



**REMAKING THE CURRICULUM**



# REMAKING THE CURRICULUM

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## PREFACE

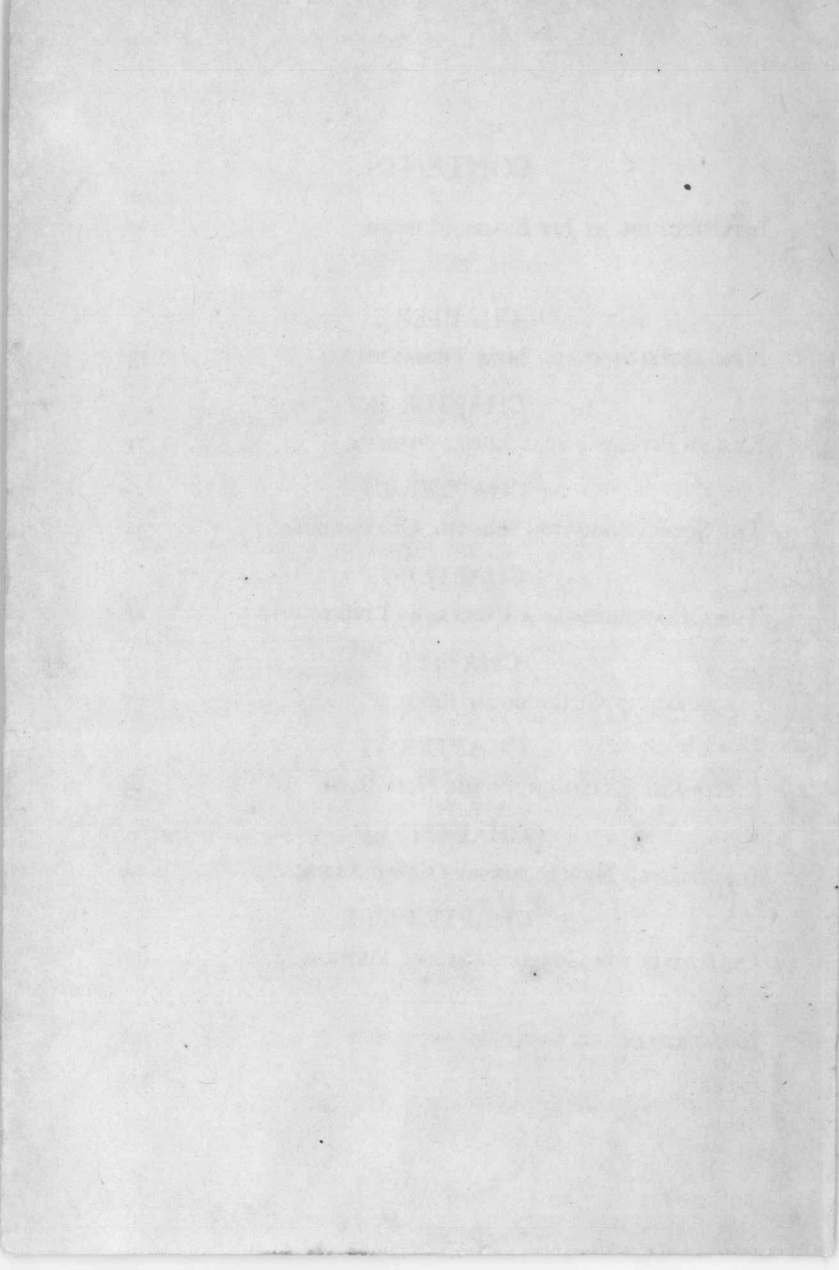
When the publishers first suggested the publication of my *N. E. A. Journal* articles in book form, I declined on the grounds that the discussion was not full enough nor sufficiently inclusive to constitute a satisfactory book. In the end, however, I consented, with the idea that what is here presented could thereby gain a wider circulation until I could find time to write out my position at greater length and with greater inclusiveness.

As the enterprise progressed it seemed wiser to include along with the original seven articles a further related one that had originally appeared elsewhere, as this helps to elaborate a point that gives trouble to many.

My best thanks are due to Mr. Joy Morgan of the *N. E. A. Journal* for his introduction and to Miss Marion Y. Ostrander for assistance in seeing the book through the press and in finishing the index when I had to lay it aside.

WILLIAM H. KILPATRICK

Teachers College, Columbia University  
June 10, 1936



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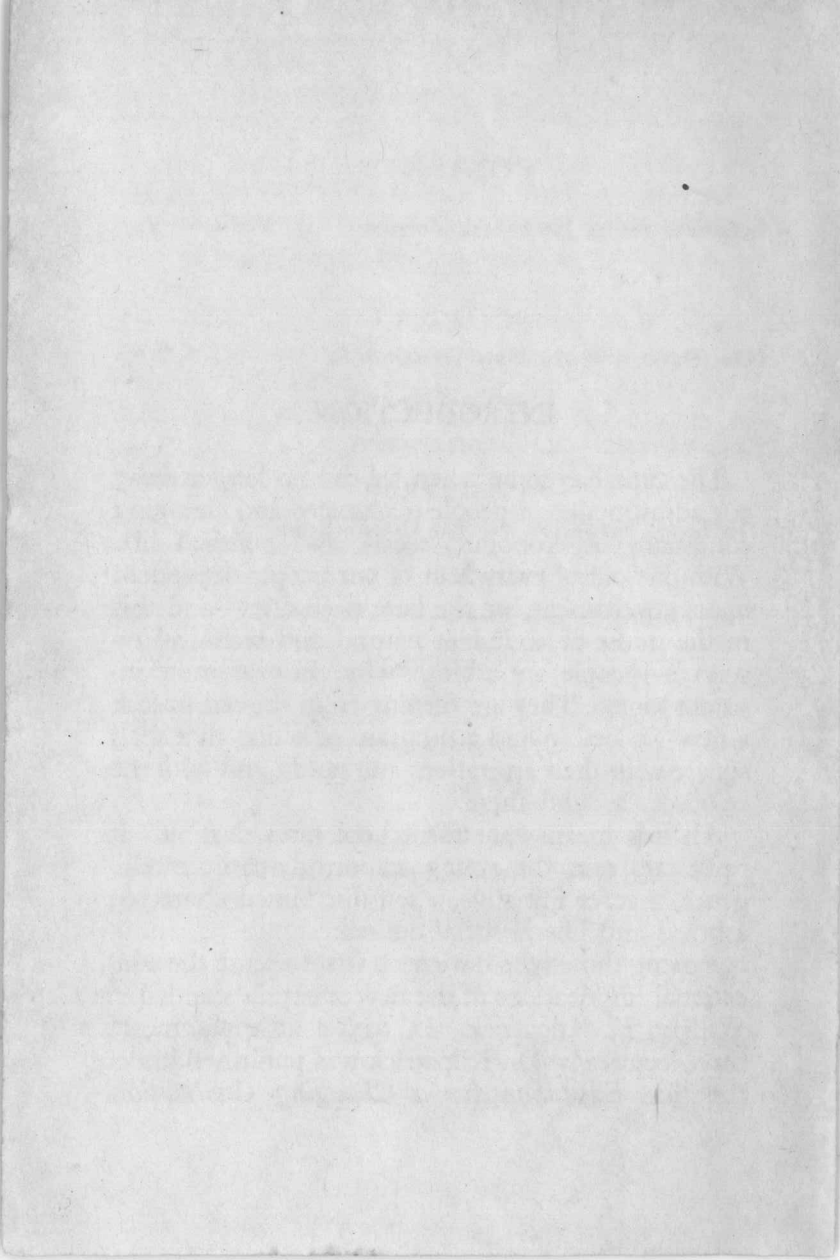
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## INTRODUCTION

The time has come when we can no longer delay our adjustment as a people to changed and changing conditions of economic, social, and political life. With one out of every four of our people dependent upon government for the bare necessities—and this in the midst of abundant natural and technical resources—people are asking “why” in ever more insistent tones. They are turning from the old to seek a new leadership and a program of action that shall square with their aspirations and needs, and with the resources around them.

All this means that the school faces destiny. It must create in the young a more dynamic intelligence, a surer initiative, a self-disciplined character, a broad and liberal social outlook.

Among those who have been first to sense the educational implications of the new situation stands Dr. William H. Kilpatrick. In 1926 a little volume of three lectures by Dr. Kilpatrick was published under the title *Education for a Changing Civilization*.

These lectures pointed out with prophetic insight that the times are changing; that these changes make new demands on education; and that our education must greatly change itself in order to meet the new situation.

Since these pioneer lectures were published the need for educational reform on all levels has become a necessity: on the college level, because students are then near the time when the major decisions of life must be made; on the high-school level, because of the vast numbers that have been added through unemployment; and on the elementary-school level, because of the changed home and neighborhood environment which today surrounds children.

The cycle of educational reform must include: first, a new philosophy and concept of education as it is related to the total life of the individual on the one hand and the total life of society on the other; second, changes in school plant and organization in keeping with this broadened concept; third, changes in the school curriculum to bring it into harmony with the new philosophy; fourth, changes in the preparation and in-service education of teachers to equip them to deal with the new situation; and finally, changes in public attitude necessary both to make the educational process itself effective and to insure adequate school finance.

In this little volume on *Remaking the Curriculum*, Dr. Kilpatrick has chosen to deal primarily with the

need for a new curriculum, but the point of view which he has stated shows equally well the need for more varied equipment, enriched teacher preparation, and a more enlightened attitude on the part of the general public. As author, lecturer, and professor of philosophy of education, Dr. Kilpatrick is our foremost interpreter of the pedagogy of activity and interest. He points out that schools exist to help the young grow and that each child must do his own growing. And how is this growth best fostered in the light of new social conditions and in accordance with the new psychological insight? That is the question which this book seeks to answer. It consists partly of seven articles which appeared in *The Journal of the National Education Association* beginning in November 1935 and ending in May 1936. Additional material has been added by the author to round out the discussion.

These articles were received with much appreciation by *The Journal's* two hundred thousand readers. Two of the articles, "Recent Psychological Developments" and "The Social Situation and the Curriculum," were ranked first by readers as the most helpful articles in their respective issues of *The Journal*. All the articles ranked high. All have substantial permanent value. Their publication in book form extends still further the author's contribution toward a new orientation of education and furnishes excellent material both for individual reading and for study in classes for the preparation of teachers.

To attract the finest and ablest young people into the schools as teachers should be the constant aim of everyone who has the future of our democratic civilization at heart. Nowhere else is the opportunity so great and the challenge so urgent. Books like this help to make that opportunity plain. May there be more of them!

June, 1936

JOY ELMER MORGAN  
Editor, *The Journal of the*  
*National Education Association*

# REMAKING THE CURRICULUM

## CHAPTER I

### NEW DEVELOPMENTS, NEW DEMANDS

Already in many places a better curriculum outlook has been achieved, and the general prospects for advance were perhaps never brighter. But much remains to be done. Our aims need to be clarified, appropriate content needs to be conceived, and the compelling reasons more firmly grasped; while all of us, including the many who still hesitate, need to be surer of the road to take.

The chief reason for a new curriculum and educational procedure lies in the fact that our modern social and thought world has brought forth significant new developments which in their turn make demands on the school that intelligent and conscientious educators can no longer disregard.

The customs and institutions of any well-ordered civilization should form one consistent and balanced

cultural whole. Amid quiet and abiding conditions the culture of any normal group does tend in time to develop such a balance. With us, however, science and technology have in recent years grown so rapidly that the remaining cultural arrangements now fall behind in failure to make adequate and just use of the possibilities thus offered. We need institutional changes. Perhaps the acutest lag of all lies in the failure of social thought and moral effort to grapple adequately with these new conditions and possibilities. Meanwhile our civilization suffers.

### MODERN CHANGE

Most inclusive of the new developments now demanding attention is the fact of modern rapid change, much discussed but still tragically disregarded in social thinking and educational practice.

A modern notion of change has emerged. Affairs develop in ever novel fashion. New situations continually confront. New aims arise. Old knowledge and habits are reworked in with the new conditions, and new results appear. Culture thus accumulates: ever new knowledge, distinctions, attitudes, and techniques. Efficiency thus increases and social intelligence grows. Individual intelligence sharing

the new cultural product should grow correlatively.

Amid ever novel conditions thinking is stressed, mere habit could not suffice. Each new situation is a problem, demanding its study and thought. We try out our best thought plan; we watch whether it works. Each new program is thus an experiment. Amid changing conditions we live experimentally, must do so. Education ceases then to be mere acquisition of something handed down. It too becomes experimental. Otherwise it were no adequate preparation for a changing and experimental life.

In a rapidly changing civilization new social problems thus continually arise, with ever new solutions proposed. These new solutions, democracy demands, must be passed upon by the people. Citizens must then be continually studying, criticizing their institutions to improve them. Social education thus must become a lifelong process. This must begin before twenty-one, or the person is sadly handicapped and probably biased against study and intelligent criticism.

The schools must accept the new task. The pupils must learn ever better, with their increasing years, to study and criticize our institutional life in order, intelligently, to help improve it. The alternative is unintelligent indoctrination in the *status quo*.

### A NEW SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

Recent science presents a second development, probably more subtle, certainly more direct in its attack on a common type of curriculum construction.

The recently discarded Newtonian science outlook analyzed the world ultimately into small material particles. These and their motion constituted all phenomena. Opposed to matter, mind was spectator only, no actual factor. From these scientific method followed: (a) Banish the subjective and personal, it can only disturb. (b) Analyze every complex thing into its "elements"; study these. Whatever is found true of them in separation holds still true in any complex whole.

Education, trying to be "scientific," imitated this method. Though concerned primarily with actual living persons, the extreme advocates tried, in order to be "objective," to banish from the educative process both personality and life. They analyzed life into small separate pieces as impersonal as possible—facts, habits, skills—and studied these in separation, as if they could put them back together and get persons and life. They called these small pieces "educational objectives," and would make a curricu-