

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 928

PS 015 568

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Issues in the Curriculum.
PUB DATE [83]
NOTE 42p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Educational Practices;
Elementary Education; *Elementary School Curriculum;
Teacher Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS *Curricular Debate; *Educational Issues

ABSTRACT

Discussed are numerous issues pertaining to the elementary school curriculum, including (1) behaviorally stated objectives; (2) selection of learning activities; (3) the structure of knowledge; (4) handwriting; (5) teaching of spelling; (6) use of basal readers; (7) the initial teaching alphabet; (8) arguments for a national curriculum; (9) teaching of grammar; (10) balance in the mathematics curriculum; (11) inductive versus deductive learning; (12) reality in the social studies; (13) individual versus group work; (14) using standard versus nonstandard English; (15) foreign language in the elementary school; (16) use of specific guidelines by supervisors making observations of classroom teaching; (17) tuition vouchers; (18) accountability; and (19) open-space education. Generally, the discussions point out advantages and disadvantages associated with particular issues and provide a sense of current educational practices in the United States that are related to these issues. (RH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it
Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy

Issues in the Curriculum

Dr. Marlow Ediger
Professor of Education
Division of Education
Northeast Missouri State University
Kirksville, MO 63501

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlow
Ediger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

ED265928

PS 015568

ISSUES IN THE CURRICULUM:

Faculty members in an elementary school must study issues thoroughly pertaining to the elementary school curriculum. There are no easy answers to certain problems in the elementary school curriculum. It would be easier to make curricular decisions if clear cut answers could be found in selected problem areas. Thus, the teacher, principal, and supervisor must gather much information pertaining to both or several sides of an issue. Educational literature, such as periodicals, pamphlets, professional textbooks, and other reference sources should be used in gathering the needed information. Faculty members must take time to talk to other professionals in the field in discussing issues relating to developing the elementary school curriculum. Information that is obtained should be evaluated thoroughly in order to make the best decision or decisions possible in improving the elementary school curriculum.

Behaviorally Stated Objectives as an Issue

In the past few years much emphasis has been placed on writing behaviorally stated objectives. Objectives that are behaviorally stated generally follow the following criteria:

1. These objectives are stated precisely as to what learners will be achieving as a result of teaching.
2. These objectives are generally stated in terms of what learners are to achieve and not what the teacher will be doing to teach pupils.
3. Words which lack clarity are omitted in writing behaviorally stated objectives; the omitted words include the following: to enjoy, to appreciate, to know, to understand, to get insight, to believe, to have skill in, and others.
4. Pupil achievement can be measured if the objectives have been achieved.
5. Teachers can observe if learners have achieved the behaviorally stated objectives.

There certainly are advantages as well as disadvantages in writing ob-

jectives behaviorally. One must first realize that not all advocates of behaviorally stated objectives would agree as to the degree of precision that these objectives should be written. Then, too, some objectives can be written more precisely as compared to other objectives:

1. The pupil will write the names of four farm animals.
2. The pupil will perform a folk dance of France.
3. The student will write a paragraph of sixty words on urban life in Great Britain.

In the first objective, there perhaps, is very little interpretation as to the content pupils will be learning. There may be some disagreement in terms of a few animals. For example, would "rabbit" be considered a farm animal that would fit into the category of being domesticated? The answer, no doubt, lies in the kind of rabbit that is being considered, wild or tame. Secondly, is a rabbit considered to be a farm animal? Or, are rabbits considered to be more of animals that live in woodlands, as well as in some areas of a large or small city.

The second objective is more general than the first objective. However, it also is behaviorally stated. One can observe if pupils can perform a folk dance as a result of learning experience. Vagueness exists in the objective in that some pupils will perform the folk dance better as compared to other learners in the class setting. There will be degrees of "good," "better," and "best" in pupils ultimately performing the desired dance.

The third objective is also behaviorally stated. There are many questions one can ask about the final product that pupils will have completed.

1. Does the evaluator count correct spelling in evaluating the final product?
2. How much attention should be given to good handwriting in the written work?
3. What constitutes good content when writing the sixty word paragraph on urban life in Great Britain? Is one sixty word paragraph equal or equivalent to another sixty word paragraph as long as it deals with urban life in Great Britain?

4. Would all evaluators of the written product agree as to it having or not having met the behaviorally stated objective?

The writer is pointing out the fact that many objectives classified as behaviorally stated objectives are general in nature thus leaving room for interpretation as to what pupils are to learn or achieve. The following objective also meets standards pertaining to precise, specific objectives:

The pupil will answer nine out of ten true-false items correctly.

In this objective much leeway, of course, exists as to what pupils will be learning. The true-false items could be as simple as the following:

Paris is the capital city of France.
 $2+3=5$

Or, they could be of the following difficulty:

Turkey is considered as a part of the Middle East.
 $213 \times 85 = 18,005$

Thus, many behaviorally stated objectives are very broad or general and leave much room for interpretation as to what pupils will be learning.

A further question that can be raised about behaviorally stated objectives pertains to how many sets of objectives should be written for a specific class of learners. For example, should the teacher write one set of objectives for each unit taught in social studies, science, mathematics, language arts, and the other curriculum areas in the elementary school? Or, should a separate set of objectives be written for fast learners, for average achievers, and still a different set of objectives for the slow learner? The number of objectives then that would need to be written would be endless. Advocates of behaviorally stated objectives emphasize that main focus in teaching should pertain to the stated objectives or ends and not the means to an end. Learning activities pertain to means toward an end or approaches in guiding pupils in realizing desirable objectives. If a teacher has written many behaviorally stated objectives, he still doesn't have any learning activities to use in teaching. In many cases it will be difficult to select learning activities which help

pupils directly to realize a specific objective or many specific objectives. For example, the teacher has written the following objective for pupils to achieve in a unit pertaining to "Living in the Middle East."

The pupil will list in writing six agricultural products produced in the Middle East.

The following could be some of the materials used as learning activities in helping pupils achieve this objective:

- reading from the textbook or textbooks
- reading information from encyclopedias
- gathering data from reputable almanacs
- viewing and discussing slides, filmstrips, and films
- interviewing a resource person
- reading pamphlets and newspaper articles
- reading newsmagazines

The chances are that pupils will be gaining much additional information other than that contained in the objective. Writers of behaviorally stated objectives advocate that objectives be stated in advance prior to teaching pupils in a specific class. Then, the teacher should select learning activities which will assist learners in realizing the desired objectives. This leaves little or no room for pupils to learn other things than what is stated in the objective. Pupils have important questions they wish to have answered. New objectives should arise in the class as units of study progress, as well as when these units come to an end. Can the teacher state all objectives for learners to achieve prior to teaching? As teaching-learning situations progress in a class setting, new objectives arise on the part of learners as well as the teacher. Predetermined objectives would need to be revised as the teacher continues teaching a unit or a specific lesson. The teacher may think of better objectives than those stated prior to teaching a unit or even a lesson for a particular day. The teacher may also feel and think that selected objectives should be omitted or revised as pupils are engaging in difficult learning activities.

A further question pertaining to behavioral objectives arises as the teacher attempts to sequence learnings for pupils. Can the teacher predetermine prior to teaching proper sequence of learnings for pupils? Or, do pupils sequence many of their own learnings with questions that are identified and problems that are solved by learners? The issue would pertain to who should do the sequencing of pupil learnings—the teacher, or children, or cooperative efforts by the teacher and learners.

Selecting Learning Activities as an Issue

Educators, of course, agree that a variety of learning activities should be provided for pupils to provide for individual differences. In actual practice, there still are teachers that cling to the use of textbooks basically in teaching of pupils.

The issue involved in the selection of a variety of learning activities is centered on the problem of who should do the selecting. The teacher could engage in selecting all of the learning activities to provide for individual differences in a class. The assumption here is that the teacher can do the best job of selecting these activities. A further assumption is that it is up to the teacher to know individual pupils in terms of capacity, achievement, interests, and motivation and thus select learning activities which can help each child develop to the highest possible in all facets of development. The question arises as to the teacher alone being able to determine what is best for learners. Can the teacher have the understandings, skills, and attitudes to do this? At the other end of the continuum, one can think of good learning activities where pupils do much of the selecting of activities for learning with the assistance of the teacher. Thus, pupils can identify important problem areas and select necessary resources to solve these problems. Also, pupils can evaluate their achievement in having arrived at satisfactory solutions toward these problems. The teacher would serve as a consultant and

guide rather than as a lecturer or explainer of facts, concepts, and generalizations.

A further problem arises as to the sequencing of these activities. Should these learning activities be sequenced as advocates of programmed learning would emphasize? The programmer would then sequence learnings so that pupils progress in very small steps basically are continuously successful in each step of learning. Toward the other end of the continuum, pupils with teacher guidance could do much of their own sequencing with self-selection of learning activities used in the solving of problem areas. Learners should select activities which would be meaningful, interesting, purposeful, and provide for individual differences within a class. These learning activities, of course, could help learners achieve objectives which they had previously identified. New objectives can also be identified as the unit progresses with related learning activities selected by pupils with teacher guidance.

Structure of Knowledge as an Issue

In the 1960's much emphasis was placed upon specialists in a given academic area identifying key ideas or generalizations for students to realize. The thinking was that college and university professors specializing in a particular discipline would have much to offer pupils in terms of gaining important ideas. The advantages given for emphasizing the structure of knowledge, among others, were the following:

1. Irrelevant learnings would have a tendency to be weeded out.
2. Pupils would learn and approach a discipline as specialists in the field would select, evaluate, and gather data or information.
3. Learners would utilize methods or approaches in gathering data that specialists in a specific discipline use.
4. Important concepts and generalizations would then be developed by pupils.

Many educators today question the values of having pupils work only as specialists in a given discipline would work. After all, when pupils are curious, they identify their own questions and problem areas. They may also wish to read content if it is or is not related to key ideas recommended by a specialist in a specific academic area. Thus, what specialists in a given discipline hold to be important, learners may not have the same perception. Elementary school pupils, of course, are much younger than college and university professors who specialize in a given academic discipline. Interests change within individuals as they progress through the different levels of schooling and on toward a particular vocation or profession.

A further question which can be discussed pertains to academicians being able to agree on key ideas or generalizations within a discipline. For example, could economists agree as to which generalizations would be important for pupils to achieve? Or, could historians agree as to which ideas could be considered to represent the "structure of history?" To be sure, academicians can and have made a tremendous contribution in identifying important concepts and generalizations that learners should achieve. They have also contributed much in stating methods or approaches to gaining and testing knowledge within a specific discipline. Certainly, elementary school pupils too frequently have learned that which is irrelevant and unimportant.

There needs to be some kind of rational balance between what academicians emphasize as being important for learners to achieve and what curious pupils feel is important to learn. There also must be balance in methods that specialists in a given academic discipline use and methods that the pupils develop creatively in the solving of problems.

Handwriting as an Issue

Many teachers in elementary schools of the United States use handwriting booklets to teach handwriting to pupils. These textbooks used in teaching

handwriting attempt to provide sequential learnings for pupils. Many teachers have pupils follow the pages through in sequence as written in these textbooks in formal periods of time devoted to the teaching of handwriting.

In some elementary schools of the United States no textbooks for pupils are used in the teaching of handwriting. The thinking here is that pupils can be assisted in developing legible handwriting when the need arises. The emphasis is not upon pupils completing the different exercises in a specific textbook in the order presented to achieve sequential learnings. For example, if individual pupils have difficulties in forming specific upper or lower case letters, the teacher then would assist learners in remedying the difficulty experienced in handwriting. The same would be true of the following kinds of specific errors that pupils would be experiencing:

1. proper and uniformity of slant of letters
2. proper proportion of individual letters
3. good alignment of letters and words
4. appropriate spacing between words and between letters

Thus, the issue in the teaching of handwriting pertains to the use or non-use of handwriting textbooks to be used in teaching pupils. These two points of view could be represented by points at either end of a continuum. In between these two points of view, one can think of various alternatives. For example, the handwriting textbook could be used in teaching pupils when learners have a need to see models which would improve legibility in handwriting in this facet of the language arts curriculum. If a pupil has difficulty in forming the letter "b," he can use the handwriting textbook to notice a model "b" and thus practice the writing of this particular letter of the alphabet until it is legible. As a further example, if a pupil cannot write the cursive letters "e" and "l" in proper proportion, the handwriting textbook could serve as a model for pupils in providing practice so that proper proportion of letters is the end result or objective in teaching. Thus, some kind of balance based on

critical thinking should be in evidence between heavy emphasis and nonuse of textbooks pertaining to the teaching of handwriting to elementary school pupils.

Advantages given for the use of handwriting textbooks in teaching pupils could include the following:

1. They give teachers security in the teaching of handwriting.
2. The writers of these textbooks have attempted to provide sequential learnings for pupils.
3. Specific methodology is given to assist teachers in the teaching of handwriting.
4. Experts in the field have given their time and attention to helping pupils achieve legibility in handwriting.
5. Research findings have been utilized in writing handwriting textbooks for pupils.
6. Handwriting textbooks provide models for pupils to utilize in developing legible handwriting.

Disadvantages which can be given for the use of handwriting textbooks could be the following:

1. Sequence in learning may not be sequential from the child's own perception.
2. Pupils too frequently practice that which they already can do well.
3. Textbooks are not the most interesting materials for pupils to utilize when teachers provide learning activities for children.
4. Teachers may rely too heavily upon these textbooks thus resulting in a lack of creative teaching.
5. Pupils may and do become bored with "routiness" in learning activities and teaching procedures.

Teachers need to think of creative approaches to the teaching of handwriting. These new approaches should provide for individual differences and continuous achievement on the part of each pupil.

Teaching of Spelling as an Issue

Most elementary schools in the United States utilize textbooks in the teaching of spelling in the elementary school. These textbooks generally con-

tain on a weekly basis a list of spelling words for pupils to master on the different grade levels of the elementary school. Various learning activities for pupils are contained in these textbooks to assist learners in mastering the spelling of words. Questions that can be asked pertaining to the use of spelling textbooks could be the following:

1. Are these words commonly used by pupils in writing business letters, friendly letters, stories, summaries, and in other functional writing activities?
2. Do pupils sense purpose in learning to spell these words?
3. Are adequate provisions made for individual differences within a class?
4. Do learners have ample opportunities to use these words in new situations that arise?
5. Are the learning activities based on important principles of learning such as learner interests, needs, and abilities?
6. Do the learning activities in the spelling textbook assist in developing motivated pupils?
7. Do these textbooks provide for gifted pupils as well as the slow learner?
8. Do teachers become rigid and formal in their teaching due to the use of these textbooks?

Much can be said in favor of using textbooks in teaching elementary spelling. The following would be strong points in using these textbooks:

1. Generally, the lists of words in spelling textbooks have been selected on the basis of research studies pertaining to words most commonly used in writing by pupils in the elementary grades.
2. Lists of words for pupils to master in spelling and various learning activities to assist learners in learning to spell these words are contained in the spelling textbooks to give teachers security in teaching.
3. Writers of spelling textbooks attempt to provide sequential learnings for pupils.
4. Teachers generally would not have time to develop an entirely creative spelling curriculum without the use of textbooks.
5. Attempts are made to provide for slow, average, and fast learners within the framework of utilizing spelling textbooks.
6. There are varied learning activities that pupils can pursue in a spelling textbook.

7. Teachers can evaluate how well each pupil has mastered a given list of words that come from a spelling textbook.

It appears that a middle ground position can be taken pertaining to the use of spelling textbooks. Recommendations that can be made relating to a spelling program which would provide for individual differences in terms of needs, interests, and abilities could be the following:

1. Pretest pupils on a list of spelling words for a particular week; thus learners would not need to study the spelling of words which have already been mastered.
2. Adjust the number of words each child is to learn to spell in a week according to the present achievement level of the learner; each pupil must feel successful in the spelling curriculum.
3. Utilize words from social studies, science, and other units of study to provide spelling words for gifted and talented pupils, as well as those who are highly motivated in wanting to learn to spell words.
4. Use other learning activities than those contained in the textbook to stimulate pupils in wanting to learn to spell.
5. Develop a weekly list for each pupil according to those words which are misspelled in everyday functional writing; adjust the number of words for each child so that success on the part of each learner will be an inherent part of the spelling program.
6. Praise pupils for doing better work in spelling; all learners desire praise for improved performance!

Basal Readers as an Issue

Basal readers are used quite commonly in many elementary schools of the United States. Generally, a basal reader series published by one of the leading textbook companies in the United States is used in an elementary school. A supplementary basal reader may be used as additional reading materials to complement or follow the main series of readers being utilized. Writers of basal readers attempt to control the number of new words added for each page of content, especially for the early primary years. Thus, young readers don't have too many new words to identify on any one page. With a carefully controlled vocabulary, learners learn to read a few new words each day. Basal readers as a whole have well developed teacher's manuals which provide the classroom teacher

many ideas and approaches to utilize in teaching a given set of pupils. For example, in providing readiness for reading a given selection, the teacher's manual may have suggestions such as the following for teaching pupils:

1. Different approaches will be mentioned in having pupils develop background information for reading content. With teacher guidance, pupils can discuss the pictures related to the content learners will be reading. This helps pupils understand the content better that will be read later either silently or orally. The teacher could also use pictures from her own file, a film or filmstrip, slides, or an excursion to develop background information that would relate to the story that pupils will be reading.
2. As background ideas are being discussed with pupils, the new words that will be met in print can be printed in neat manuscript letters on the chalkboard. (Approaches and methods in teaching should always be varied). Pupils thus see the new words in print on the chalkboard before reading the new selection silently or orally.
3. Meanings of the new words written on the chalkboard should be discussed with pupils. It is important that students obtain the meaning of these words as they are used in context in the selection to be read.
4. Pupils should also sense purpose in reading. Thus, learners should, prior to this time, have raised a question for which they would want information. The information ideally would then come from silent or oral reading using the basal reader. The teacher can also state the purpose or question(s) for which learners would read to get information.

Following the reading, the teacher would discuss answers to the established purpose or purposes. This would assist the teacher in evaluating comprehension in reading. The teacher can emphasize the following purposes in reading: reading for facts; critical reading; reading to follow directions; creative reading; reading for the main idea; and reading for a sequence of ideas.

Enrichment activities can also become a part of the related learnings activities when reading from the basal reader. Here, pupils could read related stories and library books. Or, children could read stories and library books written by the same author who wrote the selection in basal reader. Related records, poems, and audio-visual materials could be utilized as enrichment activities along with the basal reader.

There are, of course, many advantages in using basal readers.

1. The manuals are well developed generally and provide the teacher with many suggestions for teaching.

2. The controlled vocabulary is an attempt to sequence new words that pupils meet in print.
3. Beginning teachers have much security in the teaching of reading with a teacher's manual that can be relied upon to guide in the teaching of reading.
4. Stories contained in basal readers are written to develop and maintain pupil interest in reading.
5. Much attention generally is paid to sequential learnings on the part of pupils pertaining to word attack skills.

Disadvantages in using basal readers in the elementary school could be the following:

1. The controlled vocabulary may destroy pupil interest in reading since the wording becomes rather repetitious on the early primary grade levels.
2. Pupils' interests differ from each other; it is very difficult to have learners in a class or even in a small group be interested in the same story contained in a basal reader.
3. Teachers may become rather formal and rigid in their teaching if the teacher's manual is followed thoroughly when teaching reading.
4. Each pupil is at a different achievement level in reading from other learners; a basal reader cannot provide for individual differences within a class in reading achievement.
5. The basal reader limits the scope of content which pupils may otherwise be reading.
6. Sequence in learning must be perceived from the pupil's point of view.

A possible compromise solution could exist pertaining to the use of basal readers and other approaches to reading, such as the individualized reading program. In the individualized reading program, each child basically would select his own library book to read on his own interest and difficulty level. The pupil ideally would read at his own optimum rate of speed. The book to be read should be on the child's reading level and not the frustrational level. A conference in a one to one relationship between teacher and pupil could follow after the learner has completed reading a library book. The teacher then could also use the basal reader approach in addition to the individualized reading program. The use of the basal reader would have its many strengths in

the following specific areas:

1. Guiding learners in word attack skills such as phonetic analysis, use of picture clues structural analysis, use of context clues, and use of configuration clues.
2. Helping learners in comprehension pertaining to a variety of purposes in reading, such as reading for facts, main ideas, directions, sequence of ideas, and generalizations. Critical and creative reading also should be emphasized.
3. In general, basal readers would be utilized to assist learners in developing sequential skills and abilities in reading.

The Initial Teaching Alphabet as an Issue

The Initial Teaching Alphabet, hereafter called the ITA, has much to recommend itself in introductory programs of reading for elementary school pupils. It, no doubt, is true that many pupils are hindered in reading achievement due to irregular spelling of words. In traditional ways of spelling English words, phonetic analysis can help much in writing words where there is consistency between symbol and sound as is true of words such as the following: man, end, sand, bet, bin, hen, and others. In the first word "man," the beginning consonant can be changed to form many new words in this family or pattern such as "can," "Dan," "Nan," "pan," "ran," "tan," and "van." The final consonant in the word "man" can be changed so that the following new words arise: "mad," "map," "mat," "mam," and "Max." Changing the letter "n" to a "y" in the word "man" brings on an inconsistency between symbol and sound (such as "y" being silent).

There are many words which have inconsistencies in spelling between symbol and sound. In the following words the vowel sound is the same; however, the spelling of the sound differs from word to word: blue, too, to, two, moon, tune, rheumatism, and new. With ITA symbols, the same symbol would be utilized for the vowel sound.

With the use of ITA symbols, learners are to gain security pertaining to consistency between symbol and sound in the language arts areas of reading and

spelling. Pupils have experienced difficulty in reading and spelling when inconsistencies exist, and when silent letters are an inherent part of certain words.

A major problem exists in using ITA symbols when pupils engage in making the transition to traditional ways of reading and spelling words. To be sure, certain words are spelled the same way using ITA and traditional letters of the alphabet. This can be illustrated, for example, with the following words: n.a.n, bat, set, map, tot, flop, and many other words.

A National Curriculum as an Issue

Selected educators in the United States advocate the implementation of a national curriculum. It is pointed out that high mobility of population in the United States makes it a necessity to provide better sequence of learnings for pupils than what commonly is the case today. A child in the fifth grade, for example, may be beginning a unit on Canada. He moves to a different school, city, or state, and the receiving school, for example, may be ending a unit on Brazil. There is little relationship between the two units being studied. Or, a pupil in the second grade is in the middle of a science unit on "Magnetism and Electricity." He moves to a different area and the receiving school is in the middle of a unit on "Rocks and Minerals." In the receiving school, in many cases, the new child will lack background learnings for the ongoing unit entitled "Rocks and Minerals." Thus, poor sequence in learnings is a part of the child's experiences when moving to a new area. It takes a conscientious teacher to provide a variety of rich learning activities which are sequential from the newly arrived child's point of view.

Advocates of a national curriculum would say that problems in pupil mobility and proper sequence in learning could be harmonized with some kind of agreement as to which units should be taught in the different curriculum areas of the elementary school. It, of course, would not be as rigid as in some

foreign countries where a member of the Ministry of Education could look at his watch and state somewhat accurately what fourth graders (or its equivalent) would be studying.

In the United States, there is a decentralized system of education. Local boards of education and faculty members have considerable freedom in determining which units of study should be taught and when the units of study should be taught. Thus local school districts have had much freedom in determining scope and sequence in different curriculum areas in the elementary school. The rationale back of this would be generalizations such as the following:

1. At the local level, there can be heavy involvement at the grassroots level in improving each curriculum area of the elementary school.
2. Faculty members can actually implement those methods and approaches to teaching which they have considered as following good criteria, standards, or guidelines.
3. Local interest, motivation, and initiative would be hindered with a national curriculum.
4. Purpose in improving the curriculum is highest when faculty members can sense a need for making selected changes.
5. At the local level, major provisions can be made to provide for individual differences within a class.

Advantages which can be given for a national curriculum could be the following:

1. Pupils would in most cases experience better sequence in learning.
2. More uniformity would exist in terms of what pupils would be learning thus making it necessary to identify important understandings, skills, and attitudes that pupils should develop.
3. Specialists in different academic disciplines as well as specialists in education on the national level could be heavily involved in helping to determine which learnings are important for pupils to obtain.
4. Flexibility could still be an important concept when thinking of a national curriculum.

Students of education need to study thoroughly the arguments for and against a national curriculum. One's own conclusions should be based upon understanding through much study and critical evaluation of what has been read.

In teaching pupils research results must be utilized to help each pupil achieve to the optimum.

The Teaching of Grammar as an Issue

Much time has been spent by the teacher in teaching grammar in the elementary school. Learners have been involved in much drill pertaining to learning the different parts of speech and being able to identify them in sentences. Pupils in many cases have experienced much difficulty in learning what a noun is, what a verb is, what adjectives and adverbs are, as well as the other parts of speech. Traditional grammar has emphasized that the definition of a noun is that it refers to a person, place, or thing, while linguists may state that nouns are words which can be changed from singular to plural or plural to singular. Thus in proper context boy, man, woman, and toy would be nouns since these words which are singular can be changed to plural: boys, men, women, and toys. There, of course, has been confusion in traditional grammar as to selected words pertaining to nouns referring to the broad category of things. There is further confusion in traditional grammar when verbs are referred to as action words. The following sentence would indicate the problem that is involved: Singing is my favorite leisure time activity. "Singing" is the only word in the sentence that could be called an action word and yet it is the subject of the sentence. Thus, traditional grammar would have its weakness here in saying that verbs pertain to action words. It is also confusing in this sentence when thinking of a noun being a word that can be changed from singular to plural using the linguistic frame of reference. The word "singing" requires a verb which is singular. It would be incorrect to say "Singing are my favorite leisure time activity." Thus, it is difficult for learners to conceive of singing as being a word that can be changed from singular to plural and vice versa. The word "singing" is a verbal and, of course, in traditional grammar would be called a gerund. Among other

ways, gerunds can be used as subjects of sentences. Verbals seemingly do not fit the classification scheme of either traditional grammar or the linguistic approach.

Many elementary school pupils today study traditional grammar. No doubt, teachers in these schools feel more comfortable using this approach. Inservice education programs provided by the various public schools have also been lacking when thinking of implementing the linguistic approach to the teaching of grammar.

A further problem pertaining to the teaching of grammar pertains to values obtained by learners. Questions that can be asked about the teaching of grammar could be the following:

1. Does a study of grammar assist pupils in communicating ideas well orally?
2. Are pupils improving in the area of written communication due to a study of grammar?
3. Do learners enjoy studying grammar in the language arts curriculum?
4. Is interest in learning being developed when pupils study grammar?
5. Does the study of grammar make sense to learners?
6. Do learners sense reasons for the study of grammar?
7. Do pupils understand how the English language operates through the study of grammar?
8. Can individual differences in achievement be provided for?
9. Are desirable attitudes developed within learners?
10. Are learnings that pupils have developed transferable to new situations in life?
11. Are higher levels of thinking being emphasized other than rote learning and drill?
12. Can variety of meaningful learning activities be provided for pupils in the teaching of grammar?
13. Is time wasted in the teaching of grammar whereby pupils could develop other learnings which would be more useful?

There are kindergarten and first grade pupils who, of course, have

basically no knowledge of grammar, and yet they speak standard English well. Some educators have wondered how effective the teaching of grammar has been to assist learners in using the English language more effectively. A study of grammar must make its positive contributions to the language arts curriculum and the broad, general objectives of elementary education.

Balance in the Mathematics curriculum as an Issue

With the advancement of modern mathematics, pupils have studied much more geometry as compared to the decade of the 1950's. On the primary grade levels, learners, in many cases, have developed complex learnings pertaining to such concepts as lines, rays, line segments, points, simple and nonsimple curves, and open and closed curves. Prior to the 1960's, these and other concepts generally were taught at the intermediate and upper grade levels. It, no doubt, is true that teachers of elementary school children are better educated than ever before. They should possess much knowledge pertaining to teaching-learning situations. There are more research results which educators can lean upon in the teaching of children than ever before. More professional textbooks are available pertaining to the teaching of children than ever before. More and better teaching aids are available in the teaching of elementary school mathematics than ever before.

Prior to the 1960's, heavy emphasis was placed upon the teaching of arithmetic to elementary school pupils; this was followed by an increased emphasis upon pupils developing more learnings in the areas of geometry as well as algebra. All educators would realize the importance of geometry as well as algebra in the mathematics curriculum. There definitely needs to be balance based on critical thought among arithmetic, algebra, and geometry in the curriculum area of mathematics. There are certain questions which can be asked pertaining to implementing the concept of balance in the mathematics curriculum:

1. Can the learner use in functional every day life situations that which has been learned in mathematics?
2. Do pupils feel that reasons exist for studying each of the separate areas that make up the mathematics curriculum?
3. Are child growth and development characteristics adequately considered when developing the mathematics curriculum?
4. Is critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving encouraged in mathematics rather than drill on definitions and giving correct answers to basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts?
5. Has a rational balance, based on criteria, been established within an elementary school among arithmetic, algebra, and geometry?

It is important that pupils be able to utilize learnings obtained from school in actual life situations outside of the class setting.

Inductive vs. Deductive Learning as an Issue

Many new programs and materials pertaining to teaching the different curriculum areas in the elementary school emphasize the inductive approach to learning. Educators, generally, also emphasize the importance of pupils learning by discovery. The following reasons among others, are generally given for having pupils learn inductively as compared to the deductive approach:

1. Pupils are more thoroughly involved in the ongoing learning activity.
2. It keeps learners "on their toes" when responding to questions asked by the teacher and other pupils pertaining to an audio-visual presentation as well as other materials and ideas used in teaching.
3. Pupils become more interested in learning.
4. The teacher gets more feedback on pupil achievement.
5. The teacher can adjust learning activities better to the present achievement levels of individual learners.
6. Problem solving, critical and creative thinking can be emphasized thoroughly in teaching.

Disadvantages can also be listed for using the inductive approach. Among the disadvantages are the following:

1. Inductive learning is time consuming when there is much for pupils to learn.

2. Pupils do not need to rediscover what already has been discovered by man in the past.
3. Learners learn best when gradually moving from the concrete to the abstract rather than debating the inductive versus deductive approach to teaching.
4. With the "explosion of knowledge" as a trend in American society, objectives that children are to achieve should be selected carefully with economy of time in learning being a very important factor.

Reality in the Social Studies as an Issue

A major problem that is being discussed more and more in educational literature pertains to how much of reality should pupils experience in various units of study. To be sure, almost no one would be opposed to pupils experiencing reality in the following examples:

1. Pupils visiting a modern farm when a unit on the farm is being studied.
2. Learners taking an excursion to a modern supermarket when studying a unit on "Visiting the Supermarket."
3. Pupils actually seeing an assembly line at work when studying a unit on "Manufacturing in the United States."

There are numerous other examples, of course, that can be given in having learners develop positive understandings, skills, and attitudes in various social studies units as a result of experiencing reality.

There are selected questions which can be raised pertaining to other facets of living where it is an issue as to how much experience with reality pupils should have.

1. How much knowledge, for example, should pupils gain about violence in society?
2. If it is agreeable that pupils should develop these understandings as completely as possible, how can they develop feelings, that individuals have, representing these diverse points of view?
3. Would understandings such as these hinder in social and, particularly, emotional development of learners?
4. Should pupils develop learnings pertaining to both the positive and negative sides of American foreign policy? (There would be balance here based on rational thinking.)

5. Would learners then become democratic individuals, as well as good citizens, in their dealings with others?

These are questions that cannot be brushed aside lightly. In a democracy, it is necessary to have much information to use in decision-making processes. The issue arises as to how much experience learners should have with reality. The thinking of educators differs much in this problem area. The thinking of the lay public also differs much from person to person. One only needs to observe parents who carefully control which programs on television their children can observe. Other parents leave it entirely up to the child to select programs for observation on television.

Individual Versus Group Work as an Issue

Numerous programs in education are available for the elementary school years whereby pupils generally work on an individual basis. Some of these programs are the following:

1. Individual reading.
2. Programmed learning.
3. Individualized spelling (without the use of textbooks).

Textbooks can also be utilized on an individual basis entirely. For example, learners could complete a spelling textbook at their own individual maximum rate of speed. The pupils, of course, would learn to spell words correctly with an agreed upon percent of accuracy.

Reasons generally given for a totally individualized program of study for each learner are the following:

1. Each pupil has a different intelligence and achievement level as compared to other pupils in a class setting.
2. Learners' interests vary from each other.
3. Each child works at a different rate of speed.
4. No two individuals are motivated equally or in the same way.

It is a fact that all curriculum areas in the elementary school could be individualized to the point where each pupil would be working on something different from other children in the class. Each pupil would then be working at a different rate of speed on the learning activity. It is only sound educational thinking to provide for individual differences in a class. It is detrimental to a child generally to be working on a task which is uninteresting, too difficult or too easy, and lacks purpose.

Pupils also need to have opportunities to work in group situations. Social development of the learner is of utmost importance. Thus learners must have opportunities to work in committees. The following learning activities in different curriculum areas of the elementary school lend themselves well to having pupils work on committees:

1. making maps in social studies.
2. doing research on a particular problem area.
3. being on a panel or a member of a buzz group.
4. solving problems through a discussion.
5. interviewing resource personnel.
6. conducting experiments in science.
7. arriving at main ideas and generalizations inductively.
8. developing an experience chart cooperatively.
9. making dioramas, friezes, and murals.
10. constructing models and replicas.
11. engaging in choral reading.
12. participating in a dramatic activity.
13. singing together with others.
14. participating in games and physical education in general.

15. discussing content after having viewed a film, filmstrip, a set of slides, or a series of pictures.

The programs previously mentioned for elementary school pupils such as individualized reading are important in terms of providing for individual differences. Teachers must provide for all pupils in a class. The classroom teacher should also assist pupils to do well in social adjustment and development.

There is a delicate balance between helping pupils to achieve to their optimum on an individual basis and guiding learners to develop well socially. Thus, teachers, administrators, and supervisors need to think of balance in the curriculum between individual needs and social needs.

Using Standard Versus Nonstandard English as an Issue

There are, of course, learners who come from homes where non-standard English is spoken. These pupils may even speak the English language where it sounds somewhat foreign to a person accustomed to hearing standard English spoken continually. These pupils may use words such as the following:

- "cust" meaning money
- "hog" meaning an expensive car
- "tote" meaning to carry
- "flat" meaning house
- "crib" meaning house also
- "taters" or "spuds" meaning potatoes.

Selected pupils may also use sentences where the subject and predicate do not agree. "Ain't" may also be a common word in their speaking vocabulary. The "ing" ending words may be pronounced in the following ways: runnin, jumpin, singin, swimmin, and doin. To be sure a child does express himself clearly using the following choice of words:

I ain't got no money nohow. No doubt, the following choice of words using standard English does not express thoughts any clearer: I have no money. Effective communication of ideas is important. Thus, individuals can communicate ideas clearly and effectively in standard as well as nonstandard English. In American society, of course, a premium is placed upon speaking standard English. In most cases, to get better paying positions in desired environments, communicating ideas using standard English is rewarded as compared to nonstandard English, all things otherwise being equal.

The child coming from a home where nonstandard English is spoken will also speak nonstandard English. The language that is spoken is learned. Thus, pupils growing up in a home where the German language is spoken largely or only, will generally become quite proficient in speaking the German language. Thus, teachers must consider the speaking of standard or nonstandard English as learned behavior. The home may reward individuals who speak nonstandard English only, when communicating ideas. Thus, in home situations such as these, speaking standard English may not sound right and may be frowned upon. The child then is caught in a dilemma where the home emphasizes and rewards the speaking of nonstandard English. Teachers in an elementary school may reward the speaking of standard English only. They may actually call down students who choose words in speaking which do not follow the criteria of standard English. Or, pupils may be corrected so frequently in speaking that little desire is left to communicate ideas orally in front of the classroom teacher. Certainly, all pupils need to feel good about themselves. They need to feel free to participate in ongoing learning activities involving oral communication. "Calling pupils down" or minimizing their approaches

to speaking will be detrimental to learners when developing an adequate self-concept or being creative in the area of oral communication of ideas. There must be better approaches in bridging the gap between standard and nonstandard English for pupils coming from homes where usage is not in harmony with middle class homes. Questions that can be asked pertaining to closing this gap are the following:

1. Could pupils speak nonstandard English at home and in the community, with standard English being emphasized in school in a nonthreatening manner?
2. Could teachers be educated to accept all pupils as they are presently and help each to make continuous progress?
3. Can an adequate number of good models be provided for learners so that appropriate learnings can be developed pertaining to standard English?
4. Can pupils be assisted to feel good about themselves if standard, as well as nonstandard English is spoken?

Foreign Language in the Elementary School as an Issue

With the passage of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 more money was spent on foreign language instruction in the elementary school as compared to earlier times. The NDEA act provided for money on a matching basis to the public schools for equipment, materials, and other needed items to organize and implement instruction in foreign languages, among other curriculum areas.

One major problem that exists for any elementary school is to determine which foreign language, if any, should be taught. Regional differences in the United States would assist in determining in some cases which foreign language should be taught. For example, in New Orleans, Louisiana, French could be important for pupils to study. In southern Texas, the Spanish language

would be most functional of any foreign language to teach. In other areas of the United States, there are German speaking communities as well as communities where Swedish, Italian, Polish, and other languages are spoken. In many areas of the United States, there, perhaps, would be little preference, if any, for learning a foreign language which could be used in a functional situation. Thus, one issue inherent in the teaching a foreign language is which language should be taught to learners.

A second issue would pertain to when pupils should be taught a foreign language. Pupils who grow up in a community where another language, in addition to English, is spoken will generally become proficient in using the second language while conversing and discussing with others in purposeful situations. Thus, all things being equal, the younger the child, the sooner he will learn to speak a foreign language. Youngsters learn a language through imitation. They repeat what older brothers and sisters, parents, and other people in the environment have said. Thus, the individual learns to speak a language which he has exposure to. One learns to speak a language; it is learned behavior and not inherited. Infants also learn a language by experimenting with different words individually, within a phrase, or within a sentence. Thus, in trying out new words on a trial and error basis, the child makes many mistakes. He gradually learns which words are used incorrectly. Trial and error is one way of learning. Many understandings, skills, and attitudes are learned in this way. Modification of behavior generally comes about when pupils try out new words. Feedback gives pupils responses as to words being utilized in a proper context. Thus the child must be exposed to a foreign language at a young age in order to learn the new language effectively. It takes much practice to be able to pronounce words accurately and clearly in a foreign language.

A third issue pertains to an already overcrowded elementary curriculum. Is there ample time to teach a foreign language in the elementary school?

when the language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, health and physical education, music, and art all need and demand their share of time in a modern elementary school? Many elementary teachers today say there is not enough time in a school without the inclusion of foreign language instruction. If foreign language instruction is included in the elementary school, other curriculum area or areas need to be deemphasized in degrees in terms of allotted time.

A fourth issue pertains to the need to learn a second language in the United States. It is true that there are communities where a different language is spoken other than English. Could this other language be learned effectively in the home in functional speaking situations? There are many Americans that travel abroad, but is a second language used frequently enough by these people to warrant teaching it in the public schools? Can educators determine which foreign language pupils will need in the future? There are selected foreign languages which are more popular than others in the public schools. However, the importance of a particular foreign language can change.

Certainly, the teaching of a foreign language in the elementary school has many advantages. Among these would be the following:

1. The pupil should develop a better understanding of the problems that are involved in learning to speak a language.
2. Learners should develop appreciations pertaining to the surrounding culture of a particular language. If pupils are learning to speak the French language, they should also develop positive attitudes toward the music, art, architecture, history, geography, foods, crops, and culture in general of France.
3. Pupils can have opportunities to converse with others who have grown up speaking the foreign language being studied in the elementary school.
4. Learners should develop an attitude of appreciation in learning to speak a foreign language.
5. The child will have a better chance to communicate with others in a foreign language when situations in life demand this.

The Criterion Referenced Supervisor as an Issue

Educators continually advocate that the elementary school curriculum, as well as other levels of schooling, be improved. Each curriculum area needs to be kept up-to-date. Thus, trends in each curriculum area should be studied thoroughly. In light of these recommended trends, the elementary school curriculum should be changed from where it is presently to the recommended level. Teachers, principals, supervisors, and the lay public should be thoroughly knowledgeable and accepting of the trends before they are implemented.

One approach to improving the elementary school curriculum would be to conduct observational visits to observe classroom teaching. The purpose of the observational visit would be to focus upon improved objectives, learning activities, and evaluation techniques in each curriculum area of the elementary school. In the observational visit, the supervisor could focus upon objectives as compared to learning activities. Or, the supervisor could place major emphasis upon the quality of learning activities provided for pupils rather than the stated objectives. Following the observational visit the supervisor and teacher could have a conference to evaluate the quality of teaching. Agreed upon ways of improving the quality of teaching could be recorded and filed for future reference by the supervisor. In future observational visits, the supervisor can first study the filed observational notes to notice improvement in the quality of teaching from one time to the next.

A relatively new approach to making observational visits has been developed by advocates of behavioral objectives. The criterion-referenced supervisor goes by specific guidelines when making observational visits. The very first task of the criterion-referenced supervisor would be to look at the stated objectives written by the classroom teacher where the observational visit is being made. The supervisor has an important responsibility in

making recommendations for revising, modifying, or eliminating selected objectives. Once the objectives are accepted by both teacher and supervisor, the latter observes the quality of teaching to determine if pupils are achieving the objectives. If the behavioral objectives are achieved, the teacher has fulfilled her responsibilities providing that this was not done under negative conditions. Guidelines recommended by educational psychologists must be followed when teaching pupils. Pupils must be interested in the ongoing learning activity. They must also attach meaning to what is being learned. Certainly, pupil purpose in learning is also important.

If pupils did not achieve the stated objectives, the teacher and supervisor must notice if the goals were too difficult to achieve. Evaluation must also be done of the learning activities to determine if they hindered learners in realizing the desired goals.

In the criterion-referenced approach to supervision, it is quite obvious that major emphasis is placed upon behaviorally stated objectives rather than the learning activities which are provided for pupils. Focus is placed upon the learning activities if learners do not achieve the objectives. The criterion-referenced approach to supervision emphasizes objectivity. It emphasizes that pupil achievement can be measured. Learners then demonstrate if they have or have not achieved an objective. Thus, the criterion-referenced supervisor can notice the amount of learning that has taken place. With this approach, the success or lack of success of the teacher in teaching can be observed. Evaluation of teaching success is objective when viewing it from the point of view emphasized by the criterion-referenced approach to supervision of instruction.

Advantages in using the criterion-referenced strategy in supervising instruction would be the following:

1. It has a tendency to be more objective than other approaches since success in teaching is measured in terms of pupils having achieved behavioral objectives.

2. Teachers have more security in being evaluated since effectiveness in teaching is measured against the criteria or stated behavioral objectives.
3. The teacher can gather data pertaining to pupil success in learning by noticing if learners have achieved objectives.
4. The supervisor has security in evaluating teacher effectiveness by assessing learner achievement in terms of stated specific objectives.
5. The supervisor has opportunities to modify and/or suggest other behavioral objectives than those written by the teacher.
6. The effectiveness of materials and learning activities used in teaching can be evaluated in terms of the teacher's written behavioral objectives.

Disadvantages that can be listed for the criterion-referenced strategy pertaining to supervising instruction could be the following:

1. The supervisor may have little time to evaluate the relevancy of the teacher's behaviorally stated objectives prior to observing classroom teaching.
2. It is difficult to determine if the behavioral objectives which learners are to achieve could be classified as being relevant.
3. Some of the better quality objectives that learners are to achieve take much time in writing and may be difficult to state as behavioral objectives.
4. Subjectivity is involved in determining which objectives pupils are to achieve.
5. Learners may not always reveal in the supervisor's presence which objectives have been achieved.
6. It is difficult to write behavioral objectives which are attainable for pupils.
7. The teacher may feel pressure in having learner's achieve the behaviorally stated objectives.
8. Other important objectives can arise in the teaching-learning situation than what is stated in the behavioral objectives. This would be true when pupils identify important questions when pursuing ongoing learning activities.

Thus, the criterion-referenced strategy pertaining to the supervision of instruction has its strengths as well as weaknesses. If elementary schools adopt this procedure, teachers, principals, and supervisors must be knowledgeable of its philosophy and accept this approach as being worthwhile. Approaches

used to improve the elementary school curriculum must be based on sound educational thinking.

The Tuition Voucher as an Issue

Literature on the tuition voucher has become more frequent in educational journals. The tuition voucher system is used in a very few schools in the United States. It is in an experimental stage where the federal government is aiding these efforts. The tuition voucher plan has as a central idea the giving of tuition money to parents to send their child or children to a school of their own choosing. With parents in selected situations being displeased with their pupils' performance, a teacher can be selected from another school who it is believed can do a better job of providing for individual differences among learners.

Advantages of this plan in aiding learners to obtain a better education could be the following:

1. There is an attempt here in helping children get the best education possible by having parents select the best teacher who can help their offspring realize optimum achievement.
2. This would cause teachers to be selected on a competitive basis and, perhaps, aid them to develop more proficiency in teaching.
3. If there is a personality clash between teacher and pupil, parents could send their children to a different school.
4. Undesirable teachers could be weeded out when parents have a larger voice in who will teach their children.
5. Teachers would feel more accountable for their teaching. Less security may then be placed on tenure.
6. Administrators and supervisors would pay more attention to updating the curriculum as well as methods of teaching used by teachers. They would be keenly aware, no doubt, of a possible drop in enrollment due to parents sending their children to other schools.
7. Parents would become more sensitive in trying to locate the best teachers for their children.

Questions that can be raised about the tuition voucher would be the following:

1. Can parents know which teacher would do the best job of teaching their children?
2. Would some teachers then have an excessively large number of children to teach while others have very small classes?
3. Would teachers be selected in terms of competency in teaching or would hear-say be the determining factor in selecting appropriate teachers?
4. How can parents really be informed about good teachers in selected schools?
5. Is there adequate agreement as to who the good teachers really are?
6. How can teachers who are not selected as good teachers best improve their teaching skills? Should these teachers automatically be dropped from the teaching profession if they are not selected by parents under the tuition voucher system?
7. How should teachers be paid under the tuition-voucher system?

There are no easy answers to many important problems in education. Concerned parents will want the best teachers for their children. The teaching profession itself should desire to encourage and retain good teachers for the high calling of teaching pupils. Individuals who would not develop into becoming good teachers should be channeled into other kinds and types of work. Thus, the strengths of the teaching profession rest upon having high quality teachers as well as professional administrators and supervisors who assist in improving the curriculum for all pupils in the elementary school.

Accountability as an Issue

In recent years accountability has been an important topic to write about in educational literature. It is important that teachers be able to account for what pupils under their jurisdiction have learned. Educational literature generally will state the following, among other things, when expressing ideas pertaining to accountability:

1. The teacher or the school district needs to write specific behaviorally stated objectives for each child to achieve.

2. This teacher then is responsible for the strengths of these objectives as well as for pupils achieving them.
3. It is possible to measure if pupils have achieved the objectives.
4. The teacher must select learning activities to help learners realize these precise objectives in an economical way.
5. Parents, boards of education, administrators, and supervisors must have knowledge if pupils have achieved these objectives.

It sounds excellent to speak of teachers being accountable for teaching pupils. Concerned individuals will desire that all pupils develop needed understandings, skills, and attitudes. Developing individuals to their optimum is definitely in harmony with basic generalizations pertaining to democratic living.

There certainly are advantages in emphasizing teacher accountability.

1. Each teacher should help pupils achieve to the highest degree possible in intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development.
2. There should be ways of determining if this is actually being done by teachers.
3. Parents should be satisfied that their offspring is receiving a quality education.
4. Supervisors, administrators, and school board members should definitely have much information as to the quality of teaching that each teacher does.
5. Poor teachers should be weeded out of the teaching profession.
6. Objectives for pupils to achieve should be assessed in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
7. Learning activities should be evaluated in terms of guiding pupils to achieve objectives.

One also needs to study the weaknesses of basic ideas expressed about teacher accountability. There are numerous questions that can be raised about this plan pertaining to quality teaching.

1. Can educators determine which objectives are good and relevant for learners to achieve?
2. Can all good objectives be stated with such precision that it can be measured if these have been achieved by learners?

3. Can it be determined if pupils have achieved these objectives?
4. What if learners have forgotten what was taught to them shortly after these learnings were achieved?
5. Can teachers be held accountable for circumstances beyond their control such as having overcrowded classrooms, emotionally disturbed pupils, inflexible supervision and administration, and an inadequate amount of teaching materials?
6. Should teachers alone be held accountable for their learner's achievement? What about supervisors and administrators being held accountable for their stated objectives and means of achieving these ends?
7. Boards of education are in an appropriate setting in most cases to influence desirable changes in education. Their deeds can hinder or help quality programs in education. Should boards of education state their objectives behaviorally also as well as ways to achieve these stated aims?
8. Should adequate aid be provided for teachers in terms of secretarial help? Should teacher aids also be held accountable for their work? In what way?

There are numerous factors which influence the duties and responsibilities of classroom teachers. The teacher cannot be taken in isolation and held accountable for what happens to pupils in the teaching-learning situation. Perhaps, all individuals involved directly and indirectly in the teaching of pupils should be held responsible for learner achievement. Thus, the problem of teacher accountability becomes complex indeed!

Open-space Education as an Issue

Selected modern elementary schools are emphasizing the open-space concept in teaching. Advocates of this approach feel that many classroom situations are too rigid and formal.

Learning centers have become very important in open-space education. Thus, pupils have a considerable amount of freedom in selecting a learning center from which to learn. The materials used by pupils at these different centers must be changed frequently to develop and maintain pupil interest as well as provide for individual differences. Let us view a class situation where learning centers are being utilized. In this description, the language arts program is being stressed.

Pupils can select, from among others, the writing center. The teacher has placed diverse pictures at this center. A child can select a picture and write about his observations. If he has not developed a writing vocabulary, ideas can be dictated to the teacher who then does the writing. Pupils can notice that talk can be written down. The teacher together with the child may evaluate the finished product.

A second center which pupils can select to work in could be the puzzle center. Here learners would complete crossword puzzles as well as picture puzzles. At a third learning center, pupils could work with puppets. Two or three children can cooperatively develop a presentation which then is presented to other pupils in the class. The puppets can be purchased commercially or they can be made such as would be true of stick and sack puppets.

At a fourth learning center, pupils individually could select a library book of their own choosing to read. Following the reading of the book, learners with teacher guidance could determine how comprehension should be evaluated. Some of these ways could include the following: making dioramas, friezes, and murals; drawing a picture; writing a report; giving the report orally to classmates; dramatizing selected incidences; advertising the book to interested consumers; and having a conference with the teacher.

At a fifth learning center, pupils could be engaged in the playing of games, such as seeing how many "peanuts" can be fed to an elephant. The child, for example, could write homonyms on a slip of paper shaped like a peanut. If he can do this, he can feed the "peanut" to a large attractive elephant made by the teacher or purchased commercially. The learner can then count the number of peanuts fed to the elephant. Synonyms, antonyms, and heteronyms could also be fed to the elephant.

A sixth learning center could contain a listening center. Here pupils could listen to stories being told. These tapes could be developed by teachers individually, as well as in committees. They can also be purchased commercially.

The tape recorder would have headphones so as not to disrupt learners at other learning centers. Periodically, pupils could be evaluated on listening comprehension. Questions would need to be answered by pupils. These questions should encourage interest in listening to stories. This could spur pupils on in the direction of wanting to read the stories they have listened to. Creative approaches need to be developed to guide learners in wanting to read books of fiction and nonfiction. Too frequently, pupil interest in reading has been destroyed due to poor reading materials as well as inappropriate methods of teaching. Reading instruction must provide for the needs, interests, and abilities of each child.

A seventh learning center could contain materials to help each pupil achieve optimum development in spelling. If a spelling textbook is used, each pupil could work at his own optimum rate of speed. Separate word lists could also be developed for each child based on individual needs. For example, if a pupil misspells the following words in a functional writing situation, an appropriate set of spelling words can be developed for pupils to study to remedy the situation: although, driver, automobile, urban, rural, neighborhood, ocean, vacation, recreation, gasoline, mileage, and taxes. The number of words each pupil is to learn to spell per week would depend upon his interest, motivation, and abilities.

Thus in open-space education, the child can select which learning center he wishes to work from. The materials on the different centers would need to be selected carefully by pupils and the teacher. They should provide for different achievement levels in a class. The interests, needs, and abilities would be very important to consider when making selections of materials for the various centers where pupils will be working. To make the open-space concept in education more flexible, it is important that pupils have ample experiences in life beyond the confines of the class and school. Field trips and excursions into the community would definitely be an inherent part of the

openess in open-space education.

It is quiet obvious that there are pros and cons pertaining to open-space education. The strengths of this program could pertain to the following:

1. Pupils can engage in decision making when selecting a learning center to participate in. The center of interest selected must contain materials which make provision for individual differences.
2. A relaxed, permissive environment is necessary in open-space education in order that learners can freely select a center which is stimulating and contains purposeful learning activities.
3. Learning activities go on beyond the confines of the class and school. The community is very important in providing learning activities for pupils.
4. Open-space education is based upon excellent criteria in educational psychology such as providing for the interests, needs, and abilities of individual pupils.
5. Pupils can interact with other children in small groups in diverse learning activities.
6. Learners can have the opportunity of experiencing different teachers and at occasions interacting with learners who are older as well as younger.
7. Teachers serve as guides and stimulators of pupils. They definitely are not lecturers of content.
8. The feelings or attitudes of pupils is held to be very important since learners can make choices in terms of what they like to learn.
9. Good mental health becomes an important concept in open-space education. Learners are not forced in learning a specific number of facts. Neither do pupils by any means all learn the same thing.
10. Mutual respect for each other is important when stressing open-space education.
11. Traditional emphasis upon the teacher being a policeman or disciplinarian basically has no value in modern methods of teaching pupils.

There are disadvantages in having pupils participate in learning activities where open-space education is emphasized.

1. Selected learners may not be responsible enough to participate in learning activities in a highly permissive environment.
2. Emotionally disturbed pupils present problems where open-space education is in evidence.

3. Teachers may not have the temperament to work with pupils in a permissive learning environment.
4. It is difficult for many teachers to do away with traditional approaches to teaching.
5. Principals and supervisors have felt that the quiet classroom is where pupils learn best in. Thus, teachers in open spaces may not get needed support.
6. A less skillful teacher may have difficulty in guiding learner achievement where considerable freedom of choice is involved on the part of pupils in selecting learning activities.
7. Parents may be hard to convince that open-space education will help their offspring to achieve at a higher rate as compared to more traditional approaches in the teaching of children.
8. It is difficult to convert selected older buildings to a type of architecture which is in harmony with more flexible approaches in the grouping of pupils.

Teachers, principals, and supervisors must study different points of view pertaining to teaching-learning situations. Certainly, open-space education has its many strong points and would guide many learners in achieving to their highest potential.

In Summary

There are many issues in education which need to be resolved. At the present time there are no clearcut easy answers to these problems. Some questions could be raised pertaining to issues in the curriculum which would summarize ideas well, contained in this chapter.

1. How precise should all desirable objectives be stated?
2. Who should be involved in selecting learning activities for pupils?
3. Who should be involved in selecting content for pupils?
4. What emphasis should handwriting receive in the total elementary school curriculum?
5. What role should spelling textbooks play in the language arts program of the elementary school?

6. How should basal readers be utilized in the curriculum area of reading?
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the Initial Teaching Alphabet?
8. Should there be a national curriculum in the United States? Why?
9. How much emphasis should be placed upon the teaching of grammar in the elementary school?
10. What kind of a balance should there be between inductive and deductive approaches to teaching pupils in the elementary school?
11. How can balance be developed and/or maintained among arithmetic, geometry, and algebra in a modern program of elementary school mathematics?
12. How much reality should pupils experience in elementary school social studies?
13. How can balance be maintained between individual and group work in the elementary school curriculum?
14. How important is it for all pupils to speak standard English when communication of ideas becomes the major objective?
15. What role should foreign language in the elementary school have?
16. How does the criterion-referenced supervisor assist in improving the curriculum as compared to more traditional approaches?
17. Will the tuition voucher plan improve the quality of teaching that exists in today's public schools?
18. How can teachers be held accountable for learner achievement?
19. Can the open-space concept in education help pupils achieve their highest potential?