

# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CURRICULUM CHANGE

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THE purposes of education relate directly to the factors that facilitate or hinder curriculum change. These purposes are threefold: cultural transmission, environmental adaptation, and total personality development. The three purposes at once have a serial and a non-serial relationship.

In a serial way, the three purposes relate in ascending and descending order. Transmission feeds into adaptation and adaptation comparably feeds into personality fulfillment. Conversely, personality fulfillment enhances the cause of adaptation and the latter comparably enhances the cause of transmission. In a non-serial way, because all combine into a unitary constellation, stimuli applied at any single pressure point tend to set off reactions at all other points and in the constellation as a whole.

Transmission as a general process goes uncontested, because this is the only means by which a society can perpetuate itself. However, when education gets into the business of selecting specifics, divisiveness is not at all uncommon. Adaptation as a general process also goes uncontested, because no organism can grow unless it first adapts. The critical issue, however, is whether adaptation is properly an end or a means. If the former, life tends to take on static qualities; if the latter, the question, "a means to what subsequent ends?" demands careful answer.

The goal of total personality fulfillment is the most highly controversial of the three, with dialogue focusing on these basic issues. First, should personality development, broadly conceived, be a function of formal education at all, or is it more properly a function of the home and the community? Second, if personality development is a proper function of formal education, should the approach be along academic channels only, or directly along emotional, social and physical channels as well? And third, if the approach is to be along these several channels, how extensive should be the commitment and the resulting program?

Controversial questions such as these serve to remind that curriculum emanates from the values that a culture lives by. We grant that a curriculum needs input, output, schematic models, and services of knowledgeable engineers; yet these apart from value considerations ring as hollowly as do the proverbial works without faith.

### **Values at Issue**

This leads us to the focal theme of the article which is this: The decision that the culture renders on the current value debate will decide education's future course. Two emotion-arousing issues which are part of that debate are these: humanism for all versus humanism for some; and the cognitive man versus the mentally-healthy man.

*Humanism for all versus humanism for some.* The first of these value issues poses the question: Are all men or just some men entitled to the right to be human? The idealistic answer of Judaism, Christianity, and The American Dream is unequivocal: All should have this right. The heart of the thesis is that individual man—every individual man—is important. He is important because he is human, and his "humanness" obligates him to grow into his potential. This he does best in an expanding social milieu which moves directionally toward all the people. Humanism at one and the same time thus is a philosophy of individualism and of altruism.

The practical answer, however, is equally unequivocal: Just some have the right to be human. This response sentences many to a less than humanistic state. It assigns them citizenship in a second-rate Other America. It gives them the dubious right to be poor, hungry, medically neglected and educationally deprived.

Education currently is recording, and will continue to record, (as well as participate in) this debate. As the case for the ideal gains ascendancy, a curriculum will emerge aimed not at training in a narrow academic way, but at humanizing in a broad affective way. The curriculum will center on uniqueness of individuality, with the clinical emergent over the normative.

Such indefensible practices as competitive grading amid inequality, worship of the gifted, and bare tolerance of the non-verbal will recede to the background. However, as the case for the non-ideal gains ascendancy, disparity of educational opportunity will become even greater than it now is. Lines will become more sharply drawn between the verbal and the non-verbal, between the gifted and the "ordinary," and between the "haves" and the "have-nots" along many other dimensions.

*The cognitive man versus the mentally-healthy man.* This second value issue poses the question: What kind of product should the schools produce? Should he be an intellectual product exclusively or almost exclusively, or should he be one who is an affective product as well? Should he be merely knowledgeable or also mentally-healthy?

The case for the cognitive-man position has a tradition which started before Plato and which is substantial enough even today to attract to its cause such

advocates as Hutchins, Adler, Conant; in fact, many, if not most, liberal-arts scholars. The cognitive thesis, with some variation, rests in the following postulates: the intellect is of supreme worth; it can be educated more or less independently; the proper avenue to it is the time-tested disciplines; and as the intellect goes, so goes the entire person.

The mental-health thesis, on the other hand, is this: the mental, the emotional (including the esthetic), the social (including the ethical), and the psychomotor combine to make a person what he is. None of these entities is discrete, all of them are interrelated, thus formal education must embrace them all. Within this frame, the mentally-healthy individual stands as one who, developed along the totality of these dimensions, views reality for what it is and is able to respond, and does respond, to it in kind.

### **Mental Health**

Advocates of this position view mental health as a relative term. They concede that individuals predictively will differ widely in regard to such traits as self acceptance, ability to relate to others, flexibility, autonomy, tolerance before frustration, and value consistency. Those who stand high on these and kindred traits will view reality more discriminately; those who fall low will view it more distortedly and even mistakenly.

Education here also is recording and will continue to record (as well as participate in) the details of this debate. To the extent proponents of the cognitive emerge ascendant, the following program outcomes may be predicted: a hard-core academic program for most, if not all, pupils; more attention given to the gifted than to the average and below; a paucity of personnel services; teaching primarily by the process of teacher transmission; and a reliance on the educated intellect, so-called, to eventuate in approved affective outcomes.

To the extent proponents of the mental-health point of view emerge ascendant, the following we postulate as expected outcomes: curriculum content conceived with the individual as the criterion; a balanced program which, even though stressing the cognitive, will not neglect the affective and the psychomotor; educational opportunity divided equally among all pupils irrespective of socio-economic and ability differences; and extensive personnel services up to a point of at least limited psychotherapy.

For these outcomes to convert from the passive nominal to the active operational, classroom teachers and school administrators will need to believe to a point of conviction that:

1. Mental health is an independent value in its own right; that individual well being and concern for others are their own justifications.
2. Mental health is also a value which impinges on other values and on which other values impinge.
3. Mental health is a value that releases the creative powers in their many forms of expression.

In the writer's opinion, the mental-health way is the only defensible way. It is the way to a balanced curriculum, to economy of effort in the performance of life's tasks, to sane working relationships among people, to individual happiness, and to the crowning end of altruism. Any antithetical way may well be the way to curriculum imbalance, wasted work effort, personal unhappiness, and human pathology.

The crux of the issue is that if education is to live by mental-health values, it needs instructional leaders who espouse and live by the same values. Admittedly, such leaders currently are in short supply not only in education but in government, business, and industry as well. Yet as the culture becomes more convinced of the mental-health way, this disparity between supply and demand will decrease proportionately.

We reiterate that decisions about values will chart education's and the society's future course, a course that must lead to wholeness in all the people. The thesis of the article is that a curriculum grounded in broad humanistic values is an essential to this outcome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some of this article is paraphrased from Gail M. Inlow, *The Emergent in Curriculum*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., to be published on or about January 1, 1966. Chapter 4.



**Community Helpers:**

- N1 Doctor - Oriental
- N2 Nurse - White
- N3 Mailman - Negro
- N4 Policeman - White
- N5 Mechanic - White
- N6 Businessman - Negro
- N7 Fireman - White
- N8 - Teacher - White
- \$3.75 ea., \$27.50 set of 8
- White Family - \$11.75 set of 5
- Negro Family - \$11.75 set of 5

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