

Sources of the Curriculum

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OLD curriculum issues never die. They fade away only to return in new dress. A score of years ago, when the educational issue was over the extent to which curriculum objectives were to be based upon the subject, the individual, or the society, Tyler aided us with his treatise on the sources.¹ This rationale stated cogent reasons for schools' using all three sources to determine objectives and explained the ingredients and steps needed if school personnel were to perform the curriculum building task.

In the period of the 1930's through the early 1950's, many in the educational establishment attacked excessive reliance on subjects that emanated from college disciplines. The early 1950's were also marked by attacks from some liberal arts professors and lay conservatives on the nonintellectual quality of the school's curriculum. This period was followed in the later 1950's and the 1960's by scholarly attempts at improving the disciplinary nature of the subjects. The current era has its roots in movements from the mid-1960's with a mood of relevance needed in the curriculum.

In terms of the older dress, the predominant cries of the early 1970's are for more efforts directed at individual and so-

cietal concerns and sources rather than reliance on the collegiate disciplines. One might even go so far as to state that this is an era that prizes (and castigates) teaching at the expense of concern for what is to be taught. Black Studies, drug learnings, and other forms of relevance notwithstanding, the focus is not upon the curriculum but upon the recipient (student), the process agent (teacher), and social action.

Perspective requires less of the mystic's prognostication, and more of the historian's grasp of the pendulum swings. In this manner it becomes more apparent to note that while the school's curriculum is neither the sum of the university's disciplines, nor even restricted to these disciplines, it does indeed borrow from them for skills, knowledges, and concepts. By the same token, the curriculum is not the sum of the problems faced by society and individual learners, nor even restricted to them, but it does utilize these sources.

Kliebard² has raised the needed question about the holy bow to Tyler's rationale with the passage of two decades (and even questions the use of subjects as a source in terms,

² Herbert M. Kliebard. "The Tyler Rationale." *School Review* 78 (2): 259-72; February 1970.

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¹ Ralph W. Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950.



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of that rationale). If we were to pursue Kliebard's reasons for going beyond Tyler's contribution, and Goodlad's³ criticism of the rationale in terms of curriculum building as an enterprise that is much more value oriented than we tend to accept, the current mood and its impact on curriculum movements are a bit more understandable.

Recent arguments that focus on ghetto, urban schools requiring curriculum relevance through better teaching, Black Studies learnings, etc., have mystified many who are concerned about depriving city children of skills and knowledges associated with the 3 R's. In effect, the same population (and ideological) sectors from which the relevance concern has emanated is beginning to awaken to the fact that it is being shortchanged in terms of conventional, time-honored curriculum provisions. We can expect that a reali-

³ John I. Goodlad. *The Development of a Conceptual System for Dealing with Problems of Curriculum and Instruction*. Cooperative Research Program. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Project No. 454.

zation will soon arise in the white, suburban areas that more emphasis is needed on social concerns, relevance, and ethnic studies.

The real question is none of the above. The major curriculum concern about substance, and the sources from which substance is derived, is how to provide for the balanced objectives alluded to here.

It is well and good to cry out against emphasis upon mathematics and science in a world that is too theoretical, technological, and non-humanistic. But if we wish to provide opportunities for children for an existing world, we must provide for these learnings, and not merely toward any biased, conscience-oriented direction, no matter how worthy that direction may be.

Relevance

By the same token, if we wish to see more relevance (and the humanities is the label for incorporating these concerns), we must do more than exhort the teacher to de-

velop his own curriculum. We require materials that can be disseminated, but also materials that emanate from the concerns of uninterested students with the abilities and qualifications to develop programs. Tyler's model as to the sources applies here, but whether local school staffs can or will provide for the development is at question. (With all of the federal monies expended for curriculum innovation, why is there no major movement to forward this?)

There is room in the school day for both the didactic and encounter type learnings advocated by Broudy.¹ There is room for both Popham's² realization of the use of behavioral objectives and Eisner's³ concern about the loss of expressive objectives. When Wiles⁴ described his high school of the future and others commented on it,⁵ the focus was upon analysis groups in which affective learnings were to be dealt with. However, the innovator did not neglect the cognitive part of the day and even required that the teacher of the analysis group be endowed with the capacity to deal with concepts from

¹ Harry S. Broudy. "The School as a Social System: Stress and Distress." Address and paper delivered at ASCD conference, Chicago, March 1969. In: Robert R. Leeper, editor. *Changing Supervision for Changing Times*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1969.

² W. James Popham. Address and paper delivered at AERA convention, Los Angeles, 1969.

³ E. W. Eisner. "Educational Objectives: Help or Hindrance?" *School Review* 75 (3): 250-82; Autumn 1967.

⁴ Kimball Wiles. *The Changing Curriculum of the American High School*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

⁵ William M. Alexander, editor. *The High School of the Future*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969.

disciplinary learnings (though his commentators seemed to lose sight of this in their haste to emphasize other sources and objectives).

In effect, we need not become anti-intellectual in the rush to judgment for relevance and the needs of individuals and for societal change, any more than we need become academic disciplinarians to prevent an affective takeover. We do not need to become extremists; nor do we dare become victims of extremist movements that do a disservice to the very individuals and society we profess to serve.

In summary, the recent history of curriculum movements has swung back and forth from priorities on sources as disciplinary vs. individual and or society. There have been challenges to this model of sources for curriculum objectives, but no major proposals for changing it have, as yet, been forthcoming.

Recent proposals have suggested ways of organizing programs that tend to compromise the use of these sources, though these recommendations tend to be distorted by advocates of extreme positions.

The humanities provide a vehicle for incorporating many concerns for curriculum relevance. Yet national monies for reaching uninterested students have not been made available and local staffs are not well geared to develop and maintain such programs.

The major need is to provide for a balance of the use of sources and, trite as such a statement may seem, this is most important in an era when biases frequently result in disservices to the very populations to which they appear to be addressed. □

To Nurture Humaneness: Commitment for the '70's

By the ASCD 1970 Yearbook Committee

Edited by Mary-Margaret Scobey, Chairman, and Grace Graham, Co-Chairman

264 pp.

NEA Stock Number: 610-17810

\$5.75

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

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