Who Should Plan the Curriculum?

IN this time of rapid change and increasing attention to education it is important that professional educators and others take a fresh look at the question, “Who Should Plan the Curriculum?” Recent developments suggest that some new answers to this central question are in order.

Today, the educated man is the central resource of society. The supply of such men and women available to each nation is the real measure of its economic, political and military potential. We are now undergoing the educational revolution because educated people are the capital of industrial society. Every chemist, every doctor, every engineer creates opportunity and need for more men who can apply knowledge and concepts.

In addition, change is so rapid in our innovating, industrial society, that today’s education is unsuited for tomorrow’s world and is as outmoded as the Model-T for the world of 20 years from tomorrow—the world whose leaders are now in the classrooms of America.

The Curriculum We Need

Today’s curriculum planners should study conditions and trends in contemporary society and probable conditions and requirements for democratic living in the last half of this century. It may be we are planning to educate children for a society that does not now exist. Education for the immediate future in our rapidly changing society is almost useless unless it prepares learners to meet problems that are new and that neither they nor anyone else has ever encountered before.

The planners will almost certainly find that we need a curriculum which emphasizes the central concepts of the disciplines, concepts that explain phenomena in terms of their future state and direction. The increase in knowledge is so swift that many areas are rapidly becoming unteachable without emphasis on the rules for discovering the nature of the discipline.

The curriculum planners will learn that the school which faces toward the future world must teach innovation, problem solving, a love of learning; its students must acquire the tools of analysis, expression and understanding. They will surely find that learners must be prepared for work that does not yet exist. They will see that our democracy will require many skillful citizens who will have numerous increasingly complex tasks as buyers, voters, legislators and cooperative planners.

It is apparent that the curriculum planning which will be needed involves
an interrelationship of factors that go beyond the scope of any single discipline or profession.

In America, all interested citizens, parents, learners, and scholars from all of the disciplines must work with teachers, principals and supervisors in the planning. This planning should go on throughout America on a local, state and national basis. A democratic society cannot permit uniformity and centralization. The onrushing future requires many different autonomous, competing efforts to cope with its problems.

In the past the columns of *Educational Leadership* have contained many statements that laymen should work with professional educators in planning the curriculum. We have, however, given inadequate attention to the particular role of each type of planner in the planning process. Lacking adequate role definition we may have often, as professionals, overemphasized our mission to instruct the public, and may have been undersensitive to, or intolerant of suggestion and dissent. Let us try to define the particular role of each group in the planning.

**Role of the Scholar**

In this period when the front line of our defense has moved from the trenches, to the factory, to the classroom, it is fortunate that professional educators are learning again how to communicate with the scholars and research workers in the various disciplines. It is doubly fortunate that scholars in other disciplines are showing renewed interest in the public school curriculum and are frequently now working with professional educators in curriculum planning.

What is the particular role in curriculum planning of the scholar from a discipline other than education? There are at least three ways in which he can help. He can often give crucial advice regarding what should be taught; he can sometimes point out what can be taught; and he can often suggest means of implementing curriculum decisions.

For instance, scholars in biology, mathematics, and physics are now working with teachers and other curriculum workers in determining what should be taught in the schools in these fields, as well as when and how it should be taught. These planners found that the textbooks in use contained almost none of the modern concepts, although greater change in knowledge has occurred in the past 50 years than in the preceding 500. They have also learned that much of the grade placement of the material seemed to be wrong and that greater emphasis was needed on unifying concepts so that the total number of basic ideas to be taught might be reduced.

The sociologist can give particular assistance in determining the means by which the goals of education may be achieved and in identifying the essential values and behavior patterns which must be taught as society changes. Of greatest importance, perhaps, is the fact that the sociologist can aid the educator in understanding the nature of the society in which his students will live in the future. Together they can devise an educational program to prepare for it.

The anthropologist can throw light on the reasons for the development of various aspects of the culture. He can help the school to plan to counterbalance current pressures for conformity and to attach greater emphasis to creativity and critical judgment. He can help in planning to develop in each student an understanding of his powers and limitations for creating and modifying society.

The scholars from all disciplines can...
aid in curriculum planning by identifying the central concepts and rules for discovering the nature of the discipline. In the terms in which they are now represented many of the disciplines are increasingly unteachable. We need a philosophical synthesis, appropriate to our world and to the learners, that can be taught—and only the scholar working alongside the educator can achieve this.

Role of Parents and Other Citizens

In the long run, we can only build the curriculum and use the teaching methods which the active school public will accept. We must work with the public and have orderly patterns for its participation. People need to be involved in the process of planning the curriculum in order to change their beliefs, attitudes and behavior regarding it.

It is a matter of crucial importance that many school systems invent structural devices to bring about a sharing of thinking about the curriculum by the lay citizens of the community and the professional staff members.

Staff members must learn to work with citizens; citizens must take part but not take over. This should begin at the level of the parent-planning with the teacher about the needs of his child and should move from there to the citizens' advisory council and the curriculum committee. The profession, in each community, is responsible for establishing these channels.

Role of the Student

The student is the major untapped resource in curriculum planning. Students are in the best position to explain many of the advantages and deficiencies of the present curriculum. Their ideas and re-

actions are of very great importance. Learning is significantly improved by putting greater responsibility on the student.

Too little use is made of teacher-pupil planning. The understanding and skills of planning are among the most important outcomes of education in our society. Perhaps more teachers would plan with their students if they realized that student-teacher planning has at least six aspects:

1. What is to be studied?
2. Why are we having this learning activity?
3. How shall we go about it?
4. Where do we do what needs to be done?
5. When do we do it?
6. Who will do each part of the job?

While student participation in the choice of topics may be possible only in certain subjects, there is no reason why extensive use of the other aspects of teacher-student planning should not be used in all subjects.

Role of the Educator

The role of the professional educator is one of growing stature and is one that will continue to grow as he works with the scholars and other members of the community.

It is the job of the professional educators to provide structure for planning with others, to inform, to offer recommendations, to bring together contributions from all sources, and to work out a recommended plan of action for curriculum change. In the analysis of the curriculum which is planned, the professional educator must be certain that it takes account of the nature of the learner and of the society of which he is a part.

(Continued on page 39)

Educational Leadership
This part of the professional educator’s role is not new but it will have increasing importance as he works and plans with others who are not so likely to give adequate attention to these bases for curriculum decisions.

The professional educator must be alerted to the necessity for relating schools to the surrounding political, economic and social forces so that the means and goals of education harmonize with the lives of men in particular circumstances. He should seek the unifying norms as he works with others in curriculum planning.

Frequently educators need to take a stand for what they believe, sharing what they know and feel. The public relies on the vision and courage of educators to present recommendations for curriculum improvement. Such recommendations should be related to a sense of purpose, the ability to think and analyze, and a proper respect for the requirements of human response. The educator, in recommending, must carefully avoid the appearance that the curriculum is solely the professional’s business. Experience over time in working together will help to solve this problem.

A most important part of the teacher’s role is to communicate to students his own valuing of learning. Teachers motivate young people by their own motivations. Learners learn to like to learn from teachers who exhibit the intellectual accomplishment of regularly acquiring and acting on new knowledge.

Finally, the professional educator must evaluate and interrelate the contributions from other disciplines and evolve a curriculum plan for the approval of the curriculum committee or council and the school board.

Moving Ahead

If it is recognized that all public policy in education is the product of professional-lay interaction, then the main roadblocks to progress can be removed. The increasing communication between scholars in various disciplines and professional educators is a valuable step forward. A next step is to make greater use of that largely untapped resource—student contributions to curriculum planning. In each community professional educators should move to establish the structural devices needed so that scholars, citizens, students and professional educators may plan the curriculum needed for the 1970’s. It will be particularly helpful if the unique contributions and role in curriculum planning of each of these persons are recognized and utilized. Because of the importance of education in today’s world, each should be enabled to make his particular contribution to curriculum planning.

Who should plan the curriculum? Everyone interested in the future of America; everyone concerned for the quality of education being experienced by the leaders of the future who are now in our classrooms. The articles in this issue of Educational Leadership, which examine many of the aspects of curriculum planning should be of great assistance to the profession as we face this most important question.

—C. Glen Hass, Professor of Education and Director of the Laboratory School, University of Florida, Gainesville.