the students could use to create knowledge. The teacher asked all the students to study a page that pictured the main artifacts of one of these Indian groups. She soon started a discussion by asking a student to make an observation of these artifacts.

As each student made an observation the teacher jotted it on the board. Some of the facts listed dealt with the materials used in making the artifacts, others with uses, where you could find them and, interestingly enough, quite a few on geography. The teacher at times would stimulate the discussion by making an observation of her own or by asking questions.

Confronted with a mass of data, the teacher asked: "How can we organize these facts so that they have greater meaning?" An exchange of ideas was soon under way as the students devoted their attention to the selection, organizing, and patterning of these facts.

When the work was completed, the students had constructed a chart of social, economic and political activities of these people. They then began to write a short description of the Indians. All of this was done without reading any formal description of these people. The next day the essays were read and discussed. Following this the formal description of these Indians was read in the monograph. It was surprising how much of the information the students had discovered. At the same time the reading assignment served as a means of verifying the essays.<sup>3</sup>

The teacher in our illustration was attempting to acquaint students with the

<sup>3</sup> Charles Lahey. "The Discovery Method in Social Studies." *Teacher and Curriculum*. U.S. Commission for UNESCO, 1964.

nature of history and geography. The students were learning to function as historians and geographers. Instead of being told what history and geography were, the teacher helped them discover the two disciplines. This method emphasizes the relationship of history to the social sciences. It also assumes that in a free society induction and objectivity in the study of social issues are of great importance.

While history still occupies the central position in the social studies curriculum, its dominance is being seriously questioned. The theory that history offers the best synthesis for all the social sciences no longer goes unchallenged. There is little evidence that much fusion takes place in the traditional geography or history courses which still make up a large part of the curriculum.

### Structure of Social Studies

There is widespread acknowledgment of the fact that the social studies are at best amorphous. The lack of relationship between social studies courses and even between parts of individual courses points up the need for careful consideration of organizational structure for the social studies. Efforts are being made to establish social studies as a discipline intellectually autonomous from the social sciences while acknowledging them as sources of instructional methods and materials. The Harvard Social Studies Project and work by Samuel P. McCutchen are examples of such programs.<sup>4</sup> The Harvard Project views the social sciences

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. McCutchen. "A Discipline for the Social Studies." *Social Education*, February 1963. p. 61-65.

Donald Oliver. "Teaching Students to Analyze Public Controversy: A Curriculum Project Report." *Social Education*, April 1964. p. 191-94.

as sources of knowledge and methods to be used in accomplishing social studies objectives.

Other attempts are being made to identify basic ideas or concepts which might serve as cornerstones of the structure of the social studies, and in terms of which human experience can be explained. In this view content is regarded as a means rather than an end and basic human problems common to all mankind serve as an organizing principle. The concept-development approach recognizes that in spite of the enormous growth in the social sciences, we have not kept pace conceptually with the drastic changes in the nature of our social order. There exists a gap between what we think about our social, political, and philosophic problems and the objective conditions of our society.

Efforts are being made to develop approaches which enable teachers to select content by identifying concepts which will be most fruitful in advancing understanding of the contemporary world and in the pursuit of new knowledge. Also being studied are the ways in which concepts are developed and tested for accuracy and effectiveness and in which they are modified and replaced. The concept-development approaches recognize that knowledge must not merely be expanded but must also be constantly reorganized and reconstituted. A significant trend toward adopting a structural approach to a unified social studies curriculum seems to be emerging.

### Structure Within Disciplines

Other innovators are concerned with a structural approach within a discipline. Illustrative of this trend is the work of Lawrence Senesh, a Purdue University economist. He has outlined the funda-

mental ideas in economics and charted their relationships as the basis for a program in economics for children in grades kindergarten through twelve.<sup>5</sup> The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project has produced a guide which provides a model of social science concepts and materials for use in history and government courses.<sup>6</sup> A number of other studies, including several statewide proposals, attempt to set forth basic concepts and generalizations that provide a foundation from which the social studies curriculum is expected to emerge.<sup>7</sup>

New approaches to the selection and organization of content stress understanding of the method and function of the discipline rather than a current body of facts. Increased emphasis is being placed on the skill of inquiry, on methods of discovery, on self-directed learning, and on creativity. For example, the Carnegie Institute of Technology Social Studies Curriculum Development Center is preparing a sequential, cumulative curriculum in history and the social sciences grades nine through twelve. The courses include: comparative political systems and comparative economic systems, Western traditions and non-Western studies, major American revolutions—political, social, and economic—and a course in the behavioral sciences. The materials being prepared emphasize the mode of inquiry of history and the social sciences.

In a somewhat similar vein, Educational Services, Incorporated, includes in its statement of aims: "To provide an introduction to some of the basic ideas

<sup>5</sup> Indiana Experiment in Economic Education, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

<sup>6</sup> Anthropology Curriculum Study Project, 5632 S. Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>7</sup> See proposed guides for Wisconsin, Indiana and California.

of social science, such as patterns and function, evolution, etc., to provide an introduction to the methods of social sciences, to the rules of evidence and creation and testing of hypotheses, to do all these things by creating educational materials and methods that allow children, in a sense, to be social scientists, to work through real problems as much as possible on their own and to arrive at their own conclusions." As the ESI program demonstrates, learning by discovery is emerging as a popular concept in the new social studies.

Other new approaches stem from an increasing emphasis on the study of human behavior by quantitative and experimental methods, and some of these approaches are demonstrated by developments in gaming. Adaptation of operational games to social phenomena is a relatively recent innovation for teaching. Political and behavioral scientists in particular have been devoting increasing attention to various uses of games. Game theory is designed to deal with a wide range of situations and problems in terms of repetitive patterns of behavior, common aspects of phenomena, and types of actions and factors. The game is an analytic device, a model for describing and predicting behavior in a carefully defined situation.

Gaming involves two or more teams (or individuals) with different objectives engaged in maneuvers for valued stakes. Realism, student participation, and process are all a part of gaming. It is generally used as a vehicle for replicating real life situations and relating them to the substance of the social sciences.

The simulation of problems involving choice, alternatives, and decision has been used in university programs at Northwestern University, Harvard University, and several other institutions of

higher learning.<sup>8</sup> More recently several high schools have experimented with simulation as an approach to the study of international relations.<sup>9</sup> Other emerging trends include: (a) an increased concern with the process of social and cultural change; (b) a greater emphasis on international and intercultural relations; (c) a renewed interest in the role of values in American society; and (d) giving more attention to Negro and Latin influence on American life.

New ideas and new approaches are plentiful, but the chief tangible products of the current curriculum projects in the social studies are found in the quantity and variety of new instructional materials now available or in preparation. Although textbooks have resulted from some of these efforts, every conceivable type of instructional material, including transparencies, artifacts, card sorters, and games, are included in the vast array of aids resulting from various projects. The trend is toward preparing materials packaged in a variety of ways. Smaller packages containing materials dealing with a specific topic, idea, or trend seem to be more popular. Materials frequently reflect the view that they should be a means of developing the individual's capacity to learn, to inquire, to think critically, to come to his own conclusions.

This brief review of current attempts to improve the social studies curriculum reveals efforts which seek to improve techniques, to develop new concepts and content, to select and gather rele-

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<sup>8</sup> Harold Guetzkow, editor. *Simulation in International Relations: Developments for Teaching and Research*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

<sup>9</sup> High schools in Lawrence, Kansas; Wichita, Kansas; and Bloomington, Illinois, have experimented with simulation.

able for loan. Listing of materials does not constitute endorsement; nor does the July 1 issue purport to be a definitive list of all books on the topic. However, it will be a very helpful reference for books useful in teaching about "Early Civilizations."

#### . . . Junior High School

Indiana State College, Terre Haute, Indiana, publishes the *Junior High School Newsletter* three times yearly (editor: Max Bough). The publication, prepared for those who are interested in the junior high, is for the dissemination of information and significant ideas. Very timely is the Fall 1964 issue on "Reading in the Junior High School" (Vol. III, No. 1). This volume contains three articles related to the general topic with a majority of the space devoted to "Developing Reading Skills in the Upper Grades and Junior High School" by Walter J. Moore, University of Illinois.

Manuscripts are welcomed, including those on controversial issues, with the "expressed understanding that all such issues are published without editorial bias or discrimination." With this stated editorial policy, the *Newsletter* might well become an extensive open forum for issues vital to the junior high segment of American education, heavily besieged as it is by issues, including the question of its very existence.

#### . . . Curriculum Report

Have you dreamed of being free to read and read day after day to your heart's content and your mind's saturation? Are you increasingly and constantly finding this dream more difficult to anticipate, even if you restricted the reading to the small segment of the American society for which you have a major responsibility? One step toward

this dream appeared in the education world in November from the Curriculum Service Center of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals. The help is in the form of a new publication *Curriculum Report* prepared for one purpose—to help busy administrators "keep current on developments influencing the course of American secondary education."

Although the *Report* will go to all NASSP members and will have a secondary focus, it will be welcomed eagerly by all the harried administrative and curriculum personnel who are diligent in their continual seeking for current research, ideas and practices. Each monthly issue will focus on a single educational issue or curriculum problem with a thorough but quickly readable analysis and overview selected from a wide variety of sources.

We desperately need this type of help if we are to approach our reading dream. We salute NASSP for providing this excellent and timely service!

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

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vant data, to perfect methods of analyzing problems, to discover relationships among social phenomena, to formulate models, and to refine theory. In addition, descriptive and historical studies are adding to our fund of available knowledge. By offering a wealth of raw materials and intellectual tools, such efforts create new opportunities for students, teachers, and curriculum builders alike to bring human behavior into clearer focus and to apply these findings in the study of contemporary problems.

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