

Teaching and Learning Secondary Social Studies



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Preface

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.
H.G. Wells

The adolescents enrolled in our schools today will spend their adult lives in the twenty-first century. The shape of things to come is largely unknown. The workplace, the community, and the home are certain to change as much during our students' lives as they have changed during our own. Therefore, we find ourselves in agreement with Jean Piaget, who wrote that the goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge, but to create possibilities in the minds of learners.

Social studies, above all other areas of the curriculum, has the potential to create possibilities. The insight, the wisdom, and the ideas that flow from a creative study of history, geography, and the other social sciences are, we submit, the best platform from which to clearly see the possibilities. And having seen the possibilities, a student is half-way home to creating the possibilities.

Social studies and the centrality of citizenship education for life in a democratic society form a unique American curricular invention. The focus of this text is on that principle. To that end, we have developed the themes of the lessons of history, the perspectives of geography, and the ideas and methods of civics, political science, and other social sciences. But social studies is more than that. We have included special features developed by leading authorities in such areas as gender issues, multicultural perspectives, religion and social studies, and learning styles.

Our hope is that the reader will find this text eminently practical. We have gone to considerable lengths to explore the setting of objectives in teaching, lesson and unit planning, reading and writing in social studies, and the difficult decisions teachers have to make about assessment and evaluation. To prepare the reader for these activities, we explored the dimensions of growth and development from varying psychological perspectives and we examined the strengths and limitations of alternative teaching strategies, ranging from direct instruction to inquiry and discovery learning. We have also attempted to look at the social studies curriculum from the perspectives of teachers who are subject-centered, society-centered, and learner-centered.

Throughout the text, there is the idea that good teachers are good decision makers. This theme is present as we explore lesson planning, the use of technology, critical thinking and problem solving, classroom life, and the professional issues that a social studies teacher must thoughtfully consider. Thus we have attempted to link decision making with reflective thought as a paradigm for teachers and their students.

We assume full responsibility for the contents of this book, particularly its shortcomings. But we are obliged to say that the book is better than it might have been due to the kind help and thoughtful insights of several leading professionals whom we wish to thank. James Banks offered his wisdom on multicultural education. Margit McGuire shared her knowledge of gender issues as they relate to social studies. Patricia Guild provided thoughts on the effective use of learning styles research. And Mark Pitts wrote about the linkages between religion and social studies.

We also wish to thank Christopher Jennison, Executive Editor at HarperCollins for his leadership and patience during the course of this project. Thanks, too, to Allyn & Bacon, Inc., for its permission to use certain previously published material.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge three social studies teachers who made impressions much to the better on our lives. They are Jim Mackey, Jack McNichols, and Jo Tetwiler.

Arthur K. Ellis
Jeffrey T. Fouts
Allen D. Glenn

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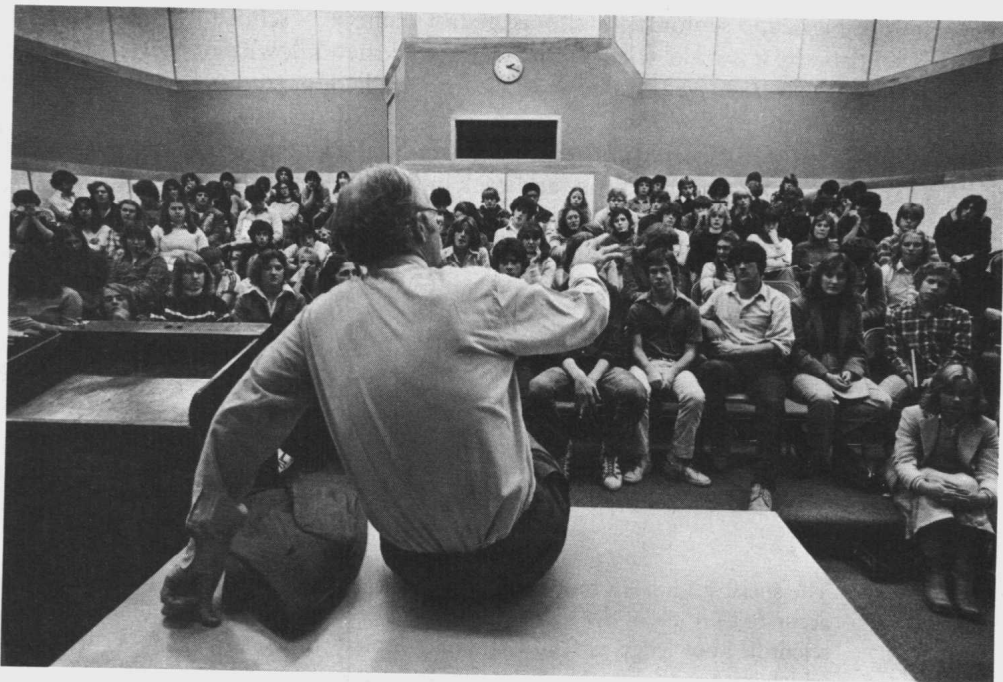
**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL
STUDIES EDUCATION**

Chapter 1: The Social Studies: Ideas, Definitions,
Trends

Chapter 2: How Teachers Think about the Social
Studies Curriculum

Chapter 1

The Social Studies: Ideas, Definitions, Trends



IDEAS, DEFINITIONS, AND TRENDS

The term *social studies* came into popular educational usage in 1916 as a result of the National Education Association's report by its Committee on the Social Studies. Prior to that time, social studies-related courses existed in public schools, but they were labeled "history," "geography," or "civics." Not everyone liked the term then, preferring to maintain the separate-subject integrity of the various disciplines—and not everyone likes it now. For example, the terms *history* and *social science* are used to describe the California state curriculum. Individual courses taught in secondary schools continued (and do to this day) to be titled more narrowly than "social studies"; but the general term used to describe the collection of courses offered under labels such as history had come into being.

As historian Hazel Hertzberg pointed out, a term such as *social studies* was perfectly in keeping with the general tenor of the times around the turn of the century when related terms such as *social betterment*, *social gospel*, and *social efficiency* were in vogue. Thus, as we attempt to define social studies, we can at least begin by identifying it as a collection of courses taught in secondary schools, which includes history, geography, economics, anthropology, political science, sociology, and psychology. In this context of meaning, pioneer educator Edgar B. Wesley coined the following definition of social studies: "The social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes."¹ Wesley's definition, typical of first attempts at staking out new territory, has taken hold, and is probably the most widely accepted definition in use today. It includes a recognition of the fact that, although they study the social sciences in the school curriculum, adolescents in middle, junior high, and senior high schools are not themselves scholars in the sense that social scientists are; it is social scientists' job to produce new knowledge. Nevertheless, his definition is *subject-centered*, and it does provide ample opportunity for others to counter it with alternative definitions.

The learner-centered conception of the social sciences can be traced to the progressive era in American education, and back in time to Rousseau. Its foremost proponent, John Dewey, identified the *learner* as the crucial variable in the educational process. Considering this, it becomes apparent that the content itself is somewhat negotiable from its purer forms—such as history and geography—and that it might make more sense to use an interdisciplinary, problem-solving approach that focuses on issues relevant to the student's needs. Dewey's book, *How We Think*, published in 1910, set forth many of his student-centered ideas, among them: "The aim of education [and therefore social studies] should be to teach the child to think, not what to think." Dewey viewed "the learner as the focal point in the educational process."

Shirley Engle's definition of social studies exemplifies the society-centered tradition:

The social studies is a broader field than that covered by the social sciences. It is more accurate to think of the social studies as an applied field which attempts to fuse scientific knowledge with ethical, philosophical, religious, and social considerations which arise in the process of decision-making as practiced by the citizen.²

If nothing else, certainly, this perspective views social studies as utilitarian rather than as something to be studied for its own sake. The goal of the society-centered definition is the development of future citizens.

THE GOALS OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies is the study of people and their interactions with one another. It is the one area of the school curriculum that focuses directly on human events and human behavior. Other curricular subjects devote much time to the contributions of people and, of course, study products of human activity such as music, art, science, and mathematics. However, the social studies curriculum is, in a nutshell, people. All social studies goals, therefore, relate to the study of human beings either collectively or as individuals.

Goals are usually understood to mean rather broad aims, which are then operationalized through the setting and implementation of objectives. At this stage of your reading, we propose to challenge you to consider the long view—the larger perspective of teaching and learning social studies. In the chapter on planning for instruction, we will identify objectives that are appropriate to lesson planning and unit development.

The goals of social studies instruction fall into four categories, all of which are, in fact, closely related: knowledge, skills, values, and participation. Knowledge is used in this context as subject matter. The subject matter of social studies comes largely from the social sciences. Skills have to do primarily with critical thinking and the ability of a citizen of a democratic society to analyze issues himself or herself, and to work in concert with others to consider the issues. Values are both interpersonal—connected with self-actualization, and interpersonal—connected with respect for the rights of others. Participation is crucial to the functioning of our society, and such involvement should be modeled in the social studies class.

The following goal statements have not been categorized as subject-centered, society-centered, and student-centered. It is our position that all three areas must be brought into concert in order for a social studies program to achieve the most meaningful goal structure. The following general statements represent a list of goals for social studies instruction that we will attempt to illustrate through concept and example throughout this book.

1. Social studies should help learners to achieve an increased awareness of themselves and of their potential to lead constructive, fulfilling lives.
2. Social studies should provide learners with an understanding of past events and persons, and of their roles in shaping present-day lives and events.
3. Social studies should promote in learners a concern for others and a respect for people of different cultural backgrounds and life-styles.
4. Social studies should provide learners with an understanding of human systems in the areas of economics, government, and culture.

5. Social studies should provide learners with the skills necessary for the conduct of independent and cooperative investigations of problems, and the ability to respond critically and creatively to solutions posed by others.
6. Social studies should provide learners with an appreciation of people's efforts to improve the human condition through creative expression and problem solving.
7. Social studies should provide learners with an understanding of where people live, how they live, and how they interact with their physical and cultural environments.
8. Social studies should provide learners with an appreciation of the decision-making processes involved in human interactions, and with the skills and values necessary to become participating decision makers.
9. Social studies should provide learners with an awareness of possible futures and the roles they might play in shaping those futures.
10. Social studies should provide learners with a sensitivity toward the potentials of all human beings, and with a desire to help them achieve fulfilling lives.
11. Social studies should instill in learners an appreciation for our democratic heritage and for their own potential to participate fully in it.

SOCIAL STUDIES: A RATIONALE

According to the *Oxford American Dictionary*, a rationale is "a statement of reasons; a reasoned exposition of principles."³ Therefore, if we are to develop a rationale for social studies and its place in the school curriculum, we must furnish you with reasons for the existence of social studies. We could begin by telling you that social studies is required of all students from grades one through nine, and in grades eleven and twelve—but that is a statement of fact and not one of purpose. The deeper question is why require it at all? In answer to a test that asked "What do we learn from History?," Lucy, of "Peanuts" fame, once wrote, "I don't learn anything from history." "I don't even learn anything from math!"

Let us begin our attempt at a rationale for social studies by asking you to think about how you spend your day. We would suggest that most of us spend most of our days attempting to communicate with and understand others and attempting to be understood. Interactions with other human beings are at the heart of our existence. Often those interactions are on a microscale; often those interactions take place collectively on a global scale. We often hear the argument that we risk annihilation and destruction of the planet if we do not choose to sit down and reason together. This is probably true. For most of us, however, life is simply more desirable and fulfilling when we make an effort to reach out to others, to attempt to understand others, and to see the world from the viewpoint of others.

A second reason for social studies in the school curriculum is that it exposes students to the vast legacy of knowledge and ideas about the people who have lived on earth and who have contributed to the development of the collective human spirit. History, Lucy notwithstanding, is the most integrative of all the subjects, and its

potential to expose students to ideas of lasting worth, deeper purpose, and moral value is unlimited. Geography, economics, anthropology, and the other social sciences offer students insights into human systems, cultures, and life patterns that are simply unavailable from other sources. To deny students the benefit of such learning would be to leave them uneducated.

Jerome Bruner, in the development of his controversial social studies curriculum, "Man: A Course of Study," wrote of five human attributes that speak forcefully to a rationale for social studies instruction in the public schools.⁴ He identified those human attributes as (1) a world view, which speaks to our insatiable curiosity about our sense of purpose—what Rollo May calls our destiny; (2) prolonged child-rearing practices, which lead to feelings of kinship and bonding and a sense of family; (3) social organization, which speaks to our need for others, for a sense of commonweal, and a need to bring order to our collective lives; (4) tool making and using, which enables human beings to employ a range of devices (from stone axes to computers) that extend our powers and encourage invention; and (5) culturally learned language, which enables us to develop, store, and retrieve abstract thoughts through the written and spoken word, and which, over time, enables cultural systems to emerge.

These five attributes of the human condition lie at the very center of social studies instruction. Various teachers will interpret them differently, and that is all to the good. However, the abiding sense of purpose that is found in the social studies curriculum—that of exploring humanity at personal, local, and global levels—is found only in the social studies curriculum. To deny its place among the school subjects would be to deny students the opportunity for reflection on their very purpose in life.

THE CHALLENGE OF CENTERING THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

All teachers operate on the basis of a philosophy of teaching and learning. They may not be perfectly clear about their particular philosophical position, and they may not know its origins, but if we could observe them on a day-to-day basis, certain definite patterns would emerge. These patterns would address the crucial curricular-instructional issues of the place of content, the student, and the society in learning. We propose to examine those variables with you as a means of helping you clarify and develop your own philosophy of social studies instruction. The three philosophical positions we offer for your consideration are (1) a knowledge-centered position, (2) a society-centered position, and (3) a learner-centered position. Of course, most of us are eclectic with regard to philosophies of teaching, but we all have our biases and it is well to be as clear about them as possible.

The Knowledge-Centered Approach

The knowledge-centered approach to teaching social studies has as its primary goal the control of the processes and contents of subject matter. The source of the curriculum is found in the material to be learned by the students—for example, U.S. history, world

geography, or comparative economic systems. A knowledge-centered teacher values structured planning, instruction, and evaluation. Lesson plans are carefully crafted and they are expected to be carried out. Students will be formally evaluated for such purposes as grading, promotion, and comparisons with other students. Subject matter is taken from centralized sources of knowledge, especially from the various disciplines of history and the social sciences.

The knowledge-centered teacher makes no apology for his or her position that information and ideas are valuable for their own sake. Thus, history is justified not because it will help you get a job but because it represents knowledge of humanity. Further, a carefully constructed scope and sequence of instruction in social studies will systematically expose the student to the accumulated ideas, values, and knowledge that history, geography, economics, anthropology, and so on have to offer. The student who emerges from such a curriculum will have achieved a level of literacy that would have been impossible to achieve in a random curriculum. Textbooks are the major element of structure in such a curriculum, but they are supported by sourcebooks, biographies, literature, film, and other resources.

The knowledge-centered approach can take on various instructional forms; we will mention two: The first, called the “structure of the disciplines approach,” was articulated by a social scientist named Joseph Schwab. Schwab argued persuasively that every one of the social sciences has a basic structure of ideas, skills, values, and knowledge. He said that students would be well advised to learn the structure of, say, geography because once they know it, they can apply it to a variety of unforeseen situations where geographic knowledge might be useful. Those situations could range from reading the *National Geographic* to applied problem solving regarding land-use issues in the local community. Schwab’s position was that learning the structure of the disciplines is preferable to trying to accumulate seemingly unrelated facts, which is how students so often view social studies.

The structure of the disciplines lends itself to such widely divergent teaching strategies as inquiry learning—in which students become social scientists and attempt to solve problems by using the methods of the historian, geographer, sociologist, etc.—as well as to such traditional approaches as lectures, teacher presentation, and textbook reading. Always, however, the focus is on the key ideas and methods of history and the social sciences.

A second form of the knowledge-centered social studies curriculum is the *ways of knowing* approach. Promoted in the 1985 *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*,⁵ ways of knowing suggests that teachers take a much broader look at how students should learn the knowledge, values, and skills of the social studies curriculum. This position states that there are at least eight ways of employing human intelligence toward the learning of content, ideas, skills, etc.: aesthetic, scientific, interpersonal, intuitive, narrative, formal, practical, and spiritual. Such an approach would automatically increase the scope of activities within the classroom as students are challenged to seek knowledge and develop skills through alternative strategies, which include incorporating the arts, hands-on learning, formal learning, small-group discussion, and searching for personal meaning. Of course, although this approach to the knowledge-centered curriculum accommodates a variety of ways to learn, it is still a structured approach that has the accumulated knowledge of the social sciences as its focal point.

These two approaches to knowledge-centered social studies are certainly not mutually exclusive and, in fact, they complement each other rather well. The structure of the disciplines approach is, in essence, a way of making the seemingly random, overwhelming body of accumulated knowledge in the social sciences meaningful and accessible to students. The ways of knowing approach simply says, "There are many ways to learn and teachers and students need to explore them."

The Society-Centered Approach

In contrast to the knowledge-centered social studies curriculum, the society-centered approach to teaching and learning has as its primary goal the exploration of societal issues. Compared to the knowledge-centered approach, the society-centered approach is less structured and places greater emphasis on problems of living in our society. Social issues themselves are the content of the curriculum. The daily newspaper and current magazines are sources of information and ideas for such a curriculum. Acquisition of content knowledge is not a goal, but a means of facilitating inquiry, discussion, and values exploration by students. Societal problems present themselves on global, national, and local scales, and all are fair game for exploration. The role of the formal social science disciplines is downplayed, and a much more eclectic, interdisciplinary use of social sciences is employed. After all, the purpose of social studies is to develop effective, contributing citizens; the social sciences are a useful tool—not an end—in achieving this purpose.

Students in a society-centered social studies class are involved in community issues, and are expected to try to solve real problems related to the local society—for example, in local government. The underlying premise is that citizenship is to be practiced now, and not at some distant point in a student's future. Decision making, participation, politics, and the democratic process in general are the heart of the curriculum. Clubs and student organizations are natural outgrowths of the society-centered approach; life skills, survival skills, and the processes of everyday living receive great emphasis in this curriculum.

Assignments take on a practical flavor, with the project as a common student task. Committees are emphasized, and cooperative learning efforts by students are common. The society-centered teacher continually seeks ways to break down the walls that separate the classroom from the community and students from each other. In that context, resource people, career development opportunities, cooperative student living, and forays into the real world are integral to the functioning of this approach. Like the knowledge-centered curriculum, the society-centered curriculum has its permutations. We will examine four such alternatives.

Conformists

The first of the society-centered alternatives is the most conservative of the four. Conformists are committed to socialization as a goal. They feel that the social studies classroom offers great opportunities to develop concerned citizens who will be able to take their places in the job market, in the community, and in the home, and to continue the ongoing processes of orderly improvement through societally accepted norms of behavior.

Reformers

The reformers are those who see social studies as a vehicle for combatting societal evils such as racism and sexism, and for the involvement of students in concerns such as hunger, the environment, conservation, and energy sources. Reformers encourage direct involvement in social action. With George S. Counts,⁶ they ask the question, "Dare the schools build a new social order?"

Futurists

The futurists represent yet another society-centered position on social studies instruction. They would place emphasis on technology in the classroom, in scenarios developed by science fiction writers and scientists, on planning, on decision making, and on simulations.

Radicals

The radicals have little faith in formal school structures to bring about meaningful change in society. Yet, they would see the potential of social studies, freed from its scholarly academic constraints, to serve as a vehicle for transforming society. The writings of Ivan Illich and Paulo Friere, which encourage deschooling and radical activism by students, are perceived by some as a clarion call to idealism for the young. Those who advocate radical change range from Marxists, to home schoolers, to proponents of communes.

The Learner-Centered Approach

The learner-centered approach to social studies represents a commitment to the growth and development of the individual. Personal freedom is its central goal. Self-realization and actualization for the individual student are the abiding concepts of the curriculum. Tracing back in time to the work of Jean Rousseau, the orientation of the learner-centered curriculum is naturalistic and unstructured. Foremost are the needs of students as they perceive them. Reflection, play, personal choice, and self-direction are the stock in trade of this curriculum.

The learner-centered curriculum is personalized, open, and places great emphasis on affective education—not merely on cognitive education. The formal disciplines of the social sciences are relatively unimportant as a guiding force in this model. Rather, learning is informal, unstructured, and interdisciplinary. Ideally, the social studies curriculum would be part of an integrated day in which plans are fitted to the student, and relevance to the student's life is the criterion for what is studied.

Some have erroneously perceived the learner-centered curriculum as no curriculum at all. Indeed, the curriculum is there, but its individualized, nonstandard, antitext-book approach makes it more elusive than its formal cousins. The day-to-day focus is on developmental tasks in the tradition of Erik Erikson and Robert Havighurst. Teachers and students are committed to self-actualization and the pursuit of personal freedom as the highest values. Knowledge for its own sake has no place in this curriculum. Of course, standardized tests are inappropriate because they are based on the assumption that everyone studies basically the same things.

Because of its unstructured, personalized nature, the learner-centered curriculum places great demands on the teacher. The teacher's role is certainly not that of dispenser of information; neither can the teacher depend on a prescribed course of study or a set