

New Realities: Paths to Change

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SCHOOLS exist today in a society that, in almost every conceivable way, is being tried and tested. The tempests of the foreign wars, the confrontations within our society, experimentation with new codes of living, and now the Watergate mess all have signified stresses and strains out of which have emerged several stark new realities. These realities must be identified, examined, and understood if we hope to overcome the negativism and sordidness all too prevalent in these days.

Too much time has been spent in lamenting the shortcomings of our society and too little time devoted to correcting these ills. The Watergate affair has underscored the urgency of the need for individual citizens to face the realities which have emerged. Perhaps talk has been too much used as a defense mechanism to evade or conceal the truth of realities. Such truth alone can strengthen our self-knowledge, our ability to join effectively with our fellow men in facing these realities.

Issues for 1973-74

"New realities" might well characterize the plans and the content for this year's issues of *Educational Leadership*. The Publications Committee and the Association have

identified some areas of great concern. Each concern or reality will be treated in forthcoming issues of the journal. Topics for the 1973-74 year are as follows:

- *Taboos in Education: New Realities* is the focus for the current issue. As school continues to play an expanding role in the socialization of the child, it is expected to introduce children to topics and experiences not previously thought to be within the school's domain. The school has had difficulty in developing and implementing appropriate programs in these areas, and there has been resistance in some communities.

Writers for this issue have looked openly and keenly at several topics that have been considered as "taboos." The writers give current evaluations of these areas and some projections as to future needs and developments.

- *Women and Education* is the topic for November. Contributors will look at some of the present realities affecting the role of women in education and in society.

Woman's role is changing, and education has an important part to play in this adjustment. Such change has received considerable documentation and has been the focus of much national and international attention. Education and schooling must

reflect and must participate in these fundamental changes.

Assistance in planning the November issue was given by the ASCD Working Group on the Education of Women.

● *Middle School in the Making?* is featured in December. Contributors, chosen because of their closeness to the middle school movement, will examine many facets of this type of organization. Some of the articles will be critical, some descriptive, and perhaps some will present a combination of these views.

The traditional junior high school organization and program have caused much concern. This level of schooling has seemed to some to be too much influenced by the high school curriculum and has not adequately met the needs of the junior high school aged learner. This concern has stimulated interest in the middle school movement. Research in growth and development has revealed that sixth graders are more compatible with seventh and eighth graders than with upper elementary children. Moreover, the maturity of ninth graders is much more compatible with high school students than with seventh and eighth grade youngsters. In addition, the ninth grade program appears to resemble more closely the high school program. For example, the computation of Carnegie units begins at this level.

● *Competency-Based Education: For Whom?* is the focus for January. Contributors will look at some facets of the competency movement which have significant implications for professional persons and citizens alike. What are some of the assumptions which underlie "performance-based" or "competency-based" approaches to education? What occurs when these assumptions are applied to the education of teachers and/or that of children and young people?

Can the competency movement in education be seen as a response to public dissatisfaction with the quality of education, particularly in times of financial stress? While considerable effort to date has been devoted to the delineation and assessment of professional competencies at all levels, the

field apparently is still in its infancy and is still characterized by controversy.

● *Technology: Use and Abuse?* is the February theme. In this technological age all kinds of commercial organizations are developing devices and materials that have implications for education. Technology must be put in its proper perspective if it is to be of optimal effectiveness in school use. Teachers in preservice and in-service education must become familiar with the devices, resources, and potentialities of technology. Only so can the function and use of technology in the curriculum be thoroughly understood.

● *Helping Professionals To Grow* is the theme for March. Schools today differ radically from those of ten years ago. Changes in architecture, furnishings, instructional materials, and student population are evident. Perceptions of teaching and learning too are changing. Society's demands upon education are increasing. To cope with such change, professionals need help. Extensive reteaching is needed by the entire profession. What is the best way to achieve this?

In-service education today is different in character and quality from that of some years ago. In-service education now includes many activities and opportunities for growth that aim to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. It is a continuous process, an extension of preservice education. It seeks to increase the involvement of all school people in planning and decision making for curriculum improvement; it focuses on self-directed learning; it ensures continuous reexamination of educational purposes, curriculum, and teaching processes.

● *Curriculum for Economic & Ethnic Diversity* is the April theme. This issue is based on the assumptions: (a) that the curriculum should be a vehicle for economic mobility; (b) that the positive aspects of any society are really the results of cooperative efforts of its constituents; (c) that respect for diversity will be the result of curricular experience; and (d) that educational institutions are held responsible for all learners' becoming functional in a diverse society.

This theme is appropriate because the realities of these assumptions are not always visible.

● *Rights, Responsibilities, and Curriculum* is the theme for May. Much lip service has been paid to the ideals and goals of curriculum development and implementation. These include the enhancement of independent, critical thinking (decision making), and understanding of one's goals which provide for intrinsic motivation and involvement, including self-assessment. Contributors to this issue will identify and reemphasize the roles, rights, privileges, and responsibilities for curriculum development by various groups and individuals. Throughout the issue there will be an effort to help readers operationalize the concept of shared rights and responsibilities. The ASCD Working Group on Student Rights has assisted in planning the issue.

To Meet These Needs

In addition to the articles in the "theme" part of each issue, other contributions will be included. Topics treated will be as current and urgent as the problems and controversies that boil up at a moment's notice in the classroom, the library, the principal's or superintendent's office. This striking new approach is evidence of our earnest desire to make *Educational Leadership* closer to practice and more keenly aware of the new realities.

While the realities are new, the successful meeting of these realities will have to depend not only upon new knowledge but upon some of the older strengths and insights. These have been gained through our own seeking and through the wisdom of our colleagues of the past as well as the present.

The continuing features of the journal

will help in identifying and working with the new realities. The "News Notes" department so skillfully selected and written by Laurel and Daniel Tanner represents a comprehensive and stimulating roundup of new developments in schooling throughout the land.

"Selected for Review" keeps us in touch with the great wealth of printed resources now available to all who seek in-depth treatments of current and timely developments. Five regional review coordinators assist in the securing of these reviews.

The column "Innovations in Education" speaks of new ways in which school people are adapting to the realities of our times in their own particular local situations.

"Research in Review" is directed to the serious students of education who need information about the works of researchers in certain categories in education. Summaries of research in a specific field have been of continuing value to many readers.

The "Research Supplement," which will appear in four issues of the journal this year, will give reports of research in various areas of curriculum development. These reports will include data and will give specific information concerning the studies described. Contributions to the supplement are refereed by the members of an advisory committee.

As we explore the "new realities" in the coming year, let us consciously work to cultivate a spirit of optimism and adventure. Let us enhance our own willingness to be surprised, to be inspired, to seek new paths. If we will do this we need not fear but rather we will welcome radical change. Self-knowledge and self-confidence will indeed help us to meet and to utilize to good purposes the "new realities."

—ROBERT R. LEEPER, Editor, *Educational Leadership*.

Future ASCD Annual Conferences

1974	March 9-13	Anaheim	Anaheim Convention Center
1975	March 15-19	New Orleans	Rivergate
1976	March 14-17	Miami Beach	Convention Center
1977	March 5-9	Detroit	Cobo Hall

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