New Understandings in Education

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IN MARCH 1970, at the study conference in San Francisco, ASCD will celebrate its silver anniversary. At such a time there is a temptation to review the past, and to make some projections of ideas, hopes, and plans for the future.

In this quarter-century of service to the education profession, and through the profession to the schools and to the children and young people of the land, the Association has come through a period of unusual stress. ASCD was born in the midst of World War II. This was a period of peril, of tremendous effort and sacrifice. Yet, too, this was a time of idealism, of unified national and international effort, and of confident hope for the future. There was unity then in the aspiration for One World, in which men would be free of the tyranny of dictatorships and in which peoples would be responsible for their own destinies.

Since 1945 the world has traveled some rocky roads. Not all nations and peoples have shared our hopes or enjoyed the right to determine their own destinies. Even so, this has been a remarkable age, one in which technological advance, based upon scientific know-how, has finally enabled man to walk on the moon.

Yet there have also been stresses other than warfare, campaigns other than the taking over of government by force. Great changes have occurred in the political, social, and educational life of our country. Demands have burgeoned for equal rights, for further enhancement of human dignity, and for growing respect for peoples who have been oppressed. Black Americans have joined with some of the youth and with other minority groups and have written large their placards. Militance, conflict, confrontation, demand—these seem to be the words of our time. We are hopeful, however, that these symbols have not entirely displaced the older language of cooperation for the common good, of consensus, and of willingness to subordinate one's own desires to the needs of one's fellows.

ASCD's concern for any who are disadvantaged or whose needs are not well served through education is innate and is all-pervasive. Such concern, based upon long-time conscientious conviction, rather than upon any late response to pressure, has guided the Association's deliberations and services in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

There have been conflicts within education during this quarter-century. Movements and countermovements related to the schools and the school program have flourished. Through all these years, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, with its early orientation in the pioneering efforts of the mental health movement as this related to the curriculum, has played a pivotal role. "Perspective" and "insight" have been ASCD's special contribution, even while some groups have seemed to yield to the pressures and temptations to place undue emphasis upon one portion of the curriculum at the expense of some other area.

Now we are apparently at the beginning of another great moment in education. Because of reactions to past excesses and imbalances in school programs, and because of the kinds of perspective and insight which ASCD members and others have proffered through these years, our organization finds itself in a uniquely favorable position to make significant improvements in education and in the school program.

Our Association, in its silver anniversary year, is embarking upon new ventures in education. With the support of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee has initiated an ambitious and challenging program that will extend frontiers of knowledge and effective fields of action.

Under the theme, "The Generation of New Understandings: A Plan of Study and Action," many aspects of ASCD's service to schools and to education have been newly constituted or refocused so as to bring more immediate assistance to members of the organization and to other persons engaged in school work. An indication of the initial thrust of this program is contained in the following statement:

> Our first efforts to generate and implement the new understandings needed for the '70's will be organized under three powerful and pervasive concepts—*relevance, accountability,* and *modifiability.*[1]

How does *Educational Leadership* fit into such an ambitious program? Basing its content upon the plans that have grown out of the work of the Publications Committee and other groups and individuals, the journal this year will attempt to advance our thinking through a consideration of several areas of seemingly urgent concern, both for the present and for the future.

Issues for 1969-70

"Generating New Understandings in Education" is the theme for the 1969-70 issues of *Educational Leadership.* We see ourselves today in the midst of sweeping changes. We no longer find a largely passive or compliant audience in the schools. Children and young people tend toward activism and toward a probing, questioning attitude that puts on trial many of the "truths" so long accepted by most of the present generation of persons in school work. This year's issues will examine some of these older beliefs and will try to generate and to enhance new understandings that can further our effectiveness in education.

- "Crisis Intervention" is the theme for October. Increasing militancy within and outside the education profession has many implications for

[1] *ASCD News Exchange* 11 (4): 5; June 1969.

school people and other citizens. How can we improve our understanding of the forces that are bringing about such militant behavior? What are some of the underlying causes? Only as we attain a better understanding of these causes can we hope to meet these needs and to help shape constructive solutions to the problems. We believe that persons in supervisory or curricular work in schools must play an important part in bringing about such affirmative action.

- The November issue will treat "International Cooperation in Education." This issue will examine what we believe to be one of the most pressing needs of our time—that of bringing about a better cooperation and understanding among school people in all lands. This issue is also intended to help participants prepare for their role in the 1970 World Conference on Education that is being sponsored by ASCD in Asilomar, California, March 5-14, 1970. This working conference will include participants from all areas of the world who are active in schools and who are concerned with the role of education in international cooperation.

- "Education for Self-Identity" will be the theme for the December issue. Can education deliberately help to enhance each person's identity and feeling of self-worth regardless of his ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic background? If this worthy objective can be achieved, then education may, directly or indirectly, have accomplished a great deal.

- "Sharing in Change" will be the theme for January. How can supervisors and curriculum workers become more knowledgeable about change processes so that they can serve more effectively as initiators and leaders of change as they work with teachers, administrators, and others in improving instruction? We do not seek to be manipulators or to serve as managers in a paternalistic setting. We do, however, seek insights that will help us to assist others to a clearer and deeper understanding of the timeless importance of the work in which we and they are engaged and of values which motivate this selfless endeavor.

- "Student Participation: Toward Maturity?" is the focus for the February issue. Student protests, in many institutions and at many levels, have forced into our consciousness the fact that all persons (even students) want desperately to participate in the enterprises which affect them. Teachers and other school people must find or create new opportunities for effective and satisfying student participation in the processes of learning and in the conduct of the "education establishment."

- "Teacher Education: Instrument for Change?" is the theme for March. Is teacher education to be regarded as a means for preserving the status quo, or is the professional education of teachers to be seen as a prime instrument for renewing, refocusing, and refining the goals and processes of our culture, society, and world through education? Whether at preservice or in-service level, teacher education must provide opportunities for experiences that will enhance the teacher-as-person as well as the teacher-as-transmitter of culture. Such growth is a continuing and critical need of all school people.

- "Enhancing Cognitive Power" will be the theme for April. Writers in this issue will attempt to exploit some of the almost limitless potentiali-

ties that have been revealed recently in the evidence that "intelligence can be created." The articles will concentrate on what this momentous discovery can mean in education.

- The journal for May will consider "Projects, Packages, Programs." Writers for this issue will look at learning systems and at the implications of their use for school people and the public.

Through the journal issues this year we will continue an optimistic approach toward solving some of the man-made problems of our time. With the generation of new understandings we can identify and analyze these problems. We can create the resources and means for solving them. We can use these new insights for enhancing living and learning in our world.

During its first quarter-century the Association has built a sound platform. Here we can stand as we project our plans and our efforts toward a more satisfying exploration and resolution of the pressing problems we face today and tomorrow.

—ROBERT R. LEEPER, Editor, *Educational Leadership.*



Photograph by Joe Di Dio, NEA

Stanley K. Elam (left), president of the Educational Press Association of America, presented Robert R. Leeper, editor, *Educational Leadership,* with a 1969 Edpress Award for Excellence in Educational Journalism. The journal received its certificate of excellence in the "One-Theme Issue" category.

The November 1968 issue of *Educational Leadership,* with the theme "Racial Integration: Roads to Understanding," achieved All-America honors in the Edpress competition. Winners were presented with certificates at the annual Edpress Awards Luncheon in Philadelphia, June 30.

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