

# A New Look at an Old Idea: Core Curriculum

The meaning of core curriculum has shifted with societal pressures and educational trends. It is time again for educators to affirm the American ideal of equal and excellent schooling by defining what is central to the education of all students.

Educators in the United States and Europe are taking a new look at the meaning of core curriculum, asking what shall be taught, to whom, and in what ways. The relevance and ubiquity of these questions were brought into focus at a recent international Seminar on Core Curriculum at Enschede, the Netherlands, in November 1985. The seminar was cosponsored by the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Seminar participants expressed their concern about at least five sets of curriculum issues: (1) whether all students within a nation should experience a common curriculum; (2) whether they should experience a common whole or merely a core of the whole common to all; (3) whether there should be some common ending point where it is deemed unnecessary or undesirable to continue this core; (4) what offerings or experiences should constitute the common curriculum; (5) what characteristics of learners, schools, or society pose difficulties or obstacles to the common pursuit of a core curriculum.

These curriculum issues have become the subjects of hotly debated white papers, green papers, royal

commission reports, and government mandates in virtually every country, province, or state represented at the seminar. Useful though this debate may be, it has at least two unfortunate consequences. First, because debate at this macro level almost necessarily produces or results in a document, curriculum tends to be thought of as a document. Second, because government-produced or-commissioned documents often carry with them official policies and directives, curriculum dialogue tends to be aborted at micro levels in the ecology of schooling. That is, at micro levels dialogue concentrates more on interpretation and implementation than on underlying philosophy and rationale. A kind of withering of the debate occurs among educators. They become, if you will, intellectual eunuchs.

Clearly, with respect to the meaning of *core* as applied to curriculum, an historical hiatus has occurred: the curricular lexicon of educators has been overwhelmed by popular usage of *core* to describe a portion of the curriculum, usually those courses prescribed for all. The fact that *core* can convey somewhat more subtle and complex pedagogical and curricular connotations seems to be unknown or forgotten.

## Intellectual Boundaries of Curriculum Debate

Before turning to the recent history of the concept of core, some further comment on the dialogue about curriculum generally is in order. Once upon a time, before some observers declared the curriculum field to be moribund, being in it and of it was great fun, probably because no one assumed there were limits to the scope of the dialogue. Participants in the debate believed passionately that both they as professionals and the debate made a difference. I wonder if we hold today as passionately to these beliefs. Or, becoming cynical for a moment, I wonder if curriculum workers of that earlier era were romantics, and that we are now more realistic, wisely framing the boundaries of debate by what is left to us after the "political process of fixation of the core" (curriculum), as Jozefzoon and Gorter (1985, p. 15) distinguish it, is over. After all, behavioristic thought in Western societies has directed the attention of curriculum workers (and others) to the pseudo-scientific process of reducing to objectives the goals presumably set by policymakers and has turned their attention away from moral questions regarding the nature, aims, and functions of education. There is

all too little room for questioning the motives and assumptions of those who politically dominate the process of curriculum engineering currently being passed off as curriculum development.<sup>1</sup>

Although I am willing to distinguish between a political process of curricular specification and a development process taking place in schools and classrooms, I am not willing to view the former as impervious to educators. Nor am I willing to view curriculum development as merely a process of derivation and interpretation. My conceptualization of curriculum-making in a democracy is that it functions as a system open at all levels, with the necessary transactions and interpretations flowing from the micro to the macro level as well as the reverse (Goodlad 1979).

My position is not, I believe, romantic. There is today a relatively large corps of well-educated (not necessarily much-schooled) adults for whom education in schools means much more than drill in basic skills and mere preparation for the work force. They want it all (Boyer 1983, Goodlad 1984). "All" includes those processes of inquiry that assure individual growth and critical preparation as a citizen. The rigorous and persistent cultivation of the inquiring mind in schools assures us that, in the long run if not the short, schools will indeed shape the social order. And so, we must do everything in our power to legitimate in the political process of curriculum fixation a core not just of subjects but of modes of inquiry, and to foster such processes in our schools and classrooms. This means, in part, that educators must both contribute to the process of fixation and assume that what is sent down to them is not "fixed."

### **Core Curriculum: From Definition to Decline**

In the United States—and, I assume, many other countries—the words *core curriculum* carried no significance until about a half-century ago. Placed in front of *curriculum*, the word *core* would have been a redundant adjective. The curriculum students encountered in schools was the whole and the core simultaneously. The use of *core*

in the curriculum dialectic coincides chronologically with rapid expansion of secondary school enrollment and therefore, varies from country to country.

In the United States, the secondary enrollments expanded from nearly 7 percent of the age group in 1889 to about 15 percent in 1909. Until near the end of this period of modest expansion, most of the students constituted the source of the cohort for the tertiary or postsecondary period. There was relatively little disagreement over the curriculum offered: the classics, Greek and Latin composition, rhetoric, natural philosophy, French, ancient history, astronomy, and trigonometry. But this curriculum was soon to give way to what the *Boston Globe* defined in 1907 as "the training of ordinary boys and girls to do the ordinary work of life. . . ." (Lukas 1985). In the three decades from 1909 to 1939, secondary enrollment increased so as to constitute 73 percent of that age group. The Great Depression, beginning in 1929, brought large numbers of young people into secondary schools who had not planned to be there and who had no plans for continuing into higher education. The compulsory school-leaving age was moved up to 16 in most states: there were no slots in the workplace for 14-year-olds and few for 16-year-olds. Although the core curriculum of secondary education was remarkably resistant to change at the outset of this enrollment onslaught, it was only a matter of time until it first yielded and then virtually collapsed.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the erosion of the core curriculum—from the entire curriculum to an increasingly smaller nucleus of core courses necessary to meet university admissions requirements, which also were eroding—was precipitated not just by a student body that was increasing in size and diversity but also by a unique combination of ideology and changing circumstances in the workplace. It was difficult to interest students in a curriculum designed to prepare them for where they did not intend to go.

Introduction to a trade, however, on school time and at no cost to the individual, provided youths with a leg

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up while they were biding their time before seeking employment. The progressive education ideas of the time—stemming from educational philosophy and psychology and having to do with learning by doing, intrinsic motivation, felt needs, and the like—fit nicely with the argument that schools must prepare for jobs, citizenship, parenthood, and leisure, not just for more academic learning.<sup>3</sup> The accompanying conversion of grammar and composition to language arts, history and geography to social studies, and the separate sciences to general science, has been both well documented and deplored (Ravitch 1983 and 1985). With these changes in the organization of the traditional subjects came substantial infusion of vocational education, a field whose leaders neatly combined practicality and progressive ideology in their language of justification (and who, incidentally, lobbied in federal and state capitols with astonishing success).

Because of changes in student populations, economic realities, ideology, and entrepreneuring educators acting in coalition with responsive groups in the community, the established array of courses constituting the common curriculum of secondary students had been badly mauled. Although the ideal of a common core of learning experiences still survived, what emerged in concept and recommended practice was a far cry from the traditional core of subjects.

### **Defining the Heart of Curriculum**

The English word *core* is derived from a Latin word meaning *heart*. The core is “... the heart, the thing from which life emanates, the part of the body that spreads life-giving nourishment to the whole body” (Butterweck 1946). To many curriculum workers a core meant something that transcended subject lines to reach the needs of the individual person—an idea fed by many psychological beliefs of the time. To others, however, core meant practice in the democratic principles that were believed to be at the heart of individual freedom—an idea fed by presumably successful revolutionary and philosophical beliefs, especially

with respect to tyranny and the ideal social order.

We see the emergence of these strands of thought in selected excerpts from the curriculum literature from 1938 to 1956.

The emphasis upon the development of a unified program of studies . . . has resulted in the organizing of a common core of experiences drawing content from all the major areas of human living, a curriculum which disregards subject matter lines and which is generally required of all pupils a substantial part of each day (Brown 1938, p. 210).

The core curriculum, then, is made up of those educational experiences which are thought to be important for each citizen in our democracy. Students and teachers do not consider subject matter to be important in itself. It becomes meaningful only as it helps the group to solve the problems which have been selected for study (MacConnell et al. 1939, p. 25).

A core represents the sum total of personal youth problems and the problems of social significance encountered by youth. It exists without relation to subject lines and is organized around problems (Smith 1945, p. 164).

A true core curriculum attacks the problems common to all youth. It is a functional approach to harmonizing the concerns of youth, on the one hand, with the demands of society, on the other, without unduly emphasizing one or neglecting the other (Burnett 1951, p. 97).

The core curriculum may be regarded as those learning experiences which are fundamental for all learners because they are drawn from their common individual and social needs as competent citizens of a democratic community (Kessler 1956, p. 43).

These statements differ so markedly in concept from what is so widely discussed today as *core* that they seem to be of another era. In a very real sense, they are. The first powerful indicator for some people in the United States that there was a shortfall in school quality came during and following World War II, when tests revealed high incidences of illiteracy and near-illiteracy among recruits. However, many people passed off low test scores as characteristic of those with little schooling. Then, a series of highly critical books (four in 1953) brought to public attention the presumed excesses of progressive education. With the launching of Sputnik in 1957, many people in the United States, including many

educators, were ready for something other than the kind of core curriculum many theorists had been recommending. What they probably longed for but did not perceive themselves getting was a return to good, old-fashioned subject matter. Then, what they heard regarding curriculum reform in the 1960s was a return to subject matter, all right, but in new dress—new mathematics, new physics, new biology—fashioned out of John Dewey (on inquiry), Piaget (on developmental stages of learning), and some concepts regarding the structure of the subject disciplines (Bruner 1960). Return to a core of basic subjects taught as subjects was to be postponed—to provide, among other events, grist for the 1980s' educational reform dialogue.

As a nostalgic footnote on the core curriculum movement that died in the 1950s, I quote from a 1961 paper.

Today, in many school systems, the term *core* is used in reference to a block of time. That is, it refers to that period of the curriculum which uses two or three class periods with the same teachers and students for two or more subject areas (Taylor 1961, p. 99).

And so, a concept intended not to corrupt the curriculum but to make it more accessible (closer to the heart) and more useful (for work, play, family life, and citizenship) was reduced to an organizational arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

I have devoted what may appear to be disproportionate attention to a concept of core curriculum that has virtually disappeared from practice and discourse (and which was missing in the papers prepared for the Enschede seminar). My reason for doing so has been to show that the effort to apply progressive theories to the curriculum was not intended to corrupt or weaken it but to render it accessible to increasingly diverse student populations—to humanize it, if you will. Unless we become more knowledgeable about such efforts in our history, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past during a coming era of educational reform likely to be quite unlike the present one. Our general failure to recognize what the future portends is exacerbated by the mountains of com-

mission reports and official documents obscuring what lies ahead—documents that look largely backward for old solutions to both old but seemingly intractable problems and new ones arising out of changing demographic, economic, and technological realities. Disciples of the progressive theorists have left us a troublesome legacy because of their excesses, but the leading theorists, at least, probably had a better grasp of their time in history than today's advocates of "back to the basics" have of theirs.

It is fair to say, I think, that in the current dialogue about school curriculum the words *core* and *common* are used interchangeably, if *core* is employed at all. Yet, if the two are to be used as synonyms, *common* must be enriched by inclusions that go beyond specification of content: connections of the subjects taught with the universe they supposedly represent, preparation through the curriculum to participate broadly in the human conversation, classroom encounters with issues and problems that transcend subject divisions, modes of learning that involve students as participants rather than mere observers, and equal access to the whole for all students. Whatever may have been wrong or excessive in the advocates' rhetoric for core curriculum during the 1940s and 1950s, their arguments are both on target and very much needed in addressing deficiencies in our schools today.

### **An Agenda for Better Schools**

If the findings and conclusions of the several major inquiries into schooling (Boyer 1983, Goodlad 1984, and Sizer 1984) are reasonably valid, then a major agenda emerges for improving schooling in the United States.

*First, there must be a complete rethinking of the domains of human experience and thought to be encountered commonly by children and youth as they progress through school toward effective, satisfying lives as citizens, parents, workers, and thoughtful participants in their culture.* Simply to prescribe so many courses in mathematics, English, and the like for graduation from high school and admission to college is to shirk this

responsibility. The essential domains of human experience and thought embrace much more than the array of subjects conventionally allotted to the curriculum. Indeed, we would be well served by transcending these rubrics to get a holistic picture of the universe into which students should inquire and about which they should become conversant.

To be active participants in their culture, human beings must be aware and have a reasonable understanding of the worldwide systems driving it: physical, biological, social, political, communicative, evaluative, and economic (Boulding 1985). Schools are assigned almost exclusively the unique responsibility for developing in students what Kerr (1987) refers to as the "canons of assessment." Through these, students acquire not just an awareness of these systems but the tools for inquiring into and conversing about them. In effect, they become participants in the great human conversation.

These canons of assessment are embedded in the subject fields, properly organized in the curriculum for human accessibility. Core curriculum theorists and advocates were committed to the task of making them accessible through curriculum planning at the school and classroom level. This required a two-way linking of what was to be taught: to the students' interests and capabilities, on one hand, and to the world's systems, especially democracy, represented in and by the subject fields, on the other. Effective linking often—indeed, usually—necessitated the selection of organizing centers for learning that cut across several domains of subject matter. Figure 1 attempts to represent this linking visually. At the center is the student, reaching out to understand the culture through the curriculum of the school.

This kind of analysis quickly reveals that determining a common core of the same subjects, let alone topics, for all students is a futile pursuit. On the other hand, it reveals the possibilities for assuring that all students have significant encounters in all, not just some, domains and in this sense that they experience a common curriculum. Data from A Study of Schooling

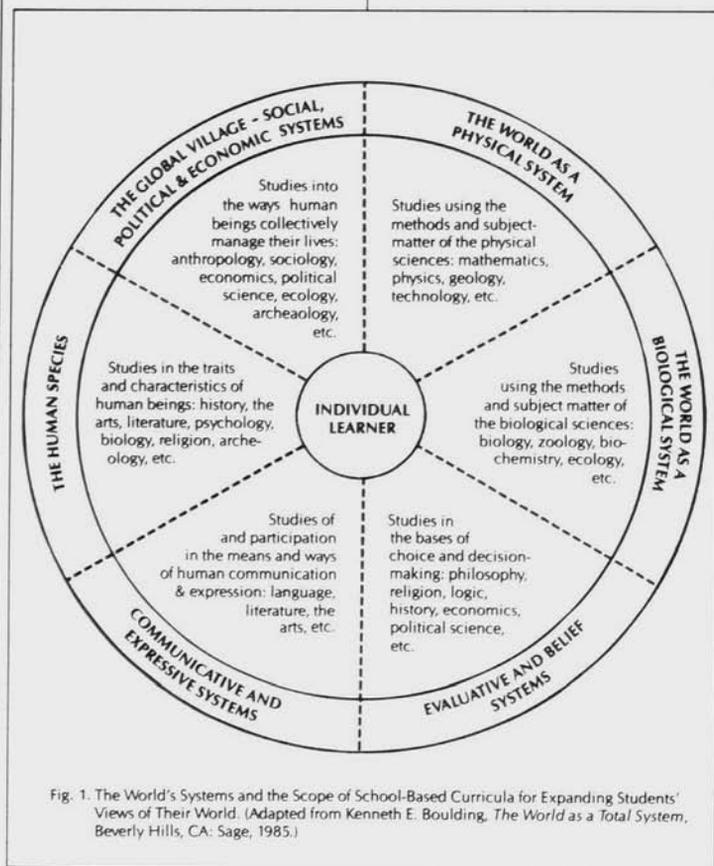


Fig. 1. The World's Systems and the Scope of School-Based Curricula for Expanding Students' Views of Their World. (Adapted from Kenneth E. Boulding, *The World as a Total System*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985.)

(Goodlad 1984) make clear that what secondary school students take as curriculum in school is rarely guided by some kind of overarching conceptual framework (a curriculum document, if you will) that defines the domains and both the comprehensiveness and the balance that each student's curricular encounters should reflect. Interest in this work is increasing among school people, but the serious efforts required are, at best, in an embryonic stage.

*Second, each state must determine with and for its citizens the length of the school program deemed necessary (and feasible) to ensure the tools and understandings required for active, constructive participation in the culture.* In the United States at the turn of the century, the assumption was

that such an education was provided in a common elementary school. Today, the implicit assumption is that attendance through secondary school is required.

There are those who argue that this is an unrealistic assumption, the result in the United States of an excess of hope that cannot be fulfilled in a single comprehensive high school. I would be forced to agree if I could accept the somewhat cynical conclusion that fundamental curricular and pedagogical change in our schools is not possible, and if I believed that the reforms now being legislated in most states in the U.S. are both the ones we need and the only ones feasible. But I don't agree with either of these propositions.

Consequently, I do not believe that our hope is misplaced and that we cannot provide in a newly defined common school the curriculum deemed necessary and, therefore, to be commonly encountered (Goodlad 1985). Further, I believe that the course (to return to the classic meaning of curriculum) can be run by most students in 12 years, beginning at age 4 and concluding at age 16. The challenge is in defining and teaching the proper core.

In my book, *A Place Called School* (1984), where I have deliberately and reluctantly defined the core rubrics in conventional terms, I allow for both encounters beyond a common curriculum and time for some students to stay longer with the core. And then I propose that a minimum of 10 percent to a maximum of 20 percent of the total curriculum be reserved exclusively for the development of individual talent—for all students, not just the academically gifted.

I shall not enter here into a defense of a 4-4-4 structure of schooling, beginning at age 4 and concluding at age 16 (the common minimum leaving age in the United States), or into the full range of arguments for shortening the total time now occupied by the K-12 school system (age 5 to 18). A large chunk of the time saved is to be achieved by excluding during these years vocational training and redefining a vocational education component for all. While I believe in the value of gardening, working with

wood and metal, repairing machines, and a host of other hands-on activities as vehicles for *general* education, I agree with Peters (1966, p. 27) that the end sought is not the vocational preparation of gardeners, or carpenters, or metal workers, or electricians. By cutting out of secondary schools those sequences of vocational preparatory courses now dominating the curriculum of large numbers of students, I would create part of the room required for the comprehensive body of common learnings deemed necessary for all. A completely rethought domain of vocational *education* would be included in this common curriculum.

Three major conditions pertaining to the changing workplace support my argument. First, it simply is no longer feasible for secondary schools to provide training that even reasonably represents the range and complexity of work for which high school graduates might now aspire. Second, studies increasingly are revealing a marked closing of the gap between education deemed necessary to prepare for higher education, on one hand, and the workplace, on the other (National Academy of Sciences 1984). And, third, there is growing evidence to show that students trained in a vocation at an early age very frequently do not enter the arena for which they were prepared. In my scheme of school reconstruction, the years immediately following graduation (at age 16) would be devoted to vocational preparation, community and national service, and a host of other endeavors often recommended for the 16- to 20-year-old group but seldom implemented—largely because the institutions controlling current options do not willingly give up any of their turf.

*Third, there must be an extraordinary broadening in the pedagogical techniques employed to assure productive encounters in the curricular domains.* This may well be the most difficult "must" to implement. Our data showed the steady drop in pedagogical variety as students progressed upward through the grades—from an average of five modes in the primary years to only two in the secondary grades. The steady diet of lecturing, telling, and

questioning the whole class, monitoring seatwork, and administering quizzes took up some 88 percent of all instructional time (just over 70 percent of all class time) in the high school classes we studied (Sirotnik 1983). It takes a considerable stretch of the imagination to conclude that some students, because of or in spite of this type of instruction, will get even a little practice with all the modes of learning that might reasonably be defined as part of the common, essential core referred to earlier.

Teachers teach the way they were taught, it appears, rather faithfully imitating the models they observed in their own teachers over many years of schooling—models that must serve teachers rather well or they would abandon them. Teacher education programs apparently are not sufficiently deep and deviant to cause teachers to transcend the conventional wisdom. We will not get better teachers, I fear, until we have a sufficient number of exemplary sites for all to observe and experience, firsthand and hands-on, during their preparation programs. This condition calls for the kind of close working relationships between schools and universities that may exist in some countries but is rare in the United States. Indeed, the major graduate schools of education often regard the small teacher education programs they offer as unwanted orphans. Studying teachers is regarded as more prestigious than educating them (Judge 1982).

It appears that the most immediately practical and practicable avenues for enlarging teachers' repertoire of pedagogical skills lie at the school and classroom levels. Policy directives from the macro level, however, can specify that a range of students' learning modes are to be cultivated, promote the expectation that a correspondingly comprehensive array of pedagogical procedures will be employed, and assure the financial resources necessary to a nation's investment in effective schooling.

*Fourth, the conditions and circumstances of schooling must assure equal access to the common curriculum and whatever options are deemed desirable, and equity in regard to the efforts made by each school to assure*

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*individual progress.* Our data show extraordinary inequities regarding both availability of the curricular domains and the distribution of opportunities to learn in schools. I shall pass over those that result simply from the apparent differences in the ability of schools to conduct their business efficiently in order to concentrate on those practices that appear clearly to be based on inappropriate educational assumptions, at best, or prejudicial biases, at worst.

There is in the culture of this and other countries the belief that people fall naturally into one of two categories—those who can learn and should work with their heads, and those who can learn and should work with their hands. Schools generally favor those thought to be in the former category and offer little encouragement and few rewards to the latter who, at the intermediate and upper ends of schooling, frequently find themselves in programs deliberately designed to prepare them for vocations not considered to require much academic ability. Often, these are pushout programs that get rid of “hands-oriented” students, whose early departure from school enhances a school’s average test scores. Or, in many countries, they are guided early into vocational schools that, together with academic schools, create separate streams of students heading for quite different careers. Our data show that a disproportionate number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and who, in turn, are disproportionately from racial minorities, are enrolled in that part of the curriculum designed to prepare for specific jobs.

A more subtle differentiation of opportunities to encounter a common body of desired learnings exists in the academic offerings of the schools we studied. In most junior and senior high schools, subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and social studies were divided into three tracks of students—high, medium, and low. Those of us who advocated provisions for individual differences during the 1960s had in mind pedagogical and organizational arrangements such as provision for more time, differing grouping patterns, varied teaching procedures, and the like. We did not

consider the possibility that some educators would take advantage of the concept of individualized instruction by differentiating the content of the curriculum and restricting for some students opportunities to learn.

What we found in our studies were gross track-to-track differences in the content offered, the enthusiasm of teachers, the extent to which teachers helped students to learn, the ambience of the classroom, and teachers’ expectations, all findings favoring the upper tracks (Oakes 1985). Once again, we found that students from low-income families, disproportionately minority students in the school population, were overrepresented in the lower tracks.

Given the extraordinary problems of dealing with individual differences in comprehensive secondary schools, governmental efforts to promote a

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common curriculum equally accessible to all students are likely often to be thwarted at school and classroom levels. The more we exhort rhetorically the ideal of a common curriculum for all students up to the time of entry into the work force and autonomous functioning as citizens and parents, the more we tempt educators to use arrangements such as tracking "to organize away" the difficult problems of dealing with student variability. It is exceedingly difficult to justify the educational practices accompanying tracking that we found to be so prejudicial to the less academically able students—many of whom appear to have been denied, early in school, opportunities to learn by and be rewarded for a more hands-on and less abstract orientation to learning.

Defining a core curriculum of models and domains to be encountered commonly by all students is not easy. But implementing it creatively, with equality and equity for all students, is as demanding a human task as can be imagined.

### **Educational Ethics and Excellence**

I close with a few brief comments on excellence, the most popular and overused educational catchword of our time. It is not possible, some people believe, to have a universal core curriculum through the secondary school and excellence, too (Clark 1985a, b). Clearly, the larger the core and the more it is extended upward in a common school, the greater the misgivings regarding excellence, and the greater the fear that this core will be watered down for all.

Husén (1983) concludes that it is possible to have universal secondary schooling and excellence, but the cost in economic terms is high. The cost of restricting secondary education and graduating only a small number of students deemed excellent also is high, he points out. He warns that the latter restriction practiced widely will increase the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," creating a great worldwide underbelly of poorly educated, underemployed people.

But confining the dialogue about quality to the merits of universal

versus selective schooling sidesteps the issues with which I began: those of what kind of core curriculum is necessary for all students, how much of the whole it is to constitute, and for how long it is to be commonly extended. Hodgkinson (1982), in arguing the merits of seeking universal secondary schooling and excellence simultaneously, points out that 75 percent of the age group in the United States graduates from high school, and that academic performance of the top 5 percent of this cohort compares favorably with that of top students in countries with comparatively low enrollments.

What he does not mention, however, is that there are gross differences in the curriculums encountered by students in the high school grades. Endeavoring to push more toward an academic curriculum defined as basic courses—the current direction of state reform enactments in the United States—could result in pushing more students out of school, increasing practices such as tracking in order to water down the curriculum for some, or both. And, to their dismay, those in the lower tracks who succeed in entering college soon learn that they were short-changed in access to knowledge while in high school.

Increasingly, the expectations of schooling in most countries are broad and call for much more than academic outcomes. Nearly all of the papers prepared for the Enschede seminar referred to academic, citizenship, vocational, and personal goals for schools and pointed to the need for a core curriculum to assure common learnings in these areas. Running through them, it appears, was the assumption that we cannot afford for our future adult citizens to have been branched early into two kinds of education, whether in common or separate schools—a fear that was expressed very early in the expansion of secondary education in the United States (Counts 1922).

To define a core curriculum as constituting  $x$  number of courses in mathematics and  $y$  number of courses in the native tongue is to sidestep and dangerously postpone the curricular and pedagogical issues that we must address. Among the most challenging

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of these, at the very heart of our professional responsibility, is how to assure for all of our primary and secondary students common encounters with the most significant domains of human experience. The ideal of common outcomes is chimeric, but the conditions of equal opportunity are necessary and obtainable. □

1. Decades ago, W. W. Charters developed a concept and accompanying technique of curriculum engineering designed to be useful for implementing the ideals of any prevailing political or governmental ideology. See W. W. Charters, *Curriculum Construction* (New York: Macmillan, 1924).

2. As late as the second half of the 1950s, there were high schools throughout the U.S. offering little more than a college preparatory curriculum to a student body from which as few as 5 percent would go on to higher education.

3. I am in substantial agreement with Kliebard regarding his comment that the ideas attributed to progressive education contained much that was vacuous and contradictory. (See Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1983-1958* [Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986], xi.) Nonetheless, leading thinkers in the movement, such as William H. Kilpatrick, and especially a few innovators in laboratory schools across the nation, expounded on and were identified with a view of education that went far beyond passive, rote learning in a few academic subjects.

4. One must raise the question as to the degree the foregoing conceptions of core curriculum were translated into school and classroom practices. No reliable data appear to be available. At a conference of professors of curriculum in the late 1950s, this question was asked of Nelson Bossing, an ardent advocate and chronicler of this core curriculum movement. He responded that only junior high schools had implemented anything close to the full array of key concepts for at least a significant part of the curriculum and that, at the movement's peak, perhaps 10 percent of the junior high schools in the country met these criteria. It is fair to say, however, that large numbers of secondary school educators (both junior and senior high) were exposed to and influenced by

the progressive ideas on which these core curriculum practices were based.

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