

HOW CHANGE?

(Democratic Supervision)

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As I have gone about and met with different groups of teachers, I find rather startlingly, teachers and administrators speaking of overall changes in curriculum as though the way we teach now is altogether wrong and we must change to an entirely different way. To this end certain "experimental classes" are set up and the other classes remain as "control." We are trying presumably to find out which is a better way. Better way in terms of WHAT? A better way of learning, reading, writing, and arithmetic and English? If so I doubt very much that we will get our answer. The most we will be able to say is, that in certain classes where certain teachers are to be found certain pupils do better than certain pupils in other classes and this we can also say of experimental and non-experimental classes.

When teachers ask me, "shall we integrate all subjects?" "Shall we integrate all the time or can we sometimes use formal teaching?" "Is it not possible that the children will only play and not learn anything if we 'integrate' always," it begins to sound as tho' we were talking about some mysterious hocus pocus that we use or do not use according to the mood we are in or the children are in. Either the newer ways of teaching are sounder than the old or they are not.

What our own point of view is will largely be determined by what we know of the learners and the

learning process and the ultimate ends desired. When once we have satisfied ourselves on this point we will change our ways to the extent we need, to be in harmony with what we believe and hope. This is not to be managed as one would the turning on and off of an electric light switch. It is a matter of growth and development. We can speed up the process in many ways but we can not successfully force life processes without coming to disaster.

We tell teachers that if they will make an attempt to understand the needs of the child and apply child growth and development principles in the development of the curriculum they will do a better job of teaching. We need also to remember that administrators, supervisors and principals no less are called upon to understand the needs of teachers and to consider the growth and developmental patterns of the teachers. Perhaps we can consider some of the techniques which seem to have worked with success among groups that have successfully met this need for changes.

First, is the need to work out with one's staff a philosophy of education so that there may be some unity in what we do. The teacher is the center of any program of curriculum change and therefore we are concerned about the growth of those particular teachers with whom we work. Whether we change or not depends

largely upon what we understand and what we believe of the educative process and what it is intended to do.

Fundamentally then let us ask these questions?

1. What are we educating for?
2. Why do we believe that these are the ends and purposes of education?
3. What materials and facilities do we possess that will enable us to carry out these goals and purposes?

Answers to questions like these, simple as they are, can not be had in a day or a month or a year. They indicate a need for persistent study and effort, because with every change in our society will come imperative need for change in the educative experiences of the child.

The present cultural upheaval presently making itself felt in the Philippines calls for changes in our ways of dealing with young citizens. The educator is challenged to see the function of the school not only as a means of passing on the cultural inheritance but as a directive force for cultural change.

For instance, we have a constitutional directive that all schools shall aim to develop moral character, personal discipline, vocational efficiency, civic conscience and shall teach the duties of citizenship. Without going into any detail here it is not difficult to evaluate our work in terms of these objectives. Self-discipline can never be achieved by teacher directed activity or thru external controls. Self-discipline indicates the internalizing of control and this the child can only learn as he sets goals that are important to **him**, so much so that he makes **choice** in the direc-

tion of what he is trying to achieve and therefore discipline himself in the direction of these ends. A child does not discipline himself just for the fun of it, or for the pain of it. He does not negate life and life experiences. He meets it and utilizes the experiences which best serves his particular need.

Vocational efficiency is not just a matter of raising more pigs, chickens and vegetables, it is a matter of attitudes and values that create enjoyment and pride in the work of one's hands, in the creation of material goods and spiritual satisfactions. Civic conscience implies not only obedience to law but the concern and responsibility as a member of society for the well being of others. We can scarcely say that our schools have been successful in developing these and like attitudes and values when on every side we find contrary evidence.

For hundreds of years we have been at the mercy of waves of cultural influences which brought certain benefits but which also have produced conflict, have from time to time aided and abetted one group of the population above others, meant the exploitation of human and natural resources for the benefit of others, have developed a personality in the masses which has been characterized by submissiveness to authoritarian dictates and have kept in a backward state large numbers of the population while creating the "good life" for a limited few.

With the rise of nationalism and the concepts of democratic theories many of the old ways have been questioned. Youth has been educated to the ideas of democracy without being given an opportunity to taste of its substance and so we

find today an eager verbalization which apparently satisfies some of our leaders both in the field of politics and education but which alarms others among us who have faith in the potentials of our human resources.

That many question the efficacy of our present ways of doing things can be seen in the political, economic, social and educational upheaval, yes and spiritual upheaval all around us.

The challenge of the present problems is which will win out—those who seek to build by revolutionary methods or those who seek to build by an evolutionary process of change and adaptation.

To get teachers to think boldly and fearlessly, to build confidence in themselves and their ability to guide youngsters to think for themselves and yet be contributing members of their group is not as simple as it sounds. If more than lip service is to be paid to the democratic processes in self fulfillment the teacher must understand the background in which the principles have been developed and the implications for school practice.

Reading, discussion, outside speakers, studies of children, studies of community resources, actual experiences similar to those they will plan for children, demonstration lessons, observations, visual aids, field trips, etc. all will help the teachers even as in the learning of the children. "Talking at" the teachers is no more effective than talking at the children. The experiences to be planned for teachers must also meet their needs, purposes, interests.

Lee and Lee in the *Child and His Curriculum* published by Appleton Century have listed the fol-

lowing as guide for curriculum change:

1. The curriculum is considered to be the actual experiences of each pupil which are affected by the school.

2. Curriculum development is conceived as a process of the improvement of the teachers in the guidance of pupil experiences.

3. Curriculum development is a continuous process carried on within each school system.

4. Existing subjects do not necessarily constitute the best organization of pupil experiences.

5. Careful consideration should be given to the utilization of the guiding principles for the selection and guidance of pupil experiences.

6. Curriculum development is a democratic process utilizing the services of pupils, teachers, parents, community and all outside educational agencies.

7. The teacher is responsible within broad units for the guidance of pupil experiences. This means that the teacher must be encouraged and be free to experiment.

8. A course of study is only one means to be utilized for the improvement of teachers in the guidance of pupil experiences.

9. The course of study should be rich in suggestions of experiences methods and materials. It should not be prescriptive.

One of the reasons why curriculum change has been so slow is the fear that the children will not learn as fast as with the older traditional methods. Wrihstone's studies in the U.S. disproved this claim. Progressive practices not

only result in faster progress toward attaining the wider overall objectives considered important in democratic education but also better learning of the fundamental skills. Progressive practices here refer to changes which affect pupil behavior in terms of greater happiness and increased social responsibility.

One of the biggest hurdles to be overcome is **not the resistance of the teacher to change, but the traditional relationship between administrator and supervisor and the classroom teacher.** While I find an encouraging readiness for change, everywhere I have gone, I find the most often heard complaint to be the difficulties attendant on this relationship as it has existed in the traditional school.

It is of course another of those hangovers of a decadent culture pattern which we should by now have outgrown, but feudal patterns of horizontal relationships still exist everywhere. Much depends on what we now do about it whether or not we are successful in bringing about the growth of teachers we know is needed.

And the way of working is most of all important. So far, our line and staff organization has meant that the supervisor and principal work for the Bureau, the teacher works for the Supervisor and principal and the children work for the teacher and the children among themselves have their own hierarchies. Each administrator under this system is a boss. Judgements are made, orders issued from top down. This process breeds fear, suspicion, often jealousy, false ambition, conflict and passive con-

formity. Schools thus controlled are neat, overly clean, quiet, and as someone has put it "dull as dish-water."

A good administrator seeing the needs of teachers finds his job one of meeting these. The teacher is trying to develop a unit of work, the administrator can help with the supply of necessary materials, books, and supplies so that the teacher can save best energies for the utilization of these supplies in the classroom. He is on the look out for new materials and possible experiences which may be enriching to the children. Above all the administrator in the new school shows and expresses confidence in the teacher and enjoys the children with her. He does not arbitrarily ask children to "move away," to "get out," or in any way show a rejecting attitude toward them. When entering the room the administrator is not a "snooper" or an inspector, he becomes one of the group and makes a worth-while contribution whenever this is possible in keeping with the plans and discussion of one group. In short he renders, **the encouragement and the services** teachers need in order that they may enjoy better living with their children.

Schools exist for children, not children for the school. The worth of a school can be seen in the children. Where children are happy, glad to be in school, cooperative, eager to share and contribute, one can be sure that teachers feel the same way and by the same token so do administrators and supervisors. The interactive process essential to democratic living is fully utilized.