

THE TWENTY-SIXTH YEARBOOK

OF THE
NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY
OF EDUCATION
THE FOUNDATIONS AND TECHNIQUE OF
CURRICULUM-CONSTRUCTION

Prepared by the Society's Committee Under the Direction of
HAROLD RUGG

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PART I CURRICULUM-MAKING; PAST AND PRESENT

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THIS YEARBOOK WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE DALLAS MEETING OF THE
NATIONAL SOCIETY, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, AND TUESDAY,
MARCH 1, 1927, 8:00 P.M.

PUBLIC SCHOOL PUBLISHING COMPANY
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS
1926

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This Yearbook is in several respects among the most ambitious undertakings of the Society. The idea of attacking the problem of the curriculum in a fundamental way—not trying to determine what the content of the curriculum should be, but trying to determine how that content should be selected and assembled—was broached by Dr. Harold Rugg, the chairman of the Society's Committee responsible for this Twenty-Sixth Yearbook, more than two years ago; indeed, the original intent had been to finish the Yearbook in the fall of 1924. The proposal met with ready reception in view of the current widespread interest in the problem of the curriculum. It was felt that the National Society for the Study of Education could perform a real service to the movement for curriculum-revision by directing its contribution to this preliminary problem of method, and particularly by making a special effort to bring together, and so far as possible to unify or to reconcile, the varying and often seemingly divergent or even antagonistic philosophies of the curriculum that were being espoused by leading authorities or by their adherents in this country.

This ambition could be realized only by means of numerous conferences for the free interchange of views. Accordingly, the Directors voted this Committee the (for us) unusually large appropriation of \$2,500. It is hoped that this subsidizing of the Twenty-Sixth Yearbook will be amply justified in the minds of the Society's members when they scan the pages that follow, especially the formulation, in Part II, of the General Statement of Principles acceptable to the entire Committee and the frank and interesting individual statements that follow in exposition of the views of the several members of the Committee.

It is also hoped that the members of the Society will approve the plan, on trial this year, of issuing the yearbook in the fall preceding the February meeting at which it is to be discussed.

G. M. W.

FOREWORD

The chief purpose of this Yearbook is the inventory and appraisal of curriculum-making in American schools — past and present. From time to time, in a dynamic society it is imperative that we stand aside from the movement of affairs to review trends, to assay products, to map out new paths. The chief outcome is re-orientation, a balanced perspective; especially is this needed in these days of vigorous experimentation. It is most important that those who are constructing our school curriculum shall maintain an overview of the total situation; lacking that, their orientation will be biased, their emphases misplaced. There is grave danger that they will continue to commit themselves uncritically to plans and movements — to take up the current modes only to discard them as unthinkingly as they adopted them. Much of the machinery of American education has indeed developed in the past fifty years by just this method.

Synthesis is needed especially because of the gap between school and society, and between curriculum and child growth. Life on the American continent has moved in two parallel but rarely merging currents. One has been the dynamic rush of land settlement, industry, and politics—exploitive, mercenary, unmeditative. The other — the academic stream of letters, art, and education — has lagged sluggishly behind. The first is thoroughly indigenous and has dominated American life for three centuries; the second, imitative, looking toward Europe and the past, has been unconsciously determined by it, although never in touch with it. No problem confronting the school is more insistent or more difficult than the re-channeling into one broad stream of these isolated currents of practical and cultural life.

To bring this about, the curriculum must be fashioned out of the very materials of child activity and of American life. Curriculum-making must become comprehensive, all-embracing, and continuous, not partial and intermittent, as it has been during a century of national development. The chapters of this volume show that no group responsible for the organization of the materials of instruction has really viewed the whole problem. The chief cause lies in the orientation, personnel, and procedures of those who have directed it.

In fifty years of curriculum-making the greatest need has been for a comprehensive overview of the currents of American life and education, appraisal of all the factors in the educational situation. Rarely — and then only by fast striding pioneers — have the child, American civilization, and the school been considered together.

Each of the three outstanding forces engaging in the organization of the curriculum during the past thirty-five years certainly has lacked a complete overview. Each was biased toward academic formulae, child interests, or the scientific study of society. The successive national committees, for example, have viewed the school from the starting point of fixed boundaries of subject matter and have been thoroughly committed to doctrines of scholarship and discipline. The protagonists of the philosophy of dynamic growth were also limited in their attack, although much closer to the truth than the subject-matter specialists. They focussed their attention so sharply upon the child that they tended to ignore the real end points of growth in our current complex order. Similarly, the newest group of curriculum reformers, students of the more scientific study of education, have been somewhat unduly immersed in their techniques. Hence, they, too, have moved on a tangent, emphasizing the study of social needs and tending to minimize child growth.

No agency in American life, therefore, has been sufficiently concerned with the *total* situation. Although the task is difficult, there is great need for a new synthesis, a comprehensive orientation of the relation between the school curriculum and the content of life on the American continent to-day. With three systematic movements for curriculum-making well under way and with an accumulating capital of experience to build upon, it is now possible to evaluate the current needs and to obtain a new vision of the direction in which the educational machine should be guided.

Now, the scope of American life is staggering. Its content is almost hopelessly complicated. The American scene is a welter of interrelated forces, institutions, ideals, cultures, prejudices, conventions, protests, what not. The school curriculum is the only great organized agency which can muster sufficient potential to prepare the younger generation to understand it.

Because of the complexity of American life, it has become increasingly clear that a sound orientation will be produced only by

the coöperative endeavor of many minds. The tasks of curriculum-making are manifold, highly technical, and they demand special professional training and experience.

An ideal conference on the reconstruction of the school, therefore, would assemble a great variety of interests and experience; far wider, indeed, than we have been able to bring together. The group would comprise, in addition to technically trained students of education, disinterested students of contemporary civilization — analysts aloof from the academic formulae of education — the poet, the novelist, the dramatist, the architect, critics of economic, political, and cultural life, students of the development of society, specialists in contemporary industry, business, government, population, community, and international affairs. These would coöperate with students of the scientific study of child capacities, methods of learning, educational experimentation and measurement, school administration, and the documentation of materials. Such a range in personnel would produce, of course, a confusion of vocabularies and would necessitate a more prolonged exchange of views than it is feasible to provide for in the present instance. Lacking the resources to organize the wider company, these two volumes have been prepared, therefore, by a group representing a partial range of specialized equipments, but a pronounced interest in the *general public school situation*. The members of the committee are all professional students of the curriculum and have sought constantly to maintain a broad perspective of American life and of growing childhood.

Recognizing clearly, therefore, the difficulties in the way of a total analysis of the current educational situation, they have joined hands, nevertheless, in the endeavor to compass it. For two years they have been engaged in the development of one phase or another of the work, either in collecting and appraising the contemporary situation, in studying the chief trends of development in the past century or in prolonged round-table conferences over similarities and divergences in educational theory.

This Yearbook presents three results of their efforts: a historical review, a description and evaluation of contemporary practices, and a statement of foundational principles for curriculum reconstruction. There appears first, in Volume I, therefore, an outline of the major movements of curriculum-making, the chief

trends, the crucial forces operative in a century of development. Our historical study, although attempting to lay a foundation in earlier movements, concentrates naturally upon the movements of the past forty years. It is out of an understanding of the achievements and deficiencies of recent movements that we shall secure the greatest help in redirecting our current efforts; so this more recent historical study attempts to set in relation the work done by three groups: (1) the national committees composed of 'subject-matter' specialists — mathematicians, scientists, philologists, etc.; (2) experimenters in the laboratory schools; (3) the students of the more 'scientific' study of education. This material is presented in Section I of Volume I.

Second, a description and evaluation of current methods of curriculum-construction is presented in Volume I. Again, the need is for a synthesis of undertakings. In Section II, Mr. Courtis and Mr. Counts describe current methods of curriculum-construction in town and city systems. Mr. Works does the same thing for the state systems. Recent developments in a few conspicuous school systems have produced additions to the administrative techniques of curriculum-making. In Section III, therefore, examples of progressive curriculum-construction in six public school systems are given. The laboratory schools, furthermore (at least a dozen of which stand out for their trial of new materials and methods), are also brought into our review. The techniques and philosophies underlying curriculum-making in ten of these laboratory schools are set forth in Section IV. Appraisal is needed—critical evaluation—hence the chapter by Mr. Bonser.

During the past ten years, marked progress has been made in job analysis of the occupations and professions and in character and trait analysis. Mr. Charters, a prominent leader in this movement, presents in Section V a review and critique of curriculum-making for the vocations.

The reader will note in the General Statement in Part II, *Foundations of Curriculum-Making*, our commitment to the view that the bases and techniques of curriculum-making in the colleges should not be unlike those employed in the elementary and secondary schools. Since the close of the World War a movement for the reconstruction of collegiate curricula has gathered momentum. Mr. Kelly, who has been concerned for some years with the develop-

ment of research in college administration, presents in Section V of this volume a series of illustrations and evaluations of these beginnings of reconstruction within the college. Finally, we round out our description by setting forth the rôle that state legislatures are playing in our day in curriculum prescriptions. To an astonishing and alarming degree, legislatures are prescribing the content of the materials of instruction. Mr. Flanders, who has made an intensive study of the last quarter century of development, reviews this important matter in Section V.

Description is worth little unless it leads to evaluation—critique. Hence the third task that we have undertaken in preparing these two volumes has been the critical interpretation of both historical developments and contemporary practices. The results of our attempts to appraise the historical movements will be found in Section I, while the evaluation of contemporary practices appear in successive chapters by Mr. Courtis, Mr. Counts, Mr. Bonser, Mr. Charters, Mr. Kelly and in Chapter XXX. In the last chapter Mr. Counts and I undertake to review briefly the chief forces and trends discernible in contemporary public and private school practice.

The third, and really the major interest of the Committee, has been the problem of a more fundamental orientation in curriculum construction. Believing that *divergences* in theory have been overstressed at the expense of *agreements*, we have joined together in the attempt to find a common basis for understanding the problems of curriculum-making. As the "General Statement" says: "We have sought to unite to discover agreements which may serve as a working basis for the next practicable step in curriculum-reconstruction." The methods by which we attack that problem are described in the Foreword to Part II entitled: "An Adventure in Understanding."

Summing up, therefore: Part I of the current Yearbook attempts a description and critical synthesis of curriculum-making, past and present. Part II presents our joint platform for curriculum-construction—a general statement of the foundational principles upon which we desire to see the next steps taken in the reconstruction of the school curriculum.

HAROLD RUGG, *Chairman.*

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SECTION I

A CENTURY OF CURRICULUM-CONSTRUCTION
IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE DRAMA OF AMERICAN LIFE

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I

Not once in a century and a half of national history has the curriculum of the school caught up with the dynamic content of American life. Whether of colonial reading or reckoning school, Latin grammar school, academy, or modern junior high school, the curriculum has lagged behind the current civilization. Although the gap between the two has been markedly cut down in the last three-quarters of a century, nevertheless the American school has been essentially academic. To-day, much of the gap persists.

Not only has there been a huge gap between the curriculum and American life; a similar one has persisted to the present day between the growing child and the curriculum. There are, indeed, three critical factors in the educative process: the child, contemporary American society, and, standing between them, the school curriculum.¹

Now, in more than a hundred years of systematization of the national educational scheme, the materials of instruction have not only been largely aloof from, indeed, foreign to, the institutions and culture of the American people; they have failed equally to provide for maximal child growth. If the curriculum of our schools is to serve its true function, however, it must be reconstructed on a two-

¹ Under proper conditions, of course, the true educational intermediary between the immature child and adult society is the teacher. If we had 750,000 teachers, (or even, say, 300,000) who, like William Rainey Harper, "could teach Hebrew as though it were a series of hair-breadth escapes," the *curriculum* itself would stand merely as a subordinate element in the educational scheme. The teacher would occupy the important place of guidance we have given to the materials of instruction. But under the current hampering conditions (better, of course, than in earlier decades and improving slowly) of inadequately trained teachers of large and numerous classes, heavy teaching programs, insufficient facilities and lack of educational perspective—I fear we tend to reverse the process and teach hair-breadth escapes as though they were Hebrew. Hence my allegiance to the curriculum rather than to the teacher as the effective educational intermediary between child and society.

fold basis. Adequate provision must be made for creative personal development, and tolerant understanding of American life must be erected as the great guiding intellectual goal of education. Its reconstruction, therefore, must concentrate upon two foci—child growth and the dynamic content of American civilization.

Now, from the early days of colonization, American life has been dynamic. With each succeeding generation the rhythm has accelerated. The dominant theme is change, movement. The innovation of to-day is relegated to the scrapheap of to-morrow. Even national points of view are altered overnight. The great slogan, "He kept us out of war," is magically transformed in a few months into "Kill the Boche!" The radical proposals of 1895 became the law of the land in 1910.

The American tempo, I say, is *prestissimo*—and its intensity *fortissimo*. The current of American life is torrential. It is personified by the pervading hum of motors and the dynamic syncopation of our new national music. The American mind, like its industry, displays itself in movement, building, exploitation, "bigness and bedamnedness."

In a hundred years, however, the public school has lagged far behind. It has never caught up with the momentum of industry, business, community life, or politics. Only rarely has it succeeded in dealing with contemporary issues and conditions; never has it anticipated social needs. The masters of the American mind have fashioned the public school as a great conserving agency, and the halo of the past has oriented those who have made the content of our school curriculum. Rarely have educational leaders affirmed for the school a preparatory and prophetic function.

II

The current American scene makes it evident, however, that the school, especially through the curriculum, must assume this prophetic leadership. Current conditions in America throw into sharp relief the critical need of teaching our youth to understand contemporary life. We are attempting to produce a unique national culture and to carry on a great experiment in democratic government under the most hampering conditions—a heterogeneous congeries of people of less than eighth-grade education, huddled in