We need to assess our frame of reference—to identify what we should be doing and why . . .

A Necessary Frame of Reference

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CURRENTLY, we are greatly concerned with scope and sequence, with having a cognitive set of teacher and student objectives, with the struggle for a rationale for public education in general, and with the implications for supervision. This concern is fundamentally a warning for those of us in education to assess our frame of reference —to identify what we should be doing and to note why we have made such an identification.

Basic to this call for an operational frame of reference is the assumption that a rational process is one in which there is some kind of relationship between ends and means.

We in education are not alone in this concern. When one reviews the current literature he cannot help but note a pervasive interest in being aware of a major social frame of reference. This is not surprising as the multitude of recent "changes" place the public school in the matrix of all transition.

This awkward placement is compounded in complexity when we realize that the traditional nature of the school has been conservative. This is true in the sense that public education has justified its expensive role in the economy by the implied assumption that it was socializing the young in terms of those values which the major society considered important enough to be preserved.

The transition which we are experiencing has challenged some of the traditional values and hence has perhaps challenged the role of the public school.

Key Social Agent

In dealing with objectives, scope, sequence, content, methodology, and evaluation (all of concern to the supervisor), we come to a realization that the public school itself is a key social agent. Its problem and, consequently, our problem, is one of being enmeshed in a complex web of interaction and action.

Role expectations cast us into the script as practitioners who must select from the theoretical, apply what is selected, justify the selection, and somehow objectively justify our position. In the process we become bogged with communication: communication be-

tween specialists and communication with a paying public which is not always aware of the theoretical, let alone the application. Human interrelatedness becomes a paramount concern.

We are faced with countless alternatives. And we are faced with the realization that there is no one "set" answer to our problem. We also recognize that choices must be made or else we muddle in an irrational way, being pushed from corner to corner by the whims of the moment.

As a social servant, the supervisor is forced by the public to be concerned with many types of interaction. For example, the supervisor must be aware of change and the process of change, decision making and the process of making decisions, communication and the process of communication, knowledge and the process of knowing, bureaucratic institutions and the structured protection of cultural lag, values and the sources of values, major social problems and their operation as a total educational environment in interaction with the formal school—things such as economic changes, mass communication, and foreign affairs.

The more complex a social situation becomes, the more tempting is an immediate, sure-cure answer. In a time of threat or fear the pressure mounts to accept the answer being proposed. In such times the answer appears to be one of having the school exist to train the intellect, and the key substance of all school activity is intellectual. We are not sure what the term "intellectual" means. It does, however, connote a view that the mind is a container to be filled by a basic body of knowledge and that a student, so filled, will somehow equate knowing good with being good, knowledge with wisdom, information with use in terms of behavior. Resulting from this view of the purpose of education is the inference that there is agreement on the basic body of knowledge to be given and that a listing of such content automatically designates the aims and objectives of education.

The educator finds bodies of knowledge offered to him which are sequential and ordered. Evaluation becomes less a problem because the concern is with the mastery of content. All this leads to a good deal of security. The teacher can be evaluated in a much less complex manner. So it is with the students, with the school, and with the state or the nation.

For example, we can tell how "good" our schools are in comparison with another country simply by giving the same content examination to respective students of the same age and educational experience. If the aim of education is this type of mastery, comparative education of the described nature is possible.

Aims of Schooling

Yet we are told that different countries and different ideologies have different aims and that the respective educational establishments thus have different functions which cannot be evaluated by similar criteria. If this is so, it suggests an implicit *use* of a body of knowledge which takes primacy and that the body of knowledge is a means to a sometimes unstated purpose.

Those pushing for a "body of knowledge" type of curriculum would probably find a common agreement with

their opponents in that the vision is one of having the school's graduate a rational, well-adjusted human being, who recognizes certain areas of independence and self-reliance while recognizing other areas of social dependency. The argument would probably ensue over such things as the meaning of "rational" and "well-adjusted," as well as concern over the meaning of independence. As was indicated earlier, the term rational involves a relationship between means and ends.

Is the "end" already established toward which we consciously guide the young? If so, is the "end" of a society based on intellectual dedication of behavioral patterns? What is the relationship between the two?

If the "end" of society is not already established but rather a part of all-encompassing change, does not the term "well-adjusted" suggest being able to cope with change and the choices which change implies? The meaning of independence may well strike at the root of the differences of opinion. Is "individual" the term for a physical organism? Is the individual personality—its desires, hopes, fears, and motivation environmentally conditioned? How independent, how "free" is the individual organism? Supervisors live with such questions.

Some of the people who question the intellectual role of the public school would replace the term with "intellectualizing." This is not a question of semantics. One is a given while the other is a process. They do not view the question as an "either/or" when it comes to a body of information. Emphasis is given to the *use* of information. Evaluation is thus more complex than just the mastery of information. There is no promise of security for those who are willing to recognize the complex factors involved.

It would seem that we are at the point of asking the school, the administrator, the teacher, and perhaps the student to identify respective frames of reference. We are asking those involved in public education to question why they are doing what they are. For example, to ask a supervisor why he expects a teacher to teach about the colonies and have him answer: "A student *has* to know this," is to beg the question.

Why does a student have to learn about the Fertile Crescent, the Renaissance, the date 1066? If the learning of such material is a means to an end and not an end in and of itself, is it asking too much to identify the end in view? And is it asking too much to note alternative approaches which might better. more effectively, and more efficiently arrive at the "end" which is now cognitive?

Whatever thinking is, it is not easy and sometimes not at all reassuring. Yet, do we abolish the problem by the refusal to recognize it? To what extent are we rational and to what extent are we rationalizing? It is rather disconcerting to recognize that the social science area is no less immune from the ostrich posture so readily recognized among the teacher's colleagues.

Are we, in fact, saying to the students that when one studies the interaction of man and his social and physical environments, the first thing to do is to deny the existence of major problems because we are not able to cope with them? Play it safe, students . . . love

the object of desire from afar but forsake hell and do not get involved!

Aims of Supervision

It is suggested that the fundamental aim of the supervisor might be to have a teacher assess what he is, who he is, what he knows, and the types of evidence he accepts for knowing; to assess what it means to be a social being and to so recognize that a world interaction necessitates identifying what other people think they are, who they are, what they know, and the evidence the other fellow accepts for knowing.

A supervisor must assess sources of values, and the difficulties and promises in communication.

A supervisor must understand types of decision making, the implications of compromise.

A supervisor must be able to dissect problems and to construct alternatives for resolving these problems.

A supervisor must recognize that "answers" are often situational and that to rationally appraise the situation is to consult our oracle.

A supervisor must identify the relationship between means and ends which justifies the rights of a minority and of individuals.

A supervisor must struggle with the meaning of the relationship between individual and social freedom.

A supervisor must learn to ask questions.

A supervisor must study all forms of social living—political, economic, and social—in order to better know himself.

And it is to know that all the above is meaningless, unless he acts and lives according to his meanings as to what living implies.

If these then become the objectives of supervision, let us welcome the opportunity. Let us relate *our* ends and means. Yet we are often told that the teachers are not qualified to pursue such a program. This is true if we maintain that the teacher stands as a sage upon a pedestal offering the answers which he, himself, has been given.

It is not true if the teacher is perceived (and evaluated) in terms of his also being a student, actively looking, guiding, and asking in a terrain which he has scouted to a greater degree than have his students.

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