

# WE TAUGHT WITHOUT COURSES OF STUDY

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The strong desire of the children to resume their schooling immediately after the liberation was the overpowering motive that urged government officials, parents, and teachers to request authority to reopen old schools or organize new ones even if they had to start with nothing. Courageously they started to repair school buildings that were repairable or to construct new ones to take the place of those buildings of which nothing but charred skeletons were left as gaunt reminder of what the war did to them. Willingly the officials and parents provided the schools with all conceivable kinds of seats, blackboards, and other school equipment.

When the classes were organized, however, we teachers found ourselves facing a problem to which we had not previously given serious consideration—the lack, if not the total absence, of textbooks, courses of study, and other instructional materials. Having been used too much to dependence on the finished courses of study before the war, many of us felt helpless without some forms of teaching guides. While we could appeal to the officials and parents for the physical needs of the schools, we could not turn to them for instructional aids. We could direct our cry only to higher school authorities. Unfortunately the war was not discriminating in its choice of victims of destruction so that even the division offices and the General Office were almost stripped of materials for instruction.

Immediate response to our distress cry for courses of study was impossible. But classes must go on, teaching must take place. Inevitably we had to

answer our own cry. Somehow, somewhere we found old courses, had them copied and distributed especially to the inexperienced and untrained who admitted they could not be expected to show better than to be groping in the dark. Where we could find no old courses those of us who have spent the best years of our lives in the teaching service pooled our resources together and with the guidance of our principals, supervisors, and superintendents drafted tentative objectives and outlines of the subjects.

We have discovered that the absence of courses of study was not after all a serious handicap. We who knew that we should adapt teaching materials and teaching procedures to the needs and interests of the pupils and that we should place greater emphasis on the whole development of the child than on the mastery of the subject matter have found that even if we had the courses we could not make use of them to the extent that we could before the war. A first-year teacher of composition could not teach the units prescribed because he was facing a class composed of those who had not been to school since January, 1942 or prior, those who passed a year or two under the Japanese-occupation schools which did not teach English composition, and probably some who legitimately did not belong to the first-year class. What background could such students show that they were ready for the units prescribed for the first year? Not even a fair recognition of nouns, pronouns, and verbs. A general mathematics teacher found it necessary to take his students back to Grade V arithmetic.

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The war has revolutionized ways of life, ideas and concepts. Students have changed. Parents have changed. Environmental influences have changed. Concepts have changed—concepts about nationalism and internationalism, about morality, about psychology, even about religion. There is a change of concept about our perennial language question, with the local dialects asserting themselves and seeking their legitimate places in the curriculum. With these changes objectives must change. The old courses would be good only as far as contents might remain unchanged but with objectives modified. We felt that we in the field are well qualified to modify objectives.

What did we do in the absence of textbooks? We had to find means of imparting worthwhile and usable contents of old textbooks. We discovered plenty of things to teach not found in old textbooks. We could get them out of the students themselves. We could see them in their eyes, in their faces, in their hearts, in their everyday acts; we could find them in the trees and plants, in the brooks; we could gather them in the streets, in the homes, in the various fields of community life. Even if we had sufficient copies of such textbooks as **Modern Times and the Living Past** and **General Science for Philippine Schools** how profitably could the students make use of them? Who is the teacher of either of these subjects who has not complained that these books are now too difficult for the first-year students, students who are products of the six-year elementary course, of automatic promotion from Grade VI completed up to December, 1941, and of half-baked instruction in the first days of the post-liberation schools?

This is the third post-war school year. Our cry for courses of study has not yet been satisfied. To a signif-

icant degree it is better that this cry was not satisfied right away. In some way we have profited by the absence of the courses. Our daily contacts with the pupils, our awakening toward our own chance to see the suitability of the teaching materials and teaching procedures to the needs of the pupils, our closeness to the homes, our direct participation in the varied activities of the community have shown us that we have much to contribute to the preparation of the courses of study. Henceforth we shall know when to deviate from the official courses of study as changes in the needs of the school population and the community warrant. In the past we had looked upon such deviation as sacrilegious. Had we been spoon-fed with courses right when the schools were reopened after the liberation, with the probable exception of those whose practical common sense, initiative, and resourcefulness would not permit themselves to adjust the pupils to the courses, most of us would have, in their natural tendency to follow the line of least resistance and to be complacent to authoritarian policy, would have placed themselves in total dependence on the courses regardless of conditions. I venture to say that the havoc which the war did to the courses of study has made the teachers more dependent upon themselves and has prepared them for greater usefulness to the General Office in the preparation of the courses of study and in the application, interpretation, and implementation of the courses. If it happens again—although we hope that will never happen—that destructive forces would cause the dearth of courses of study, the teachers will no longer find themselves helpless but will welcome the opportunity to make use of their creative abilities in providing themselves with what to teach.

# Principles of Democratic School Administration and Supervision

1. Educational facilities should be made available to as large a number of young people as possible, who shall imbibe the ideals and learn to practice the ways of democracy.

2. The personnel of the school system should have the widest opportunity possible to take part in the formulation of policies of school administration.

3. Policies of school administration should reflect the best ideals, traditions and practices of the community that the school system serves.

4. The personnel of the school system should be given the opportunity to advance, compatible with the capacities of each individual.

5. It is the function of democratic school administration to try to reach the ideal of equality of educational opportunity by erasing the barriers, social or economic, which deny the benefits of education to a large number of young people.

6. School administration should provide for an effective instructional program which groups young people according to ability so that each group may be served adequately with such techniques and materials of instruction as will enable them to develop to their fullest capacities.

7. A definite trend in school organization and curriculum building emphasizes participation by the learner in meaningful experiences rather than the

accumulation of knowledge as the main objective of education.

8. The unifying and the differentiating principles should be utilized in working out any type of school program.

9. The relation of the school service to the services of other social agencies should be carefully considered with a view to coordinating all efforts to make education functional and effectively influence the life of the community.

10. The schools must be free from politics. The democratic form of government stands or falls depending upon the way the people act with respect to public affairs and how they regard their responsibilities as citizens. "The only sound basis upon which to maintain an intelligent citizenry is through education. If the schools are subject to partisan control, there is no assurance that a fair consideration of common social and governmental problems will be presented to children and to youth as an important part of their education. If schools become the agency through which any particular propaganda advocated by any section of the population is promulgated, then democracy is doomed."

11. School administration should work toward an independent fiscal control over the schools.

12. Uniformity of practice within a school system or a single school is neither necessary nor desirable.