

● From the Executive Secretary

THE SYSTEMS CONCEPT¹

THE increasing interest in a systems approach or concept is a welcome development to those who are concerned with a qualitative and balanced curriculum. Perhaps we are beginning to learn that significant curriculum change is a grand involvement, not piecemeal tinkering. We rewrite a course outline, we select a textbook or a new piece of equipment and call it curriculum change. Not so.

Change requires a fundamental modification of the organism, a new alignment of skills, processes, ways of perceiving and acting. This necessitates large scale thinking because to change any experiencing or perceiving requires a consideration of what came before, and what will follow. Such alterations thus involve the whole system, the whole range of sequencing, pacing, concept development and evaluation. We are not engaged in the process of modifying interchangeable components; we are changing the system-structure as an entity.

Likewise the systems emphasis dramatizes the need for the prepared generalist, for overall curriculum and supervisory leadership. An adequate systems design necessitates a critical review of the impact and conjunction of objectives, pupil needs and capacities, instructional possibilities, organization, resources and evaluation. Such consequences require persons with assigned roles, time and money, who know that any part of instruction is systemic, that every decision and every classroom act touches the web of all the experience that is the school's responsibility.

Such a perspective regarding the system will make possible the proper use of the package or the box, the cell or the carrel; also, such a perspective will provide for the best utilization of the simulator or the learning laboratory. In the total fabric of the curriculum, the computer and electronic data processing become integral resources as subsystems, as means not ends. There must be balance between the system and the subsystems, just as there must be between in-service education and innovation. The systems approach can be a welcome resource to those who are concerned with the whole network of experiencing and learning.

—LESLEE J. BISHOP, *Executive Secretary, ASCD.*

¹ From "Imperatives in Instruction," NEA Regional Conference on Instruction, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 1, 1967.

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