



Four Curriculum Issues¹

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1. Values Development

Question: Is it not doubtful whether we can "force" values on anyone?

Hypothesis: Insofar as the processes of values clarification and values acquisition effectively facilitated, students will grow into more purposeful, productive, self-directive, coping, self-reliant, self-esteeming learners and personalities, who are tolerant of diversity and change (or even may relish diversity and change and committed to the advancement of human welfare as they may pluralistically conceive it.

Implications: (a) Subjects should be means (not ends) not only to the acquisitions of skills and concepts, but also and more importantly to the acquisition of personal valuing systems. (b) Learning environments should feature options, alternatives, individualization.

2. Basic Skills and Performance Objectives

Question: Should teachers alone be held accountable for behavioral outcomes of learning?

Hypothesis: Insofar as the enormously forbidding task of adequately formulating goals and objectives in behavioral terms of performance may be accomplished in operation, then the instructional process may be planned and evaluated with maximal effectiveness-though nevertheless the outcomes of learning per individual child will always be multiply determined, and will very probably result in more learnings than specified in our objectives.

Implications: (a) Reliable information on how human needs may be satisfied, on how the process of learning may be effectively facilitated, and how human organisms mature and develop within the framework of our cultural norms, all are maximally pertinent to the planning, selection, and use of instructional materials and methods. (b) Learning environments should feature options, alternatives, individualization.

3. The Distribution of Justice and Power in Human Social Groups

Question: To what extent are schools reflective of and responsive to the social forces (dominances, conflicts, strains, and forces of change) operating in the

¹Ted Ward. Four Curriculum Issues. Handout prepared for curriculum course, Michigan State University, 1970s.

society at large—or conversely, to what extent may schools function as an agency for social change? What role(s) may schools play in maximizing social justice?

Hypothesis: Insofar as teachers may be able accurately to analyze and understand the social dynamics and value systems in the community, society culture, and subcultures in which they operate and of which they are a part, then they may better be able to perceive opportunities for using what minimum social power they may possess for making curriculum decisions which are most likely to generate maximally just and moral learning environments for their students.

Implications: (a) It behooves teachers constantly to analyze critically and seek to understand better their society, community, culture, and times, so as to counteract against the "mindelessness" to which Silverman refers. (b) Justice in a pluralistic society implies options, alternatives, individualization.

4. Self-knowledge, Self-awareness

Question: What freedom and responsibilities do teachers have for implementing curricula in operational settings?

Hypothesis: Insofar as teachers may become maturely aware of themselves their own personal needs and their own value preferences, aims, and objectives--then they will be best able to discern the latitudes and limits open to them and to identify those options and alternatives to which they may most fully commit themselves and find personally and professionally rewarding environments for themselves as well as for their several individual students.

Implications: (a) The personal quest for self-knowledge, self-realization, self-actualization is the enduring, transcendent quest. (b) Teachers deserve to be free to create options and alternatives best suited to their own interests, capabilities, talents, and values.