

Field Notes

The following two short articles represent a form of short report that can elucidate for the non-specialist the gist of a piece of research in a way that the regular research paper, clad in full academic regalia, can hardly do. Both are on points of education that are of acute interest - and indeed are rather touchy subjects - for many of the public in contemporary Western society.

Bagley's summary of some research carried out in Britain over a period of years tells us that real progress can be made in teaching racial tolerance to large numbers of students, even though with this approach no dent was made where the students suffered from low self-esteem, or where the teachers were of racist inclination. Searles describes the successful introduction of a sex education program in a Montreal school, an achievement that deployed a combination of two different schemes of value in negotiating a new curriculum, one making much of community involvement and the other of student needs. Both reports demonstrate the rewards of patient scholarship concerning what otherwise would seem intractable cultural problems.

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Teaching About Race Relations

A curriculum pack of race relations materials had been prepared for use by teachers using a non-directive, discussion approach (Parkinson and MacDonald, 1972). It had been developed from the Humanities Curriculum Project directed by Lawrence Stenhouse and his colleagues at the Centre for Applied Education at the University of East Anglia (Stenhouse, 1975). An evaluation of the approach, using specially devised attitude scales of established behavioral validity (Bagley and Verman, 1975), indicated that the "race pack", when used by specially trained teachers using non-directive methods (the "neutral chairman" approach), resulted in moderate but statistically significant shifts towards tolerant attitudes and interpersonal orientations in

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comparison with control subjects (Verma and MacDonald, 1972; Verma and Bagley, 1973).

Political controversy in Britain has surrounded the use of these materials. Critics of the right suggested that the materials in the race pack were too inflammatory, and that race-related issues were best ignored in the classroom; critics of the left argued that prejudice and racism should be overtly condemned by teachers, and not handled in the open, humanistic way that Stenhouse had pioneered (Jenkins et al., 1979).

Partly in response to these criticisms a much larger project was mounted, involving some 2,000 pupils aged 15-16, in 39 English schools. Three different strategies were evaluated: A. a didactic chairman using the race pack; B. a neutral chairman using the race pack materials; C. use of psychodrama and role playing in race-related situations. Some 500 pupils were enrolled in each strategy, the remaining pupils acting as controls. Each program lasted three months, and before-and-after testing using a variety of attitudinal and psychosocial questionnaires involved both the "experimental" and the "control" pupils.

Six months after the teaching, those involved in both Strategies A (didactic chairman) and B (neutral chairman) showed statistically significant attitude shifts in the direction of tolerance in comparison with the controls. A similar but non-significant trend occurred with Strategy C (use of drama) (Verma and Bagley, 1979). Analysis of the pretest data showed that poorer self-esteem, various psychological difficulties as measured by Cattell's HSPQ, poor scholastic achievement, and alienation from school and teachers significantly predicted racist attitudes in these pupils (Bagley et al., 1979). Poor self-esteem was seen as a pivotal factor in attitude development and change, and an experiment in one school showed that enhancing self-esteem was more effective than classroom teaching of various kinds in reducing racist attitudes (Bagley, 1979).

Post-testing of the available experimental subjects and controls, eighteen months after the teaching program had been completed, showed that the attitudinal shifts of the experimental subjects remained significant, although less marked, in comparison with the controls. Strategy A, using the didactic chairman, had the most clear and positive long-lasting effects (Bagley and Verma, 1982).

Further analysis of the data showed that some students in all programs showed a negative attitude change after teaching. These students had particularly poor self-esteem, a high degree of alienation from school and teachers, and came from depressed urban areas where their families had to compete with ethnic minorities (mainly West Indians and South Asians) for scarce employment and housing resources. The students whose attitudes changed most fundamentally and

permanently in a positive direction tended to be female, well-adjusted high achievers, from middle class areas with less ethnic minority settlement. A further factor in less successful outcome was the dispositions of teachers themselves. Those who handled the race-pack materials with active distaste, and who were shown in prior attitude testing to have negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, tended to have pupils showing a less favourable outcome.

These results are moderately encouraging. They show that teaching about race relations in school can have some positive outcomes in terms of attitude shifts in the direction of tolerance. Nevertheless, such teaching cannot counter a range of factors in the wider social structure which dispose many individuals to prejudice and racism; and it cannot cope with the problem of a general climate or culture of racism reflected in the attitudes of some teachers (Bagley and Verma, 1979).

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In recent times controversy has almost invariably arisen over the development of curriculum for sex education. Concern has been expressed by parents and educators who have been shocked with the content of the curriculum and who have questioned its suitability for the students for whom it was intended.

The purpose of this paper is to report the development of a curriculum in sex education using a consensus of concerned parents and educators and the input of students. It makes use of curriculum development models, identified in the field, whose values have been clearly delineated. In this respect it is interesting to note that the three "ideal types" of curriculum development models identified by Macdonald (1975) are in line with three of the models (or conceptions) recognized by Eisner and Vallance (1974).

Three value positions

Macdonald's three curriculum development models are known as the 1) Linear-Expert, 2) Circular-Consensus, and 3) Dialogical. The basic value position inherent in the Linear-Expert model is "control", which is associated with the subject matter or disciplines approach, an approach concerned with the modes of inquiry and structures of a discipline. The value position inherent in the Circular-Consensus model relates to the problems of living, or social issues; it reflects a concern for practical knowledge rather than the more theoretical concern of the disciplines. The Dialogical model is concerned with the emerging needs of the student; its emancipatory interest fosters self-actualization. These three value positions thus reflect the cognitive human interests of control, consensus, and emancipation.

The developmental procedures of the Linear-Expert model are dominated by experts, who attempt to maximize a control by the discipline. The whole process therefore "is controlled and monitored with specific goals in mind, and it is the experts who make the initial and final decisions about the validity of the content and process." The nationally-developed science curricula produced in the United States during the 1960's are examples of this kind of curriculum development. Most of these curriculum projects were initiated by discipline scholars at the university level, who prepared the materials and tried them out in the schools. These experts obtained feedback regarding the results in the classroom, and then rewrote, piloted, and finally revised

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the curriculum materials for broad distribution. In this manner scholars controlled the development of the curriculum and thereby maintained the integrity of their discipline. Support for this model can be found in the work of Phenix (1965), and King and Brownell (1966).

The Circular-Consensus model is commonly referred to as the "grass roots" approach to curriculum development, since it involves teachers, administrators, and community in the developmental process, with experts on call if needed. All members of this group are regarded as being of equal rank in the deliberation process. In this model there is a conviction that unless teachers are present and participate in the process of curriculum development, the curriculum materials emanating from it will be misused in the classroom. It is recognized that there is some rhetoric of control in the developmental process of this model, but that consensus and communication are the more important outcomes. This model is supported by the work of Walker (1971), Schwab (1973), and others.

The Dialogical model is based upon the emerging needs of the student, and is supported by Paulo Freire's work in the field (1970) and by the propositions of Sergiovanni and Starratt (1971), and of Weinstein and Fantini (1970). Initially, the teachers identify student leaders, with whom the educators engage in a dialogue, and it is from an assessment of the results of this discourse that the curriculum emerges. The adults then attempt to provide a match between the cultural resources known to the adults and the expressed needs and interests of the students. In this manner the model actively involves students in curriculum development, and the needs of students are given priority over its social and discipline content.

These descriptions of the three models clearly indicate the value position inherent in each. An empirical research study in science education recently undertaken by this author (1978) substantiated Macdonald's contentions. The findings indicated that the models do have different basic value positions, and that they were responsible for the selection and organization of different content, resulting in a curriculum design that varied with the developmental model used.

Application in sex education

In the development of a controversial curriculum such as sex education, the educator or curriculum developer should be able to make use of this sort of information about the different models as a guideline. Both the Circular-Consensus and Dialogical models would be useful. The Circular-Consensus model

involves administrators who are responsible for matters pertaining to the school's curriculum, teachers who are responsible for the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom and have knowledge of what can or cannot be taught in a particular classroom setting, and laymen who represent the viewpoint of concerned parents as to the relevant needs and interests of their offspring. The Dialogical model is useful since it allows for the recognition and presentation of the needs and interests of the students for whom the curriculum is being developed. With such information it becomes possible for the administrators, teachers, and laymen in the Circular-Consensus model to match cultural knowledge to the students' needs.

A combination of these two models was recently used by Kotsos in his "Sex Educational and Personal Development Curriculum" for Level V students of the LaSalle Catholic Comprehensive High School in Montreal, Quebec. The critical pathway for this curriculum development was controlled by the paradigm of the two models thus:

1. Discussion with the school principal regarding needs for the curriculum; description of models; and substantiation of the procedures to be used.
2. Approach to the Teacher's Council and presentation of the project. Endorsement of the project by the Teacher's Council. Establishment of a committee of teachers and administrators as the school staff component. (The committee consisted of the school principal, the executive vice-principal, and one member from each of the science, social studies, mathematics, and guidance departments.)
3. Compilation by the committee of a list of recommendations for a student questionnaire. (It was considered that some difficulties would arise if adults attempted to engage teenagers in dialogue regarding their sexual needs and interests, and that a strictly confidential questionnaire would be the best way for the students to express themselves.)
4. Meeting of the curriculum developer with the School Committee (parents) to outline the project to the parents. Establishment of a special subcommittee of the School Committee to work in conjunction with the curriculum developer. (These members formed the community component - laymen - in the developmental procedures that would be governed by the consensus of the group.)
5. Preliminary considerations for the student survey drawn up by the Curriculum Committee, consisting of administrators,

teachers, and laymen from the school community. These considerations dealt with

- specific aims
- main survey features
- obtaining adolescent cooperation
- determination of suitable survey questions
- organization of survey sections
- procedure for selecting students
- obtaining parental permission.

6. Presentation to Level V students explaining the purpose of the project and the confidential procedures to be used for the questionnaire, and seeking their cooperation, using the **Dialogical Model**. Completion by students, all volunteers, of a questionnaire based on two standardized questionnaires (Rogers, 1974; Schiller, 1973).
7. Evaluation of the findings by the Curriculum Committee. Development of the curriculum, using the **Circular-Consensus** model.

The empirical evidence obtained from the Dialogical model survey had a powerful influence on the discussion during the developmental procedures of the Circular-Consensus model. The results of the survey clearly indicated that there was a need for sex education and pointed out the most relevant topics to meet the needs and interests of the students. The following are some of the salient findings of the Kotsos survey:

Fully 28% of the subjects had received no sex instruction from their parents.

Altogether 44% of the subjects admitted to having been uncomfortable to very uncomfortable during parent-child sex talks.

The parents' instruction was not rated highly, and some 45% of the subjects considered it to be 'incomplete' to 'confusing'.

The peer group is the primary source of sex information; however, the subjects had a low regard for the quality of such instruction.

A total of 78% of the subjects classified their level of sex knowledge as from 'adequate' to 'comprehensive' but their mean scores (respectively for these categories) were only 38% and 50%.

Some 25% of the subjects had engaged in sexual intercourse.

Some 39% of the subjects had engaged in heavy petting two or more times.

Some 64% of the subjects had engaged in light petting two or more times.

Fully 71% of the subjects viewed sexual intercourse as acceptable after only a few dates.

Some 72% of the subjects viewed heavy petting, kissing, and fondling the sexual organs of a partner, with the intention of achieving sexual climax, as acceptable after only a few dates.

Some 88% of the subjects considered light petting, kissing and fondling the sexual organs of a partner as acceptable after a few dates.

A total of 40% of the population had masturbated two or more times.

From their deliberations the members of the Curriculum Committee agreed that the philosophy of the sex education curriculum should emphasize factual information about sex and the concomitant interpersonal relationships. The Curriculum Committee also made the following recommendations regarding the implementation of the sex education curriculum they had developed:

- A. The implementation of the sex education program be slow and deliberate so as to allow for the proper organization of teachers and methodology. The program should commence in Level V only during the first school year.
- B. Experts in the field be consulted regarding the selection of suitable staff and the methodology required for successful implementation.
- C. The library be furnished with suitable literature for use by the senior students, and a special section be established for use by parents of children in the school board.
- D. The proposed program be carefully monitored by a special committee of persons from both the original staff and the community committees to ensure that the course goals are

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being attained.

- E. The parents of the intended student group be informed about the new program through a series of lectures during the year prior to the introduction of the course.
- F. A committee be established to research the operation of sex education courses already in existence.

In conclusion, it was generally agreed by the school community that the hybrid Circular-Consensus and Dialogical curriculum development models, which had organized the school staff, the community, and the students themselves as planning agents, had resulted in an acceptable and relevant curriculum.

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