



TEACHING WITHOUT

A CENTRAL issue in the curriculum field is the dilemma, perhaps oversimplified, between *discipline* and *freedom*. Lawrence S. Kubie stated it most clearly:

To put the question even more specifically, the educator must ask, "How can I equip the child with the facts and the tools which he will need in life, without interfering with the freedom with which he will be able to use them after he has acquired them?" We have learned that both input-overload through the excessive use of grill and drill, and input-underload through excessive permissiveness, may tumble the learner into the same abyss of paralysis and ignorance (1).

The aim of this paper is to argue that by accepting the basic assumption that the *primary* purpose of schooling is to change the behavior of students in specific predetermined ways, schools are only making the problem defined by Kubie more acute. In addition, this paper asserts that activities may be justified for inclusion in the curriculum on grounds other than those based on the efficacy of the activity for specifically changing the behaviors of students. It is also proposed that schools, while accepting a minimum number of training responsibilities, should take as their *major* purpose one of involving students in activities which have no preset objectives, but which meet other specified criteria.

Teaching for Behavioral Objectives

Regardless of the underlying bases on which curricula are selected for inclusion in a program, a major problem is that of justifying the activities children are asked to experience. Clearly, the selection process always involves subjective and value-related judgments.

Consider the junior high school teacher of science in his efforts to defend the behavioral objectives of his program. He may argue that a particular objective is justified on the grounds that it is related to student success in senior high school; that the objective has traditionally been taught as a part of the curriculum; that it reflects the behavior of scientists and as such is important to his students; or more simply, that the objective is "in the book." None of these justifications, either singly or collectively, seems especially convincing.

The problem is seen most clearly in the affective domain. Lay persons and professionals alike have long asked, "What values should be taught?" Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (2) have argued that one reason which partially accounts for the erosion of affective objectives in our schools is that teachers hesitate to impose values on their students through the lever of giving grades. On the other hand, teachers seem to feel that

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JAMES D. RATHS*

manipulating students in the cognitive domain is ethical. For instance, a science teacher may want his students to acquire behaviors associated with the scientific method. Manifestly, there is no one scientific method, just as there is no one view of justice, yet teachers seem to feel no compunction about "forcing" students to learn the scientific method they have in mind while shying away from teaching one view of justice.

It is important in terms of the central thesis of this paper to consider the long range implications a teacher and his students must accept once it has been decided that all students are to acquire a specific instructional objective. The teacher's task becomes at once difficult and tedious. He must inform his students of the objective to which they are expected to aspire; he must convince them of the relevance of this objective to their lives; he must give students the opportunity to practice the behavior being taught; he must diagnose individual difficulties encountered by members of his group; he must make prescriptions of assignments based on his diagnoses and repeat the cycle again and again. Needless to say, this "method" of instruction has proved itself effective, if not provocative. It is the training paradigm perfected during both World Wars and utilized extensively in the armed forces and in industry to prepare persons for specific responsibilities.

It is the rare teacher who implements this procedure with the precision implied by the foregoing description. Few teachers have the energy, the knowledge important for making diagnoses, the memory needed to recall prescriptions, or the feedback capabilities of a computer. The ultimate training program is the research-based IPI model used experimentally in a few schools throughout the country. This observation is not meant to fault teachers as a group but merely to observe that in terms of the ways schools are organized, for example, teacher-student ratios, availability of special technical assistance, etc., only the most gifted and dedicated teachers can offer an effective training procedure to students. So instead of a rigorous training paradigm, most students are presented with "grill and drill" techniques, as cited by Kubie, repetitious to some and meaningless to others. Yet even if all programs could be set up on the basis of behavioral objectives and even if strict training paradigms could be established to meet the objectives, who could argue that such a program would be other than tedious and ultimately stultifying? This last comment applies both to the students and to the

* James D. Raths, Director, Bureau of Educational Research and Field Services, College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park

teacher. Usually, teaching for objectives is dull work. Most of the student responses are familiar ones and are anticipated by a teacher who is fully aware of the range of possible problems students might meet in acquiring the behavior. Hopefully, both teachers and students aspire to something other than this.

Teaching Without Specific Objectives

To suggest that teachers plan programs without specific instructional objectives seems to fly in the face of many sacred beliefs—those dealing with progress, efficiency, success, and even rationality. On the other hand, such a proposal evidently does not fly in the face of current practices. Much to the distress of empiricists (3, 4), teachers do from time to time invite children to participate in activities for which specific behavioral objectives are rarely preset. Examples of some of these activities include taking field trips, acting in dramatic presentations, having free periods in school, participating in school governments, putting out a class newspaper, and many others. While teachers evidently hope that students, as individuals, will acquire learnings from these activities, the learnings are generally not preset nor are they imposed on all the children in the class.

Instead, teachers may intend that these activities will provide students with some of the skills they will need in life, either through the direct experience they undergo in the classroom in carrying out the activity or through subsequent follow-up activities. In addition, teachers learn to expect that some children will become bored with any single activity—whatever it is. This response can be found in most classrooms at any one time and teachers simply make plans to involve those students suffering from momentary ennui in other provocative activities later in the day or week.

While carrying out a program composed of such activities, a teacher must perform many important and difficult tasks, but the functions seem less perfunctory and more challenging than those carried out under the

training regimen described previously. A teacher must listen to the comments and questions of his students with the intent of clarifying their views and perceptions; he must encourage students to reflect upon their experiences through writings, poetry, drawings, and discussions; he must react to their responses in ways that suggest individual activities students may consider in following up on their experiences. In these ways, teachers provide an environment that is sufficiently evocative to encourage children to become informed and capable, but in individual ways that would be difficult to anticipate either in the central offices of a board of education or in the test construction laboratories located at Palo Alto or Iowa City.

Criteria for Worthwhile Activities

If we accept the argument that the major focus of our schools should be away from activities designed to bring about specific behavioral changes in students, then on what basis can activities be justified for inclusion in the curricula of our schools? This section advances some criteria for identifying activities that seem to have some inherent worth. The criteria set down here for identifying worthwhile activities are not advanced to convince anyone of their wisdom as a set or individually, but merely to suggest value statements that might be used to justify the selection of particular activities in a curriculum.

The value statements are couched in terms that can best be used in the following manner. As a teacher contemplates an activity for his classroom, each of the value statements may suggest ways the activity might be altered. For instance, if a teacher were to consider an assignment which requires students to write a report on Brazil, he might revise his assignment to include one or more of the value dimensions suggested by the criteria. With all other things being equal, the revised assignment would be considered, according to these criteria, more worthwhile than the original one.

A relevant question to raise at this point

is, "Worthwhile for whom?" The answer necessarily is for the child and for society. While there can be no empirical support for this response, neither can any other activity or behavioral objective be justified through data.

1. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it permits children to make informed choices in carrying out the activity and to reflect on the consequences of their choices.*

An activity that requires children to select topics for study, resources for use, or media for the display of ideas, after some exploration of alternatives, is more worthwhile than one that provides children with no opportunities or another that gives choices at rather mundane levels, for example, a choice of now or this afternoon, or using a pen or pencil.

2. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it assigns to students active roles in the learning situation rather than passive ones.*

An activity that channels students' energies into such roles as panel members, researchers, orators, observers, reporters, interviewers, actors, surveyors, performers, role players, or participants in simulation exercises such as games is more worthwhile than one which assigns students to tasks such as listening in class to the teacher, filling out a ditto sheet, responding to a drill session, or participating in a routine teacher-led discussion.

3. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it asks students to engage in inquiry into ideas, applications of intellectual processes, or current problems, either personal or social.*

An activity that directs children to become acquainted with ideas that transcend traditional curricular areas, ideas such as truth, beauty, worth, justice, or self-worth; one that focuses children on intellectual processes such as testing hypotheses, identifying assumptions, or creating original pieces of work which communicate personal ideas or emotions; or one that raises questions

about current social problems such as pollution, war and peace, or of personal human relations is more worthwhile than one that is directed toward places (Mexico or Africa), objects (birds or simple machines), or persons (Columbus or Shakespeare).

4. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves children with realia.*

An activity that encourages children to touch, handle, apply, manipulate, examine, and collect real objects, materials, and artifacts either in the classroom or on field trips is more worthwhile than one that involves children in the use of pictures, models, or narrative accounts.

5. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if completion of the activity may be accomplished successfully by children at several different levels of ability.*

An activity that can be completed successfully by children of diverse interests and intellectual backgrounds is more worthwhile than one which specifies in rigid terms only one successful outcome of the activity. Examples of the former are thinking assignments such as imagining, comparing, classifying, or summarizing, all of which allow youngsters to operate on their own levels without imposing a single standard on the outcomes.

6. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it asks students to examine in a new setting an idea, an application of an intellectual process, or a current problem which has been previously studied.*

An activity that builds on previous student work by directing a focus into novel locations, new subject matter areas, or different contexts is more worthwhile than one that is completely unrelated to the previous work of the students. (This position is an example of one that is impossible to build into every activity presented to students. Obviously a balance is needed between new areas of study and those which are related to previous work. Value dimension number six

asserts the need for some continuity in a program.)

7. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it requires students to examine topics or issues that citizens in our society do not normally examine—and that are typically ignored by the major communication media in the nation.*

An activity that deals with matters of sex, religion, war and peace, the profit motive, treatment of minorities, the workings of the courts, the responsiveness of local governments to the needs of the people, the social responsibilities of public corporations, foreign influences in American media, social class, and similar issues is more worthwhile than an activity which deals with mundane "school topics" such as quadratic equations or short stories—topics usually considered safe and traditional.

8. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves students and faculty members in "risk" taking—not a risk of life or limb, but a risk of success or failure.*

Activities that may receive criticism from supervisors and parents on the basis of "what's usually done," that may fail because of unforeseen events or conditions, are more worthwhile than activities that are relatively risk-free—using approaches which are condoned openly by the community and the school administration and which have served teachers well in the past.

9. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it requires students to rewrite, rehearse, and polish their initial efforts.*

Rather than having students perceive assignments as "tasks to complete," activities should provide time and opportunity for students to revise their themes in the light of criticism, rehearse a play in front of an audience, or practice an interviewing technique to be used in a project so that they will begin to see the value of doing a task well. Activities that communicate to students that their efforts are approximations of perfect work—

and that efforts can be made to improve their work—are more worthwhile than ones that merely suggest that once an assignment is completed the first time, it is finished.

10. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves students in the application and mastery of meaningful rules, standards, or disciplines.*

Using standards derived from students as well as authorities, panel discussions can be disciplined by procedures; reporting of data can be disciplined by considerations of control; essays can be regulated by considerations of style and syntax. Activities which foster a sense of meaningful discipline, either imposed or chosen by the children themselves, are more worthwhile than ones that ignore the need for the application of meaningful rules or standards.

11. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it gives students a chance to share the planning, the carrying out of a plan, or the results of an activity with others.*

One facet of the current trends in individualizing instruction found in some programs is that of minimizing the chance for children to work in groups and to learn the problems inherent in any situation that calls for individual desires to yield at times to group requirements. An activity that asks children to play a role in sharing responsibilities with others is more worthwhile than one which limits such opportunity.

12. *All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it is relevant to the expressed purposes of the students.*

While a prizing of children's purposes might well be protected by the value dimension previously expressed, of providing choices for children, it is important enough to stress in a value dimension of its own. As students are invited to express their own interests and to define problems in which they feel a personal involvement, and as the activities of the curriculum reflect those interests, the ensuing activity will be more

worthwhile than one that is based on attributions of interests and concerns made by teachers.

Obviously, not all of the value components identified in this section can be built into a single activity. Also, not all the values listed deserve the same amount of emphasis in terms of time within a given program. For example, some assignments involving "risk" may be titillating for students and teachers, but a program which has more than a few activities reflecting the "risk" value would probably be out of balance. Finally, the list above is not exhaustive. It is meant to illustrate values that might be used in defining a program of worthwhile activities. The value-criteria are merely working hypotheses at this time, subject to analysis if not empirical testing. Others are encouraged to develop their own set of criteria.

Caveat

It must be emphasized that all teachers, whether working at the first grade level or in graduate school, generally need to do some teaching for objectives as well as some teaching without specific objectives. Whitehead has suggested that in terms of the rhythm of education, many more of the tasks assigned to younger children should be justified on non-instrumental values, while those assigned at the upper levels might reasonably contain more performance-related activities (5).

Evaluation

All of the foregoing is not to suggest that school programs need not be evaluated. As in the past, those activities which are justified in terms of the objectives they are designed to meet can be evaluated through criterion-referenced achievement tests. Other procedures need to be developed to describe school programs in terms of the characteristics of the activities which comprise the programs. The following procedure might serve as a way of communicating information about a given course or program which would be meaningful to administrators and parents.

Assume that a teacher accepted as the major values of his program those previously identified in this paper. (Presumably, this procedure could be used for any set of values.) He could periodically describe his program using a chart similar to the one presented in Table 1. The chart could be completed according to the following ground rules:

Column 1: This column would simply number the activity for purposes of identification.

Column 2: This notation would place the activity in the sequence of activities carried out during the reporting period.

Column 3: This entry would be another way of labeling the topics under study for purposes of identification.

Column 4: The number of students who successfully completed the activity would be

Subject: _____		Teacher's Name: _____		Unit: _____	Dates: From _____ To _____									
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)									
Activity number	Dates	Title of activity	Number of students completing activity	Estimated number of hours of participation per student	Justified by criteria (Check those relevant)									
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Jan. 8	Experiment with electricity	15	2 hrs.	x	x		x	x					x

Table 1. Teacher's Log

entered here to communicate the extent to which all students in the class were involved with the activity.

Column 5: To give emphasis to the centrality of the activity to the scope of the course, the estimation of the average number of hours students spent on the activity would be entered in this column.

Column 6: In this column, teachers would check those components of the activity which in their eyes serve to justify it in their program. In the example entered in the table, the teacher has justified an activity, not in terms of what students can do on finishing it that they could not do before, but on the grounds that it gave students a chance to make a choice (#1); involved them in active roles (#2); included experiences with realia (#4); provided various levels of achievement which could be judged as successful (#5); and required students to apply meaningful standards to their work (#10).

If each line of every teacher's log were punched on a computer card, a program could easily be written which would yield output describing the percentage of time spent on each activity, and the number of children who were involved with programs under each value dimension. At present, no generalizations are available which could be used to rate definitively a given course description as adequate or inadequate, based on these data. Nevertheless, if a science program profile indicated that almost no time was spent with students in active roles, if students were almost never involved with realia, and if students had few opportunities to apply meaningful rules or standards to

their work, then a person sharing the values espoused in this paper would have serious reservations about the quality of that particular science program.

In summary, the argument has been presented that an activity can be justified in terms other than those associated with its instrumental value for changing the behavior of students. In addition, this paper has presented a set of criteria for identifying worthwhile activities, proposed a modest procedure for describing programs in terms of those criteria, and issued an invitation for others to present alternative criteria. Most of all, it has asked that some concern be directed toward the quality of opportunities for experiences offered through our schools.

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ETHNIC MODIFICATION OF THE CURRICULUM

Maxine Dunfee *Professor of Education, Indiana University*

Report of an ASCD-sponsored conference which studied the need for immediate curriculum evaluation and revision in terms of a pluralistic society.

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