



CLASSROOMS FOR DEMOCRACY

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In the hills of Bataan, as in many other provinces, a running battle is being waged between two ideologies. In the classrooms of Bataan, as in many other school divisions, a battle is being fought. The darker ideas use guerrilla tactics—they hide in foxholes and lie in ambush, while the brighter ideas are in uniform, fight in the open, have devices and techniques back of them. The ultimate objective is to capture the hearts of the youngsters who are making up their minds whether to heed the call of some of their elder friends who are already in the hills or remain in the lowlands and follow the ways of peace.

Our classroom techniques for the last fifty years have been based on a highly competitive system of motivation and a highly autocratic system of classroom management. On one side is the teacher, ferule in hand, eyes keen to detect misdemeanor or even restlessness, tongue ready to lash insult at offenders, her whole person itself being an unintentional and a well-meaning insult to democracy. On the other hand are the children, a brow beaten group timid, regimented, looking up to authority for decision, relying on fiat rather than group conference and decision, a veritable symbol of colonials, imbued with the mental-

ity and attitude of serfs. This has been the unrelieved situation for fifty years, during a period which was supposed to be devoted to the propagation among a nation of colonials the dignified ways of democracy. No wonder, after fifty years of supreme but misguided effort, we have a running battle in the hills in which democracy itself is at stake.

Democracy never really had a chance to demonstrate itself in practical ways in classrooms supposedly serving democracy. We never gave more than lip-service to democracy in our supposedly democratic classrooms.

In the Philippine Normal College Training Department, a few critics and student teachers are trying an idea—the integrated procedure. I was there a few months ago with my supervisors and some classroom teachers in order to see how this idea works out in actual practice. The idea was not perfectly executed, and in fact it flopped in some classrooms where the teacher had no grasp of the basic idea or else was utterly incapable of this type of pupil guidance. In fact, some of my own teachers, who were visiting at the time, were pained by the noise and apparent lack of teacher control over the classroom situation. They could not at the time appre-

ciate the difference between voluntary, unavoidable and sometimes necessary noise in these classrooms where freedom of activity reigned, and the conventional teacher-dominated classroom where silence is golden and noise of whatever kind, source or motive is a curse.

Yet in these classrooms in the Philippine Normal College and in some in Iloilo, Bulacan, Bataan and a few other places an idea is being patiently developed — the idea of integration and its implementation and application of the democratic way of life.

For, first this idea wars against autocratic control. It seeks to liberate classrooms from teacher-dominated procedures, from the regimentation imposed by printed courses of study and basic textbooks. The teacher becomes a guide and a catalizer. The children learn through experience. They decide what to do, discuss how they are to do it, elect their leaders, work according to group plans, and evaluate their activities according to their original objectives. Classroom activity is no longer confined to question-and-answer and competitive procedures. Cooperation and helpfulness are developed instead of selfish individualism and aggressive competitiveness.

In this classroom the child is not treated as a well-timed absorber of subject-compartmented facts. He is a whole person, a complete personality, with all his faculties and abilities being challenged and being used to solve the problems of the whole person and the complete citizen. The child is treated as a whole, not merely as an intellect trying to memorize or to imagine, nor as an individual

alone and aggressive against the world, but as a configuration of well-adjusted abilities and attitudes and as a cooperating member of a group.

This sounds abstract and difficult, but it is a basic concept which the teacher should grasp. It is a departure from the subject-centered classroom activities of the past; it is an acceptance of the child as the center of all interest and attention; the core of the curriculum, the very heart of method and procedure. Evaluation itself can not be by pencil-and-paper tests, for evaluation tries to weigh the intangibles of personal transformation and personal achievement.

Easiest periods to fuse and integrate are language and the social studies. In fact, many integrated periods have been confined to the combination of language and the social studies. The resulting period is a period of free activity where children work together in the solution of group problems and the prosecution of group projects, while using language skills in natural real-life situations. The result of such fusion is greatly-expanded opportunities for the use of language, especially oral language, and the practice of habits and skills of group work so essential in the social studies.

The following ideas are basic and should be the starting point of every teacher:

1. That the main objective of learning in the social studies is not in the acquisition of facts but the improvement of the social reactions of the individual so that he may become a better-integrated human being and a better and more active member

of his family and his community.

2. That the democratic ways of life, which is one of the important objectives not only of the social studies but of the entire school life of the child, can hardly be attained through the techniques of the teacher-dominated classroom, where dictatorship at its worst operates. The best way to learn democracy is to practice democracy, and what more democratic way is there than to give the pupils a chance to assert themselves in determining what they are to do and how they are to achieve such chosen objective? The teacher is to be considered weak, even recreant to her duty who can not make use of pupils' genuine interests by directing them toward worthwhile goals.

3. That usual procedures of lesson hearing or "recitation" are not always effective, especially in social studies and language lessons, where the main aim is to train correct habits and attitudes through active participation and actual experiencing.

4. That the time-honored goals of subject matter learning are no longer to be accorded as much honor and emphasis as the guidance of the individual toward a better-integrated personality and more effective practical group membership, that subject matter is to be subordinated to the development of character and personality, of useful habits and skills and worthy attitudes rather than the memorization of facts as found in textbooks.

5. That the individual and his personality should be respected and dignified, and that the best way to do this is to give the individual an opportunity to find a comfortable and well-appreciated place in the group to which he belongs.

6. That teachers are now to be given, under existing policies of the Bureau of Public Schools, much freedom to adapt the curriculum as well as teaching techniques to the needs of education in the locality.

7. That in the selection of instructional experiences, actual conditions and resources in the community as revealed in community surveys, as well as actual interests and needs of pupils, should be taken into consideration.

The Director of Public Schools has enunciated a policy of encouraging local initiative in adapting the curriculum to local needs and conditions. (B.P.S. Memorandum No. 51, s. 1951) Such a policy can best be implemented through the release of initiative and the challenge to ability in the integrated classroom. Here, the teacher does not only feel free to work out her own units but is actually compelled to think out new plans and new ways. The integrated procedure, even in what a teacher in Orion calls "semi-integration" helps the teacher to break away from the traditional "recitation."

The teacher should learn long-range planning of units of work. She should learn to continue relying on courses of study for guidance in the selection of objectives, but she should learn to supplement such materials with her own knowledge of her own pupils, their in-

terests, their needs. She should study standard reference books and keep up with the latest knowledge pertinent to her work, but she should also study the community in which she and her pupils live, for even more important than second-hand book learning is first-hand knowledge of our immediate environment. She should realize at long last that materials of instructions are not necessarily printed in books—that they may be periodicals, may be documents, may be inscriptions in front of the church, may be an old man who can fish or an old woman who can tell stories of the “first times,” or a field which can be visited, or a **purok** which can be surveyed, or clouds up in the sky which can be surveyed.

The teacher should know the activities that little children delight of engage in. She should know how to guide children through these activities so that by means of group work, she may harness every moment of child activity to serve her educational ends — the acquisition and integration of functional knowledge and the development of healthy and efficient bodies as well as socially valuable and personally wholesome habits and attitudes.

The teacher should be clear on all these and then she should be able to put all of them together into a workable unit of activity which, through skillful initiation, will be wholeheartedly accepted by her pupils and adopted as their very own.

All these need initiative, resourcefulness, infinite capacity for taking pains even boundless understanding of the ways of childhood.

The integration of social studies and language or National Language is easy to work out and in fact has been successfully tried in many classrooms. In a series of demonstration lessons held in Pilar and Balanga on February 24, 1951, various aspects of integrated activities were shown by nine teachers who had worked out their long-range plans and had been successfully carrying them out for some time. In a series of discussions held after the demonstration lessons on February 24, more than three hundred teachers showed intelligent understanding of integration of this limited type. A great number of these teachers started integrated activities, even only as a trial, late in February and early March. If they failed, the cause may be attributed to lack of intelligence or capacity, rather than to lack of background or supervisory help.

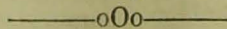
In Bataan, the first effort at greater integration of learning was taught in most districts in connection with Christmas. District supervisors had seen how the period of integration is conducted in the Philippine Normal College. A conference of supervisors was devoted in part to a discussion of the techniques of integration, and the visit at the Philippine Normal College from November 27-29, 1950 clarified many things hitherto theoretical or vague to the supervisors. Two conferences of the supervisors held in the college itself and the showing of educational films by the Training Department gave further clarification to the activity program and the integrated period.

Now, in every district, a selected teacher or two, who receive special supervisory attention, have

started an integration period. The plan is to put language, social studies, and National Language close together so that the teacher may feel free to treat all three as an integration period whenever she feels that doing so would be advantageous, and to treat them as separate subjects whenever she feels that there is a need for more graduated and systematic development of skills. The allowance for free choice on the part of the teacher whether or not to "do" integration gives her sense of freedom and develops self-confidence. Division bulletins and memorandums were issued in the early part of February entitled "Enriching the Curriculum Through Community Surveys," "Enriching the Curriculum Through Integrated Activities," "Long-range Planning of Integrated Activities," "Integrated Activities for Grade I," etc. Sample unit plans for all grades have been issued. These materials were a great help to teachers who did not have sufficient background to enable them to work out units of their own at first. As this is being written, newer classroom practices are gradually being introduced through laboratory classrooms all over the Division, and it is hoped that in due time the other teachers may take up the idea and possibly improve on what the original "model" teachers have introduced.

The Director of Public Schools, in an address delivered at the Arellano University, has aptly observed that the battle for democracy is being fought not only in the hills of Central Luzon; even more so it is being fought in the frontier classrooms where potential dissidents too young to take to the hills, still attend school and resist the call of their older friends already leading the nomadic lives of the hunted. In a year or so, the young boys will be old enough and their hearts will have listened to the twisted arguments and the appeal to greed for divided wealth, and the battle would have been over as far as they are concerned.

But now there is still time. In the autocratic classrooms, the potential dissidents are being taught more resentment against domination. In the new classrooms, where democracy reigns in the choice of activities and leaderships, where majority rule is respected, where freedom of speech is welcome, where evaluation and self-criticism is a privilege taken for granted — perhaps in such classrooms the young men can not hear the siren-call from the hills and heed the call for a more prosaic but certainly more decent existence among everyday people and their everyday problems of eking out a living among their fellows and leading more useful and more peaceful lives.



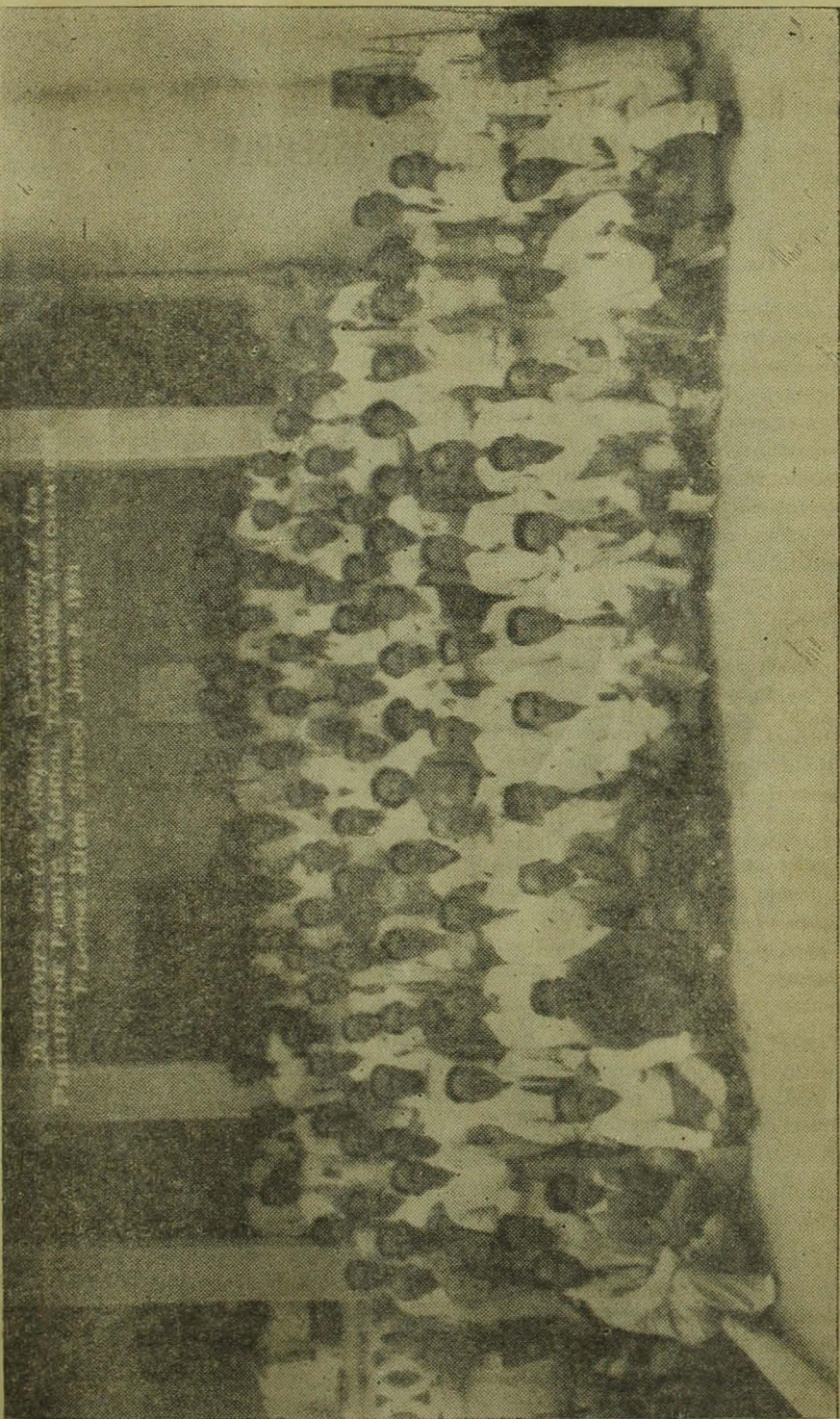
The Teachers' . . .

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sumed the responsibility of social reconstruction.

We shall stand together and forge ahead together in this program. We count on the teachers in pushing it through with greater

vigor and wisdom. With our vision clear and our sights raised, we hope to achieve our national ideal, the improvement of our rural communities through education. In this we cannot afford to fail.



DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES, CAMP MARYLAND, CAMP CAROLINE, AND CAMP
PETERSBURG, DURING THE CIVIL WAR. PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES M. SMITH, 1864.