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This analysis of the philosophies of John Dewey and the new British infant schools dealt briefly with the historical background of each and examined the influence of Dewey on the development of the new British infant schools. A more thorough comparison of the similarities of the respective philosophies was made in the areas of physical and intellectual development; the nature of knowledge and knowing; experience and learning; the curriculum; method and evaluation; and responsibility for improvements. The actual practice of the two philosophies was also compared.

It was concluded that Dewey's philosophy did indirectly influence the development of the philosophy of the new British infant school. Similarities were found in all areas, although difficulty of comparison occurred in some areas from the lack of explication of these areas by the new British infant schools. Similarities included: physical development as an enabling concomitant of mental development; an emphasis on doing and active learning; teacher responsibility for bringing child and content together in a framework of complete support by the educational system; the administrator's role as facilitator of each teacher's best teaching, bringing unity and coherence to the school's program; and the child's role as an active participant in both planning and learning.

A major difference appeared in the avowed purposes of schooling, as Dewey's philosophy has a much greater political orientation than does the new British infant school. In practice, the curriculum of the Laboratory School under Dewey was oriented toward common, democratic group experiences, although there were wide variations in the way this group experience was developed by each child. The new British infant schools' curriculum was more tuned to the individuality of each student's experience than to the commonality. A further curricular difference was the attempt at the Laboratory School to provide opportunity to work in all curricular areas concurrently, whereas the new British infant schools' approach provided more intensive work in specific areas with less emphasis on concurrent work. Questions of fragmentation and amount of exposure were involved here. Another difference appeared in the area of evaluation, where the new British infant schools perceived a necessity for more extensive testing. There was commonality of concern for continual informal evaluation, however. Dewey affirmed value transmission, while the new British infant schools were more concerned with the how of values rather than the what. A final distinction in practice was the use of the Laboratory School as an experimental school while, of course, the new British infant schools are not.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PHILOSOPHIES  
OF JOHN DEWEY AND THE NEW BRITISH  
INFANT SCHOOL

by

Martha S. Sasser

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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Greensboro

Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## CONTENTS

Open education is one of the more prominent and more important educational trends in the United States today. While there is general agreement that it is a desirable trend, there is considerable disagreement as to what it means. Some see it as a radical departure from traditional education, while others see it as a modification of traditional education. In this paper, we will explore the concept of open education as it is used by John Dewey and the New British Infant School Model. We will also discuss the implications of open education for the classroom and the role of the teacher.

This paper attempts to explore the concept of open education as it is used by John Dewey and the New British Infant School Model. We will also discuss the implications of open education for the classroom and the role of the teacher. The paper is organized as follows: First, we will discuss the concept of open education as it is used by John Dewey. Second, we will discuss the concept of open education as it is used by the New British Infant School Model. Third, we will discuss the implications of open education for the classroom and the role of the teacher.

1. John Dewey's philosophy of education is based on the idea that education should be a process of continuous growth. He believes that education should be a process of learning by doing, and that the classroom should be a place where students can learn by doing.

2. The New British Infant School Model is based on the idea that education should be a process of continuous growth. It is a model of education that is based on the idea that education should be a process of learning by doing, and that the classroom should be a place where students can learn by doing.

By making explicit the relationships between these schools of thought, the concept of open education can be better understood. This paper will explore the concept of open education as it is used by John Dewey and the New British Infant School Model. We will also discuss the implications of open education for the classroom and the role of the teacher.

CHAPTER 1  
AN OVERVIEW  
Introduction

Objectives

Open education is one of the more prominent and more important educational movements in the United States today. While there is great interest in the implications of the "new British infant schools" for open education (either as model or contrast), open education is also often viewed as a renewal of and/or improvement on the progressive education of John Dewey and his followers (Barth, 1972; Engstrom, 1970; Silberman, 1971, 1973; Weber, 1970).

This paper attempts to explore these two reference points of open education: the educational model presented by the new British infant schools and progressive education as developed by John Dewey. The basic concern is the similarities and differences between the two philosophies. Also considered are the auxiliary questions of:

1. What role did Dewey's philosophy of education play in the development of the new British infant school?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the implementation and practice of the two philosophies?

By making explicit the implicit relationships between these schools of thought, the concept of open education may

be more clearly viewed in perspective. A comparative analysis of the philosophies and practices of progressive education and informal education as practiced by the new British infant schools should reveal an illuminating historical-educational perspective from which open education may be profitably viewed.

### Definition of Terms

Progressive Education is viewed only from the standpoint of the writings and practice of America's foremost educational philosopher, John Dewey. There are so many different concepts of progressive education that to attempt to reconcile all of them would be more confusing than clarifying. Dewey's "brand" of progressivism has been more extensively and comprehensively developed than that of other writers who followed him in concern with progressive education. His writings, published more than seventy years ago, are still fresh and relevant today.

The new British infant school, as pictured here, is a composite of material drawn primarily from the following sources: Blackie (1967), Dearden (1968), Eisner (1974), Featherstone (1971), the Hadow Report (1931), the Plowden Report (1967), and Walton (1971). Where particularly applicable, information from other sources is introduced. Significant deviation from the views of the majority will be noted. It must be remembered that the proportion of infant schools in England who follow this philosophy is estimated at between



25% (Engstrom, 1970) and 40% (Weber, 1970). For this reason, "new British infant school" will be used to specify this model as opposed to the traditional British model for the infant school.

#### Limitations of this Study

This study is limited to the early elementary (kindergarten through second grade) levels of education. This is in part a reflection of the age range of the typical infant school and to some extent of Dewey's Laboratory School, rather than of limited applicability of the theories. (Philosophically, these theories are unlimited in scope. Although much of the Laboratory School work centered around the early grades, Dewey wrote about the application of his theories throughout the ranges of age and ability.) Inquiry into open education as such is not the focus of this paper, although it provides an historical-educational perspective for open education.

#### Method and Order of Presentation

To be able to discuss comprehensively any educational theory, two areas must be considered: instruction and curriculum. The area of instruction may be further understood in terms of the nature of experience, learning, development (physical and intellectual), methods, and evaluation. In examining curriculum, Seguel's (1966) four interests can serve as a guide: the nature of knowledge; the nature of knowing; responsibility for instructional and curricular

improvements; and availability of the best teaching skills to all teachers. Accordingly, this paper will consider each of these aspects of instruction and curriculum with respect to progressive and informal education.

It is often difficult to document the statement of a philosophical position or educational theory that seems to be held by the new British infant schools. Most of the descriptive writing amounts to anecdotal statements or specific curriculum recommendations hedged about with "this is what may work or did work at one time with one teacher in one classroom with one group of children." From reading many such statements and recommendations by many different writers, a Gestalt picture of the new British infant schools begins to take shape. But it is the combination of all this that reveals the picture. And in such combination it is difficult to give specific credit to specific instances as demonstration of the validity of the combination.

Robert Dearden (1968) recognized the lack of a stated philosophy of the new British infant schools, and attempted to fill that gap. However, his work falls far short of being representative of writers in the field. That his book accurately represents his own philosophy is not at question. However (in some instances more notably than in others) whether it also represents the philosophy of a substantial number of those writing about the new British infant schools seems highly doubtful. Nevertheless, as it is the only work that attempts systematically and extensively to reach the

underlying theory behind the recommended practices, particularly in respect to philosophical questions about the nature of knowledge and knowing, experience and learning, and curriculum, Dearden's The Philosophy of Primary Education will be heavily drawn on for the chapters so concerned.

The interrelatedness between one part of the philosophy of either Dewey or the new British infant schools and another is so great that it is difficult to separate out that part pertaining to experience without necessitating a discussion of the nature of knowledge, or to discuss methods without being, at the same time, intimately concerned with curriculum. Some chapters focus on a combination of areas, in an attempt to give a fuller, more connected view of each. Chapter 2 is concerned with physical and intellectual development; Chapter 3 with the nature of knowledge and knowing; Chapter 4 with experience and learning; Chapter 5 with curriculum; Chapter 6 with methods and evaluation; Chapter 7 with responsibility for instructional and curricular improvements and making the best teaching skills available to all teachers; and Chapter 8 with the theories in practice.

#### Historical Background

##### John Dewey

John Dewey's (1859-1952) original interests in philosophy became focused on education early in his career (Blewett, 1960; Brickman & Lehrer, 1959; Seguel, 1966). His roots were in the quiet peacefulness of Burlington, Vermont, a

small New England town. He later identified the household and agricultural activities he experienced in his childhood as the most productive and satisfying part of his pre-college education. He found in the rewards and lack of rewards of his own experience the foundations of his proposal for education. After graduating with honors from the University of Vermont, he taught traditional high school subjects for two years in Pennsylvania. When he returned to Burlington to teach in the local school (with less than complete success), he studied philosophy privately.<sup>49</sup> The following year he enrolled at Johns Hopkins University, completing a doctorate in philosophy two years later, in 1884.

He moved from the quiet of the countryside into the bustle of the large city when much of America was undergoing the same transformation. His educational philosophy is partially a result of his attempt to deal with this movement, with all its promises and dangers. Writing first in the area of metaphysical philosophy, he soon moved into a philosophical approach to then current psychological issues. His first university appointment was to the Philosophy Department at the University of Michigan, where he spent most of the next ten years. In 1894 he was invited to chair the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago. Founded by him soon after he assumed this position, the University Elementary School quickly became known simply as the "Laboratory School." The next

ten years found him deeply involved in educational philosophy and practice.

The people around Dewey during this period played an important role in the development of his philosophy. His wife shared his intellectual interests and was deeply involved in the Laboratory School, first as an observant visitor and careful critic, later as a principal. George H. Mead, a colleague at Michigan and Chicago, W. T. Harris, the United States Commissioner of Education, William James, the behavioral psychologist, and Felix Adler of the Ethical Culture Society stimulated and influenced his philosophy. His ideas about educational practice were encouraged and supported by Ella Flagg Young, a District Superintendent in the Chicago public school system, and Jane Addams of Hull House in Chicago.

The Laboratory School was organized for experimentation in pedagogy to find guiding principles concerning how, what, and when students should be taught. Although the scope was to be kindergarten through twelfth grade, a reorganization of the Laboratory School by the University of Chicago in 1904 resulted in Dewey's resignation before the realization of this goal. Consequently, the majority of the work at the Laboratory School under his direction was confined to the lower grades. Much of his writing, although applicable to the whole scope of education, is particularly concerned with the early levels of learning. The School and Society (1915),



The Child and the Curriculum (1902), and Democracy and Education (1916) reflect his major conclusions about early education.

Dewey felt that Democracy and Education was the most comprehensive of his works, philosophically and educationally. Written early in his years at Columbia University, his experience with the Laboratory School had had time to ripen and be seen from a less blinding perspective. The Child and the Curriculum, written in response to the still popular dualism between child and curriculum, detailed the relationship between these two most important aspects of a school as a continuum. The School and Society was first written in 1900 from a collection of talks about the Laboratory School given to parents and friends. Revised and republished in 1915, this volume, along with The Child and the Curriculum, is the most widely read of his works. Although enlightening and suggestive, The School and Society particularly so from a "practical" standpoint, The Child and the Curriculum more theoretically inclined, these two books, without Democracy and Education, form a very incomplete and easily misconstrued conception of what Dewey felt education should be. For these reasons, these three books were chosen as the primary vehicles for an examination of Dewey's educational philosophy.



### The New British Infant School

The development of the new British infant school spans more than a century. The first "enrichment" of the curriculum of the infant schools began during the 1830's and continued into the mid-1840's when the Home and Colonial Institution (later known as the Home and Colonial Society) began establishing infant schools and training teachers for them. This effort was influenced by the writings of Pestalozzi, Owen, and Oberlin. Froebel's work and writing in Germany have influenced British education since about 1851.

Education became compulsory in 1870, against the wishes of two classes of the population: the rich, who not only did not want to pay the costs but also feared the results of educating the poor; and the poor, who thought education unnecessary and did not want to lose the income of their children while they were being educated. At this time, both the public schools, for those who could not afford to pay, and the independent schools, for the rest, were cheaply built for a limited education. The main difference in curriculum was the lack of Latin and Greek in the public school. In both the public and independent schools discipline was harsh, and the teachers themselves were poorly educated. The clientele of the two schools, though, was vastly different. Only children from the working class--a very different and much poorer working class than that of today--attended the public school.

Between 1893 and 1902 several British government reports began to draw attention to the young child's need for spontaneous activity and also to the necessity for the school to encourage "the harmonious and complete development of the whole of a child's growth" (Weber, 1970, p. 162). When the Hadow Report was published in 1931 it was regarded as one of the most important official reports on the primary school. By this time, the foundation of the new schools, in philosophy if not in practice, had been established. After studying the mental and physical development of young children, the committee concluded that the "good" school should be able to answer the following questions affirmatively:

Is their curriculum humane and realistic, unencumbered by the dead wood of a formal tradition, quickened by inquiry and experiment, and inspired, not by an attachment to conventional orthodoxies, but by a vivid appreciation of the needs and possibilities of the children themselves? Are their methods of organisation (sic) and the character of their equipment, the scale on which they are staffed, and the lines on which their education is planned, of a kind best calculated to encourage individual work and persistent practical activity among pupils, initiative and originality among teachers, and to foster in both the spirit which leaves the beaten path and strikes fearlessly into new fields, which is the soul of education? (Hadow Report, 1931, p. xiii)

By 1939, based on this committee's recommendation, about one-third of the school age population in England were being educated in two different schools: the primary school, for ages five to eleven, and the senior elementary school, for ages eleven to fourteen. However, it was not

until 1965 that all schools in England adopted this organization. The typical primary school before World War II had large classes, rigid scheduling, and complete head teacher domination. Despite this atmosphere, children were better treated, and the curriculum was somewhat more suitable, than it had been before the Hadow Report.

The publication of a new Physical Training Syllabus by the Board of Education in 1933 was a forerunner of still greater changes. This syllabus had moved from rigid drill and Army exercises toward free movement and gymnastics. Initially the children and parents, who could hardly afford the special clothes and shoes appropriate for this, were uncooperative and protested the expensive move from formal P. E. By 1939 however there was less protest, the children were more appropriately dressed, and the lessons were growing increasingly more informal. In Art classes some children were allowed to use large brushes and paper, rather than hard drawing pencils on small (5" x 8") drawing paper. With the exception of a very few schools, the move away from formality stopped with P. E. and Art.

Blackie (1967) traced this rigidity of the public schools to several factors. The still recent (30 years) memory of performance-tied salaries and examinations for teachers gave historical support for the use of traditional methods. The rigid and out-dated programs available in the training colleges, as well as the prevalence of teachers

with lower than training college level education, suppressed Frobelian ideas of freedom and play.

Despite the traditional rigidity, there were forces working for change. The freedom of the head teacher to decide what to teach, how to teach, and what texts to use was great. Her Majesty's Inspectorate (educational advisors--see Chapter 7) was becoming the proponent of innovation, as were, more slowly, the training colleges. In-service training was increasing, and the Hadow Report gave official sanction to the new ideas. The drastic physical changes in teaching that came with World War II were a particularly efficient change agent. Not only were physical changes forced on the teachers, but the necessity for new emotional relationships came with the war. Whole classes, including the teachers, were evacuated from London--without desks, texts, or other standard classroom equipment. The war itself bred a questioning atmosphere. Population shifts and the number of teachers who were lost to the profession during the war caused a great demand for new teachers. Rather than using untrained teachers, Emergency Training Colleges for Teachers were established. Most of their students were young men back from the war, only months away from facing death and still reordering their own priorities. Even with all these factors for change, the results did not come about overnight. The combination of tradition and the

qualifying exam for the grammar schools proved to be a major obstacle that would be overcome only with great care and deliberation.

A 1964 study reported in The Plowden Report (1967) showed the proportion of schools to be one third substantially changed toward informal education in method and outlook, another third somewhat affected by such changes, and the final third essentially unchanged, still traditionally formal. Approval and support of the Plowden Committee for changes that move the schools toward the new British infant school prototype has been the most recent major impetus for further change.

#### The Relationship between Dewey's Philosophy and the New British Infant Schools

Opinion varies as to the relationship between Dewey and the new British infant schools. Bruston (1961), an American writer, has strongly held that, although there may be superficial resemblance between the two, the relationship ends there. His arguments center around the assumption that the English are too traditionally academic to do more than utilize a few of Dewey's methods, where they seem to be most adaptable to a "higher" educational purpose. While this may be true when considering the total educational scene, from nursery school to graduate departments, a closer examination of the new British infant school reveals the lack of generality of that assumption.



It is commonly accepted by those writing about the new British infant schools (Blackie, 1967; Silberman, 1971; Weber, 1970) that this movement has come from the grass-roots of education--from the classrooms. The teachers discovered what seemed to work best under most circumstances and consistently followed the guidelines of their experience. As teachers, particularly with the very specialized training of British teachers, they had at best only minimal knowledge of specific educational theory. (Froebelian theory is the exception.) However, associations have been made between their work and the theories of not only Dewey, but also of Isaacs, Froebel (whose influence has been more obvious than most), Piaget, and others.

An examination of official British education reports reveals many striking similarities, not only of thought, but even of language, between their expressed philosophy and that of Dewey.

Although the Plowden Report "doubted whether the direct influence of these (Dewey, among others)...was great" (para 510) in the original development of the new British infant school approach to education, the similarity between the writings of Dewey and those now concerned with informal education is so great as to suggest that there is more than coincidence involved, both historically and in the present. (See page 55 for an example.) Dewey's works have been available in England since 1900. It is known that Dewey had



his English proponents before 1907, when Professor J. J. Findlay edited and published his first volume of Dewey's writings. England, in general, had been impressed with the quality and products of American education from the time of the Mosely Commissions of 1903, when the representatives of the labor commission reported:

One of the principal reasons why the American workman is better than the Britisher is that he has received a senior and better education, whereby he has been more thoroughly fitted for the struggles of after life. (Armytage, 1967, p. 47)

One of the representatives of the Mosely Commission of educators, H. B. Gray, was so influenced by what he saw in America that the remainder of his active life after retirement in 1910 was spent campaigning for "a flexible and original curriculum based on observation of men and nature." Public schools, in his view, should "aim at producing...participants in a co-operating commonwealth" (Armytage, 1967, p. 48).

Many English students were beginning to study in American universities during the early years of this century and the Dalton plan (which bears the firm imprint of Dewey) was one of the imports into Britain that resulted from the interest in American education. Many books on education published in England make more than a passing mention of the Dalton plan, even when specific mention of Dewey is limited to a few lines. The fact that Dewey is considered important enough to British education to rate even a passing mention is proof of the presence of Deweyian influence. A

major work, A Short History of Educational Ideas, by Curtis and Boulton (1956), devoted its longest chapter to Dewey, included among such notables as Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Herbart.

Knowing how great the educational information flow between America and England was during the formative period of the new British infant schools (1890 into the 1930's), and that several influential people in England were advocating Dewey's philosophies, it seems somewhat absurd to claim that there has been no active influence on the schools of England by Dewey's philosophies. Although perhaps more obvious in the infant schools, Dewey's ideas have been a factor in change throughout British education. Even A. S. Neill's radical private school, Summerhill, traces its heritage to Dewey through Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth. Perhaps the best documented of the writings concerned with this relationship is that of the British writer A. K. Thomas (1970). It is his conclusion, based on analysis of official reports, that the extent of Dewey's influence is considerable. The striking similarities found by the present writer between Dewey's works and popular British writing on the new British infant school seem to give additional proof to this view. However, the actual extent of influence is and probably will remain unmeasured.

## CHAPTER 2

## PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Dewey's concepts of physical and intellectual development, although based on work done by G. Stanley Hall, and influenced by Pestalozzi and the Herbartians, were shaped and confirmed by his experiences in the Laboratory School. Although not based on the research that supports Piaget's more recent exposition of developmental stages, there is a remarkable resemblance between the two.

The integrity of the body-mind whole was an important basis for an insistence on "the activity method" in the early stages of learning.

Without the particulars as they are discriminated by the active responses of sense organs, there is no material for knowing and no intellectual growth. Without placing these particulars in the context of the meanings wrought out in the larger experience of the past--without the use of reason or thought--particulars are mere excitations or irritations. ...the function of sensory stimulation and thought is relative to reorganizing experience in applying the old to the new, thereby maintaining the continuity or consistency of life. (Dewey, 1916, p. 343)

Dewey was concerned with physical development as an enabling concomitant of mental development. Physical and mental growth proceed at different rates at different times, for different children. Awareness of the characteristic unevenness of growth enables the teacher to present material

when the time is right for it--resulting in a more efficient learning situation. This view of growth is the sketchy forerunner of the Piagetian concepts that give theoretical support to the new British infant school.

Among the relevant facts (of growth and development is)...the enormously wide variability in physical and intellectual maturity amongst children of the same age. (Plowden Report, 1967, para 11)

Much of the variability arises from the biological nature of children....This demands that teachers should be adaptable in their approach to individuals, and that the educational system itself should be as flexible as possible. (Plowden Report, para 20)

For the cognitive stage to emerge, brain maturation is probably necessary, though not, of course, sufficient. (Plowden Report, para 23)

#### Intellectual Development: Dewey

Dewey's most important contribution to understanding intellectual development was his vision of the progressive development of learning and knowledge, going from early stages of exploration and manipulation, to later stages of abstract, systematic approach to subject matter. This progression was seen not as age-bound but as experience-bound, in terms of familiarity with the area. A novice of any age would follow these stages in gaining a well-founded, usable knowledge of a new subject area.

In designing the curriculum for the Laboratory School, Dewey was pressured by his sense of the unity of life to construct a program that would "harmonize" with the child's growing ability and experiences. Like Piaget, he

characterized this outline of intellectual growth in terms of stages. In recognition of the variability of individual differences, the age ranges were understood to be approximations. Transitional periods occurred between stages, when the child was not yet functioning completely at the higher levels. Stage 1 extended from age 4 to 8-8½ years; Stage 2 from 8½ to 10½-11; Stage 3 from 11 to 14-15 years.

Stage 1 was characterized by "directness of social and personal interests, and by directness and promptness of relationship between impressions, ideas, and action." "Motor and expressive activities,...manipulation, investigation, and oral communication" (Dewey, 1915, p. 105) were seen as strong needs. As long range goals are not common, "play, games, occupations, storytelling, and informal conversations" were considered to be more appropriate activities than skill development. Within this framework, inquiry and experimental behavior were to be stimulated.

The child was seen as beginning to focus on long-range goals in Stage 2, which required technical skill mastery. This stage marked the beginning of the child's ability to deal with differentiated studies--to move towards specialization of thought and skill, discipline and refinement.

Stage 3 was the border between the elementary and secondary stages. By this time, the child was expected to have the experiences that would leave him alert to the possibilities of learning--its origin, and its relation to the human



concerns. The "tools of thought and methods of inquiry and activity" he had begun to master would be the basis for systematic work in subject areas. By this stage, the pupil could be lead to a valuation of the organization of knowledge, and a direct interest in inquiry that would act as motivation for further intellectual work. (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, p. 53 and ff.; Wirth, 1966, pp. 102-111)

The basis for all development is the act:

The principle of coordination or of sensory-motor action supplies us with...a centralizing principle--a principle which can be employed equally on the physiological and the psychological side. In popular language this unit is an act, whether of greater or lesser complexity. (Dewey, in Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, pp. 450-453)

Dewey saw three periods in the development of the infant. The maturation of ear, eye, and hand of the first stage was followed by the coordinated action of the second stage. Seeing, reaching, handling, are coordinated into one act. Intelligence develops from this ability to coordinate behavior. The third period was marked by the extension (over time and through interest) of coordinated behavior, into larger experiences.

Dewey's description of the chain of experiences has striking parallels to Piaget's concepts:

Each impulse in its expression tends to call up other impulses; and it brings into consciousness other experiences. A child puts forth, by natural impulse, his hand towards a bright color, his hand touches it and he gets new experiences--feelings of contact, these, in turn, are stimulus to a further act; he puts the thing in his mouth, and gets a taste, etc. (1897, p. 14)



This basic unit of the act was seen as the basis and means of all growth throughout life. The act has three components: the sensory-motor stimulus, the idea, and the motor-response. The idea gave purposefulness to the act, without which, the behavior would be automatic and unrelated. The act further served to clarify and develop ideas, as does reflective thought about the act, following it.

Dewey's picture of the child as immature, both physically and mentally, was a break from much educational thought of his time. This view is now shared by most, if not all, current educational theorists, including those of the new British infant school. However, Dewey's special connotation for "immaturity" (both physical and intellectual) was as a positive force, "not a mere void or lack" (1916, p. 41). Immaturity means "the ability to develop" (p. 41). The ongoing process by which immaturity (both physical and intellectual) becomes maturity is called growth. Growth, itself, does not have an end--maturity--but rather is the end--the purpose, the result, of life. As such, this process is continuous throughout the life of the individual.

#### Intellectual Development: New British Infant School

"Unless the education of children is in harmony with the way they grow it will not be much good" (Blackie, 1967, p. x).

The two facts that are the basis for many of the new British infant schools' philosophies are first, that developmental age does not correspond with chronological age; and

secondly, that the normal corresponding chronological ages for any particular developmental age can vary widely, as much as five years, or more, in extreme cases. Thus, in a single age classroom, there will be a wide range of normal intelligence, motor skills, and emotional development.

The new British infant schools' conception of growth recognizes the overriding importance of the home environment in development, as well as the effect on the children of the attitudes of the home. Because of the range of developmental ages and variety of home environments to be found in a classroom, those associated with the new British infant school value total flexibility in the school system, from the classroom on up.

Age of entry, age of transfer, age of leaving, all expectations based on chronological age, classification by I. Q. or by examination, basic curricula, agreed syllabuses and all the rest are uneducational because they are based on an entirely obsolete view of growth. (Blackie, p. 24)

Piaget's theory of intellectual development is the major source and support of the new British infant school's understanding of this process. To summarize the work of Piaget in a few pages is impossible. However, there are several features of his theory that are basic to practice in the new British infant schools.

According to Piaget, there are three aspects of the child's intelligent interaction with the environment: content (uninterpreted behavioral data), function (major characteristics of intellectual activity), and structure (the

"mediators" between the invariant functions and the varied behavioral contents). There are two properties of functions: organization (the tendency towards systematization of the understanding of reality), and adaptation. Assimilation, the process of incorporation of the environment into the current operating framework, and accommodation, the process of modification of the current framework to meet environmental demands, are the two aspects of adaptation. Psychological structures are the result of the tendencies to organize behavior and adapt to the environment. Each stage through which the child progresses is marked by different psychological structures, or schemes. Both the behavioral schemes of the younger child, and the operational schemes of the older child are organized patterns.

These modes of behavior--the functional invariants and the psychological structures--work together inextricably. One cannot proceed without the rest. Structures are necessary for adaptation and organization to continue, but adaptation and organization are necessary for new structures to be created out of those previously effective. The functions remain constant, while the structures continually vary, in a regular sequence, creating stages that are marked by the type of psychological structure prevalent during that time. An important process in this sequence is a tendency toward equilibrium, which maintains the total behavior around a central core of effectiveness of interaction with reality.

Motivation for all this comes from the child's innate behavior of acting on the environment. Piaget sees the newborn infant as an active initiator of behavior who quickly learns to modify his behavior to meet his distinctions of various objects and events in his environment. Intelligent behavior has its roots in this modification. As modifications become sequentially more sophisticated, intelligent behavior also increases in sophistication. The learning continuum thus proceeds throughout life until the person reaches the point where further experience becomes increasingly difficult to assimilate and accommodate to.

Two characteristics of structures are particularly applicable to learning in the primary classroom. First, structures need exercise. With disuse, structures lose effectiveness (for example, getting "rusty" at tennis). Secondly, the fact that the exercise of structures is pleasurable seems to be a major motivation for their continued exercise. Play consists of this practice of structures, which is necessary for the child's learning.

#### Comparison Between Dewey and the New British Infant School

The similarities between the work of Piaget and the writings of Dewey are great. When it is considered that Dewey was working at a time when psychology was just beginning to take shape as an independent field with important contributions to make of its own, Dewey's perception of intellectual development can be seen as a daring but accurate leap into the unknown.

Both Dewey and Piaget were concerned with the active child within his environment, the sensory data he receives (content), and the intellectual processing of that data (function). Dewey hinted at the existence of structures. The Piagetian concept of structures is a detailed explanation of the reorganization of experience that Dewey recognized. Both saw the necessity for use of the processes involved in reorganization, to prevent loss of effectiveness, as well as the fact that this use was actually enjoyable to the child.

#### The Role of Play in Intellectual Development

According to both Blackie and the Plowden Report, the child learns about the environment through play: the nature of materials, concepts of weight, height, breadth, texture, softness, hardness, plasticity, impermeability, transparency. Children discover what they can and cannot do, what objects can and cannot do. They also learn about people through play. Their role play of the adults, other children, and animals they come in contact with helps them understand behavior. Dramatic play also helps them deal with the harsher realities of life--painful situations--separation from parents, accidents, death--and gives understanding and a measure of control over these situations and the associated feelings. Such play also serves to consolidate and extend vocabulary understanding.

Dewey, too, saw play and active work as essential for intellectual development, rather than as a pleasant addition



to it. The first stages in the development of subject matter (see Chapter 4) were centered around play and active work. Without them, Dewey believed it was difficult for the child to reach any further understanding of subject matter. Dewey saw the inclusion of work and play in the classroom as increasingly necessary as the child's responsibility and active, purposeful involvement within the family shrinks. Even when the child's involvement outside the school has educative results, those results are accidental and incidental. It is for the school to regularize, emphasize, and strengthen the learning that comes from experience. From this, certain curriculum guides naturally followed: for an experience to be educative, the child must be encouraged in "the perception and elaboration of ends,...the use of judgment in selecting and adapting means,...(and provided with the) opportunity for making mistakes" (1916, p. 197). If the child has no opportunity to make mistakes, he has likewise no opportunity to exercise initiative or judgment. The Plowden Report echoes this concern:

In play, children gradually develop concepts of causal relationships, the power to discriminate, to make judgments, to analyse and synthesise (sic), to imagine and to formulate. (para 523)

The perfection of the child's present product is not what is important. What is important is his growing skill in knowing how to begin something and work through to the end. Perfection will be gained with experience; if pushed too early, it will be gained without experience, and thus be useless and inapplicable.



## CHAPTER 3

## THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWING

The Plowden Report's view of nature and knowledge is not explicit, but must be read between the lines. Dearden, in The Philosophy of Primary Education (1968), attempted to provide the "closely argued educational theory" for the new British infant schools called for by the Plowden Report (1967, para 550). However, on more than one occasion he departed from the spirit of the Plowden Report, as well as that of the writings of others on the new British infant school. Dearden appeared to seek a middle ground--at once more strictly academic and less whole-child oriented than the new British infant school, and less strictly academic and more whole-child oriented than traditional formal education. In so doing, he has satisfied the real requirements of neither. Nonetheless, he has made the only comprehensive attempt at discussing the nature of knowledge and knowing, and the role of experience in learning, as it appears in the new British infant school. Therefore, his work provides the comparison for Dewey's philosophy in these respects.

Knowledge

Dearden's approach to the nature of knowledge is incomplete. He dismissed the view of knowledge as a collection of facts (as did Dewey) and then dismissed the more recent

equation of knowledge with knowing-how-to-learn. To avoid the frequent connotation of knowledge as facts, he used the term "understanding" to denote the full depth of knowledge.

Understanding...involves mental structures, ways of experiencing, which are progressively acquired only over a period and through the teaching of one who himself has such an understanding. (Dearden, p. 63)

Although this statement shed no new light on the nature of knowledge, being a superficial restatement of Piaget's writing, it reflected the belief that one cannot always extract true understanding from a book. Teaching requires a meeting not only of minds, but of bodies. The two elements of Dearden's mental structures were systems to inter-connect concepts and organize principles and validation procedures to ascertain the truth and adequacy of one's ideas. Again, this seems to be another way of talking about Piaget's two structures of assimilation and accommodation, as discussed in Chapter 2. Dearden moved from this position statement into a discussion of the "division of forms", where a breakdown into subject areas (mathematics, science, history, the arts, ethics, and religion) was offered, and then to an exposition on the relevance of experience to knowledge. (See Chapter 4.)

Dewey's writings on the nature of knowledge and knowing were less superficial, reflecting the philosopher's concern with basic questions. What is knowledge? How is it achieved? Is change real or imaginary? How is reason related to action? How is theory related to practice? Of what value is knowledge?

For Dewey knowledge is a tool to be used by men in ways appropriate to their needs. Knowledge is not static but is always in flux, not only to meet the changing conditions of a continually growing world, but also to accommodate changing individual purposes. Knowledge is not the collection of independent facts recorded in books and libraries. Such facts are separate from the knower's experience, lack meaning, and are only mechanically usable. With only a collection of facts, a person cannot take a problem, seek a solution, and move from "doubt to discovery." Experiential knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for effective problem solving. Before recorded facts can be called true knowledge, they must be usable in terms of the knower's ability to respond, to apply, to act on, and to find and understand solutions using them. Knowledge is "that which we think with rather than that which we think about" (1916, p. 188). Unlike many philosophers, Dewey characterized knowledge by continuity and integrity. Empirical knowledge and higher, rational knowledge are not opposites, but complementary halves of a whole. To be considered knowledge, subjective use must be made of objective facts. A mind cannot function apart from its physical environment. Rational knowledge comes not from a mind untouched by physical reality, but from a mind that has dealt continually with, and is firmly grounded in, physical reality. Further, knowledge cannot occur without an appeal to emotional interest, either from internal forces--desirable material, or external forces--desirable grades.

Knowledge does not pass untouched from the eye or ear to the mind: interest serves as its carrier. Knowledge is the result of a combination of doing and knowing, practice and theory, body and mind, emotion and intellect, rather than the product of any of these alone.

### Knowing

Knowing is essentially an active process. The first knowledge is that of "how to do." (See Chapter 4.) To know, we must first actively do--using the body, handling the materials. Without this introductory activity, the result of instruction belongs not to the learner, but to the teacher. It is something only to be given back to the teacher, not something for the student himself to use. Before a person can intelligently use an object--or a knowledge--for himself, he must become familiar with it. He must know precisely what it will or won't do. A child knows about a spoon by his activity with it. He will use the spoon in many ways, in many situations, many times, before he reaches a firm knowledge of what a spoon is in terms of its uses and properties. All initial learning occurs in this manner. Activity is the means through which knowing occurs.

Dewey called his method of coming to know "pragmatic." "Its essential feature is to maintain the continuity of knowing with an activity which purposely modifies the environment" (1916, p. 344). The circumstances that call forth knowledge are problems needing solution and feelings of

uncertainty. Under these conditions there is an active utilization of objective facts, combined with subjective search, in an attempt to reach a suitable answer. Thus, knowledge is the result of active thrusts to know. Thinking is the interface between already possessed knowledge ("the subject matter of reflection") and uncertain groping through which knowledge extending occurs. Activity--active thinking, not passivity--results in knowledge. Although the data for reflection can come from memory, observation, reading, or communication, the essential aspect of these data is its availability as a resource for new thought, new inferences, new combinations and results. Any method of obtaining data that hampers its active use is wasted effort. It is, in fact, mind-cluttering. If the material is not usable, because of its form or because of the inability of the mind to deal with it, it is an obstacle to productive thought. The mind must be able to deal selectively with its data, evaluating it, ordering it, before using it. Knowledge is meaningless unless it can be used. Unless the individual possessing knowledge performs the final action of putting it into physical application, the knowledge is of no value. The knower must act out of his knowledge, if that knowledge is to have value other than that of aesthetic contemplation.

The function of knowledge is to make one experience freely available in other experiences....Knowledge is a perception of those connections of an object which determine its applicability in a given situation. (1916, pp. 339, 340)



Stored knowledge (knowledge of the past) is useful only in continuity between past, present, and future. What was applicable yesterday has a high probability of continuing to be applicable in some form today. Knowledge of the past is useless unless it is applicable to the current, changing, unsettled conditions of today. This principle guides selection of subject matter for inclusion in the curriculum. On these grounds, Dewey rejected the scholastic method

the whole-hearted and consistent formulation and application of the methods which are suited to instruction when the material of instruction is taken ready-made, rather than as something which students are to find out for themselves (1916, p. 280)

and with it the doctrine of formal discipline, which he viewed as an inferior updating of scholasticism. Although once a valid educational method, the conditions of unsystematized and irrational authority to which formal discipline brought order and logic no longer exist. Likewise, he rejected sensationalism and rationalism, on the grounds that sensationalism emphasizes exclusively the particular, and rationalism the general, when the real nature of knowledge is particularizing and generalizing, concurrently and concomitantly. Particularizing is useless apart from generalizing.

As Dearden left much unsaid, the reader is left to infer whether Dewey's philosophy of knowledge and knowing is reflected in the philosophy of the new British infant school. Dearden's general thrust seemed to be toward a modified, less rigid formal discipline approach. However, this is in direct opposition not only to Dewey but also to the unorganized



bits-and-pieces of philosophy that are scattered throughout the writings of others on the new British infant school. The Plowden Report's plea for the child's active, integrated experience in the world about him to take advantage of the child's natural ability to learn is compatible with Dewey's stance. The emphasis on doing--on active learning--is Dewey. Blackie, in particular, is concerned that the curriculum be applicable and relevant to the needs of the children, today and in the future. He shares the view that knowledge is useless unless the child is able to use it to deal with reality.

## CHAPTER 4

## EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

In both progressive and informal education, the role played by experience in the learning process is strongly emphasized. According to Dewey:

There is no difference of opinion as to the theory of the matter. All authorities agree that that discernment of relationships is the genuinely intellectual matter; hence, the educative matter. The failure arises in supposing that relationships can become perceptible without experience--without that conjoint trying and undergoing of which we have spoken. It is assumed that "mind" can grasp them if it will only give attention, and that this attention may be given at will irrespective of the situation. Hence the deluge of half-observations, of verbal ideas, and unassimilated "knowledge" which afflicts the world. An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance. An experience, a very humble experience, is capable of generating and carrying any amount of theory (or intellectual content), but a theory apart from an experience cannot be definitely grasped even as theory. It tends to become a mere verbal formula, a set of catchwords used to render thinking, or genuine theorizing, unnecessary and impossible. Because of our education we use words, thinking they are ideas, to dispose of questions, the disposal being in reality simply such an obscuring of perception as prevents us from seeing any longer the difficulty. (1916, p. 144)

Dearden noted that, without experience,

...what was gained from (traditional) schooling was not an understanding but a collection of information and recipes gained by memorization and frill. Sometimes it would have been over-generous to speak of information, because even to acquire information requires that the words used be meaningful, which was not always the case. (1968, p. 106)

This view of experience runs throughout the British infant schools. The 1931 Hadow Report asked that "the curriculum...be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored" (para 75). Following the appearance of the same statement in the Handbook (1959), the Plowden Report (1967) endorsed it and added methodological innovations based on activity and experience. Terms such as "providing experience," "structured environment," and "stimulating environment" are part of this methodology.

What is experience? Dewey viewed the nature of experience as two-fold: active-trying and passive-undergoing. In experiencing something, first there is the experience of action, followed by the experiencing of the consequences of that action. The educative value lies in the understanding of the relationship between action and consequence. Experience is thus instructive--it results in an understanding of the connection of things. Experience is more a matter of output-input, than cognition. Cognition enters at the point of the perception of the meaning of the action-result continuum.

Far from acting as an intruder, bodily action is essential to a cognitive understanding of the relationship. Without this link with physical reality, knowledge is second-hand and limited in its applicability to future action. When bodily activity is viewed as an intruder, discipline problems take up more class-time, with the teachers busily

suppressing the bodily activities that are viewed as disruptive of the application of mind to material. With bodily activity thus "divorced from the perception of meaning," (1916, p. 141) the body finds outlet instead in meaningless roughhousing or time-wasting. Both Dewey and the new British infant school prefer to acknowledge the relationship between activity and knowledge and to put it to profitable use. The children are involved in planning and execution of class work. They are not passive recipients but active participants in the educational process. It is this failure to provide for the whole child that not only creates discipline problems in the formal classroom, but also causes intellectual development to fall far short of its potential.

Although Dearden added a cultural dimension to his description of experience, he did not disagree with the basic concept presented by Dewey. Anthropological studies in culture have made clear that experience, for each of us, is filtered through and shaped by previously held concepts. These concepts focus on characteristics of the environment. As Piaget has noted, language-acquiring and concept-acquiring occur concurrently and are the basis for shared experience. In learning these things we are treated as social beings, as members in a common social unit with all its implied heritage and history. It is this culture, learned with our language, that sets time, place, and people limits on our experiences.

There are three stages of experience in the philosophy of both Dewey and Dearden. While Dewey emphasized the active "power to do" as an initial stage in knowledge, Dearden stressed the idea of initial, more passive, "perceptual concepts". He qualified this passivity by adding that the perceptual concepts are developed by the child's active environmental exploration. Thus, for both philosophers the initial stages of experience are characterized by active interaction with the environment. The "practical concepts" (knowledge of use) of Dearden's second stage correspond roughly to Dewey's second stage of "communicated knowledge or information" (1916, p. 184). This stage deals essentially with informal knowledge about the world--how things work, what they are for--in short, "people and their purposes" (Dearden, p. 117). Such knowledge is an active, experiential knowledge, growing out of the child's experiences within his environment.

It is only after much experience within the environment, resulting in practical, useful knowledge, that experience, in the view of both Dewey and Dearden, culminates in the "logically organized material" (Dewey, 1916, p. 184) and "theoretical concepts" (Dearden, p. 115) of science. Dearden polished Dewey's conception of science with more recent knowledge of perception; otherwise, like the second, this last stage is essentially the same for both writers.

The key to experience lies in its quality. Referring again to Dewey's nature of experience: if there is not first,



experience of action, secondly, experience of consequence, and lastly, awareness (cognition) of the relationship between action and consequence, experience is merely meaningless activity or meaningless transition. Awareness is basic to educative value. But even this is not sufficient to make an experience educative. Added to this awareness must be freshness of awareness. When the experience is so familiar to the one experiencing it that the relationship has become automatic, (in Dewey's term, mechanical), then that experience is no longer educative for that individual. Dearden rephrases the concern with appropriateness of experience and freshness of awareness into two progression-related questions: first, "what kind of concept is involved?" and secondly, "at what stage in the growth of understanding is the learner?" (p. 120). Dewey shared this concern that insistence for early familiarity through experience not be carried inappropriately to the last stages of learning. This approach to experience has been reaffirmed for the new British infant schools by the precedence, in the Piagetian stages of learning, of concrete operations before abstract operations. Dearden is concerned that appropriateness of experience for individual children be confirmed empirically, as different children and different "educational circumstances" play an important role in determining appropriateness.

The role of experience, according to Dearden, is limited to "learning...perceptual and practical concepts" (p. 122).



He maintained that the examination of the environment that is so essential to perceptual and practical concept development will not yield theoretical concepts in math, science, or history.

Books, television, interested parents and, above all, teachers who themselves possess to some degree these basic forms of understanding, will be necessary for the learning of theoretical concepts. (p. 123)

Such "outside" intervention is necessitated by the discontinuity between elaborate systems of theoretical concepts and the personal experience orientation of perceptual or practical concepts. Directed personal experience that starts where the child is in experiential terms is the method by which this discontinuity can be overcome. However, Dearden openly rejected Dewey's suggestion of the use of experience in practical situations of homes and communities for making the bridge over this discontinuity. He cannot logically accept practical experience as a bridge, maintaining that theoretical understandings are different, qualitatively, from practical understandings. However, intuitively, he appears to accept it, and contradicts himself by working from a base of practical experience. It is not surprising that Dearden experiences confusion on this point. The question of how to bridge the gap between practice and theory is one of the great unresolved pedagogical concerns that faces all involved in education at any level.

Dewey sees the active teacher as an important part of this process, but Dearden substitutes active pedagogy as the

bridge between experience and theory. Dearden portrayed the kind of teaching that will overcome this discontinuity as not

a brutal imposition, but the creation of an independence of authority through coming to share concepts and apply the same impersonal procedures of validation as those of the teacher. Such a liberalized kind of teaching...tell(s)...., questions, discusses, sets tasks; hints, preserves judicious silences, prompts, provokes, invites contradiction, feigns ignorance, poses problems, demonstrates, pretends perplexity, comments, explains and so on through the battery of devices by means of which passivity in intellectual learning may be overcome and a more critical learning stimulated. (p. 129)

In this way using the child's experience, the teacher's "redescription", based on the above techniques, helps the child's concept move from perceptual/practical toward theoretical. The child's understanding of the theoretical concept is not verbalism, but is based on his own transformed concept and experience. Once again, Dearden's view of the learner as passive is apparent. It is only in this respect that Dewey's philosophy is significantly different from that of the new British infant school, as expressed by Dearden. Although Dearden remarked that Dewey's methods fall outside the parameters of those recommended by Dearden, this seems to be the result of Dearden's misrepresentation of Dewey, rather than a true difference between the methods recommended by both. As discussed earlier, Dewey's concept of science was essentially the same as Dearden's theoretical concepts.

It consists of the special appliances and methods which the race has slowly worked out in order to conduct reflection under conditions whereby its procedures and results are tested. It is artificial

(an acquired art), not spontaneous; learned, not native. To this fact is due the unique, the invaluable place of science in education.  
(Dewey, 1916, p. 189)

Both writers viewed this as a qualitatively different aspect of knowledge, unreachable through unguided normal experience (not "spontaneous"). The real distinction, if there is one, may be a matter of timing and explicitness of method.

Dewey neither pinpointed a time for this learned approach to be taught, nor the exact method for its teaching. Dearden does both, but seems to take Dewey's insistence on "essentials first, and refinements second," (1916, p. 121) to be insistence on essentials as a way to refinements. The present writer believes that a more accurate interpretation of Dewey would have us see that

the things which are socially most fundamental, that is, which have to do with the experiences in which the widest groups share, are the essentials. The things which represent the needs of specialized groups and technical pursuits are secondary. (1916, p. 191)

Nowhere has Dewey maintained that these "essential" experiences, unguided, are the way to "technical pursuits" (theoretical concepts). Rather, Dewey viewed the crux of teaching as keeping "the experience of the student moving in the direction of what the expert already knows" (1916, p. 184). Dearden's "method" falls well within this movement toward theory. Dewey saw the need for "activity on the part of the children preced(ing) the giving of information on the part of the teacher" (1916, p. 32). He valued educational circumstances "where the children had some motive for demanding

the information" (1902, p. 32), but did not insist that the demand must always precede the giving of information, or that the demand should be a verbal one from the child. He saw that the child's behavior could "demand" information by showing readiness to understand.

Dewey anticipated Dearden's problem seventy years before it was raised by the latter:

If you simply indulge this interest by letting the child go on indefinitely, there is no growth that is more than accidental. But let the child first express his impulse, and then through criticism, question, and suggestion bring him to consciousness of what he has done, and what he needs to do, and the result is quite different. (Dewey, 1915, p. 40)

Again,

But for the child to realize his own impulse by recognizing the facts, materials, and conditions involved, and then to regulate his impulse through that recognition, is education. (1915, p. 40)

Other writers have given support to this view.

In Dewey's terms the educator's task is to develop strategies that will lead students to see their world with new meanings--to reconstruct their experiences. (Wirth, 1966, p. 277)

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum, by dictionary definition, is "all the courses of study in a school." Although Dewey's recommendations for how the curriculum was to be taught were very specific, he mentioned what was to be taught only in very general terms. Dewey defined three broad areas of concern: realization/appreciation; subject matter; and life values. None of those who have written about the new British infant school have taken a broad look at the curriculum of the school, concerning themselves instead with experiences and environments which arouse desirable attitudes toward knowledge and develop the ability to obtain and use it, as discussed in earlier chapters. Rather than focusing on specific subjects or areas to be pursued, they have dealt with specific, loosely categorized outcomes, some of which can be subsumed under Dewey's three areas.

#### Appreciation

By realization/appreciation Dewey meant the feeling conveyed by the expression "really taking it in." Novice learners must have the closeness resulting from "direct experience", as opposed to the detachment of a "representative experience" to be able "really to take it in." A



student must experience appreciation of quality (rather than quantity) real experiences before he will be able to appreciate material that is representative of such experiences. Specifically, the aim of primary education is not to amuse, nor to pour in information without upsetting the student, nor to teach skills. All these may be by-products, but the chief aim is to "enlarge and enrich the scope of experience, and to keep alert and effective the interest in intellectual progress" (Dewey, 1916, p. 234).

Blackie (1967) saw the need for primary education to fulfill this double role in broadening experience and stimulating the child's own interest in intellectual progress. The word "appreciation" seems particularly appropriate within the context of both his writing and that of the Plowden Report (particularly para 543-546). There is a great impetus to provide "quality real experiences" through lengthy, integrated development of particular areas of interest to the children. A field trip is not something that happens one day with perhaps a required paragraph the next day, along with a required drawing, after which it never again appears. Many activities should precede and follow a field trip. Each child is helped to develop his own particular interest in the subject, regardless of the form it may take. In this way, an experience becomes a "quality real experience" through which the student's experience-base is broadened and his intellectual curiosity stimulated and satisfied.

Three subsidiary areas were involved in Dewey's use of appreciation: standards of value; the role of imagination; and the role of fine arts. The appreciated standards of value are those the student not only says he values, but those that his actions reflect a belief in. If he verbally rejects greed as a value but then wants to eat the whole cake without sharing with those around him, he has not reached real appreciation of the value of unselfishness. Thus, appreciation--valuation of standards--applies to all behavior not just to areas such as music and art. In the new British infant school, standards of value are an inherent aspect of all work. Each child is not only expected to, but also usually wants to work toward high standards for himself, thus reflecting true valuation of high standards.

For the process of appreciation to occur, a functioning imagination must make the link between activity and mind, between representative experience and direct experience. Imagination is a basic aspect of human behavior that cannot be ignored. The difference between play and work is not a matter of imagination but of the materials upon which imagination is acting. To make material in all subject areas (not just in literature and fine arts) meaningful, imagination should be considered and encouraged in the context of each (Dewey, 1916, p. 236). The "activity method" brings imagination in to the school, making education meaningful. But unless manual activities, laboratory work, and play help

the student to sense the meaning of what he is doing, they will not constitute educative experiences. The use of the imagination is a theme that runs throughout the new British infant school. An integrated approach both stimulates and provides outlet for active imagination in exploring every aspect of the curriculum. Children are encouraged to pose their own problems as well as ways of reaching a solution. The "activity method" is of primary importance in the new British infant schools in providing a vehicle for such work.

Both Dewey and the new British infant schools share the belief that neither fine nor industrial arts should be separated from the rest of the curriculum.

Art is both a form of communication and a means of expression of feelings which ought to permeate the whole curriculum and the whole life of the school....It affects, or should affect, all aspects of our life from the design of the common-place articles of every day life to the highest forms of individual expression. (Plowden, para 676)

In keeping with Dewey's interest in man within society, he defined the difference between industrial arts and fine arts as a matter of emphasis on "socially serviceable values" in the former, and on "enhanced appreciation of the immediate qualities which appeal to taste" (1916, p. 236) in the latter. It is only when there is a necessity to make one of these emphases that a distinction is made. Otherwise, the activities themselves incorporate both values to the enhancement of all subject matter.

### Subject Matter

Dewey saw subject matter as a duality of child and curriculum. Rather than seeing the content of the courses of study as a choice between the child-centered approach, where the child is seen as the be-all and end-all of educational effort, and the curriculum approach, where each subject to be taught is carefully divided and redivided into its components, Dewey sought to integrate the two approaches.

He saw three major sources of conflict between the child and the curriculum:

First, the narrow but personal world of the child against the impersonal but infinitely expanded world of space and time; second, the unity, the single wholeheartedness of the child's life, and the specializations and divisions of the curriculum; third, an abstract principle of logical classification and arrangement, and the practical and emotional bonds of child life. (Dewey, 1902, p. 7)

It is from these fundamental differences between the two that the emphasis on either the child or the curriculum arises. Dewey treated them as "necessarily related to each other in the educative process, since it is precisely one of interaction and adjustment" (1902, p. 10). The gap between the child's experience and the formal logic of subject matter is not one of kind, but of degree. Both are composed of the elements of fact and truth. The child begins with the same general attitudes, motives, and interests that impelled the origin of subject matter initially. When subject matter is seen not as a fixed given, but as the culmination of the experience of mankind, and the range of child experience as wide rather than narrow,

we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies. (Dewey, 1902, p. 11)

The problem becomes not one of whether the child or the curriculum is the reality but rather of what significance is the "end" of subject matter when dealing with the "beginning" of the child. If the continuum is seen, the answer is also seen: the end of subject matter helps interpret and serves as a guide for the beginning. This function of subject matter is overlooked by the child-centered curriculum. Dewey sees the child's present experience as transitional, incomplete, changing. The ordering of subject matter aids the teacher in interpreting these experiences, in being able to see where they may lead, rather than seeing them as ends in themselves. This view of the child is crucial to Dewey's philosophy of education. It determines the appropriate curriculum and methods to be employed in the educative process.

The process of interpretation, in light of the end of subject matter, enables the teacher to discriminate between experiences: which experiences should be encouraged and facilitated, and which experiences are passing fancies or waning tendencies. Dewey warns that to fail to see the relation within the child-subject matter continuum is to



take interests as achievements, rather than as "attitudes toward possible experiences." The result of this failure is to retard growth, rather than facilitate it. The child's interests provide motivation for education rather than culminating the educative process. Failure to use interest for growth is mere excitation without direction toward achievement. As Whitehead later wrote, education does not happen without exploration, closure, and generalization. Lacking one of these three steps, the process is incomplete.

By thus observing and interpreting students' behavior the teacher can provide opportunities for further experiences that build on the experiences of the child, rather than appear, isolated and purposeless, in the classroom. But "guidance is not external imposition. It is freeing the life-process for its own most adequate fulfillment." This is the alternative to either "forcing the child from without, or leaving him entirely alone" (Dewey, 1902, p. 17). The child's own interests serve as the basis for further activities, suggested by the teacher who sees beyond the immediate situation to the culmination of mankind's experience. This is consistent with Dewey's view of education as a major socializing force. The child is guided but not forced toward the valued objectives of his society.

Dewey distinguished between the logical (subject matter) and psychological (relation to child) aspects of experience. The psychological aspect of experience is historical, following the pattern of growth (both successful and unsuccessful

steps taken) as it occurs. The logical aspect is the culmination of the psychological aspect, taking over when the process has reached a degree of integration and completion. Ignoring the process, subject matter summarizes, categorizes, and rearranges the experiential outcomes. Without the logic (subject matter), the psychologic (child's experiences) would be unfulfilled, unfinished; without the psychologic, the logic would have nothing to summarize, categorize, or rearrange. The two aspects are mutually dependent and interrelated. One cannot be divorced from the other. The logically arranged material of subject matter cannot replace the individual experience but it

serves as a guide to future experience, it facilitates control; it economizes effort, preventing useless wandering, and pointing out the paths which lead most quickly and most certainly to a desired result. (Dewey, 1902, p. 19)

Subject matter--logically arranged material--is not valuable for itself but as a "standpoint, outlook, method." It puts experience into a more available, more significant, more seminal form for further use, further application. But as for worth within itself, it has none. The teacher's concern with subject matter is with

the ways in which that subject may become a part of experience; what there is in the child's present that is usable with reference to it; how such elements are to be used; how his own knowledge of the subject matter may assist in interpreting the child's needs and doings, and determine the medium in which the child should be placed in order that his growth may be properly directed. (Dewey, 1902, p. 23)

The scientist's view of subject matter--as a given body of truth--represents the curriculum-centered view of subject matter. However, for the scientist this body of truth is not complete within itself--it is the source of new problems, new solutions. It is self-contained; new facts interconnect with it. The student cannot act as a scientist in this respect--he has no direct relationship to the body of truth, as does the scientist. Nor does he have need to. His concern is with experiencing the contents; there is time later for complete integration and organization as he experiences many aspects of it and discovers that it facilitates use.

Dewey saw three evils in presenting organized subject matter to the child rather than providing for suitable experiences. First, whatever learning occurs is only verbalism. In learning what a symbol "means" without having appropriate experience that arrives at that symbol, the child reaches no understanding of it, understanding that is necessary for him to be able to apply what he has learned. The material remains something only to be returned to the teacher, not a reality for the child to use. Secondly, unless the child has real need for the knowledge, there is no motivation to learn it--to acquire these meaningless symbols. Need arising from experience motivates learning and understanding. Need also provides an aim for an activity or a knowledge: "I need to know X so I can apply it to Y." But knowledge divorced from the reality of experience has no aim or direction that is apparent to the child. The resulting lack of intrinsic

motivation necessitates the application of extrinsic motivation: external rewards (grades, M&Ms), or punishments (grades, "time-out"). Thirdly, to render subject matter appropriate to young children whose concepts are still developing it is usually necessary to leave out just those parts that give significance, reason, logic, and unity to that subject. Even though the purpose is to make subject matter usable, the material is presented to the child with the utility and applicability removed. The child must memorize it, and he has neither the opportunity to profit from the adult logic involved nor from his own ability to experience, understand, and respond.

These are not the only evils of presenting subject matter as a fait accompli. Through enough exposure to this method, the child loses his ability to discriminate: he begins to "enjoy" the drills and repetition that accompany it. His mind has been brought down to the level of what is available to it. Rather than encouraging its growth, the mind is restricted and bound. The child's unfilled interest in reality is lost, and he turns to the only outlet available to him--symbols--not understood, not usable, and not applicable, from the lack of understanding.

Dewey summarized the role of subject matter in these words:

Now, the value of the formulated wealth of knowledge that makes up the course of study is that it may enable the educator to determine the environment of

the child, and thus by indirection to direct. Its primary value, its primary indication, is for the teacher, not for the child. It says to the teacher: Such and such are the capacities, the fulfillments, in truth and beauty and behavior, open to these children. Now see to it that day by day the conditions are such that their own activities move inevitably in this direction, toward such culmination of themselves. Let the child's nature fulfill its own destiny, revealed to you in whatever of science and art and industry the world now holds as its own. (1916, p. 31)

This expression of Dewey's beliefs about the curriculum is consistent with the anecdotes of the new British infant school writings. The Plowden Report specifically rejected the child centered curriculum, while recommending a whole experience approach to work in subject areas. Citing Piagetian research, the Plowden Report echoed Dewey's view that the child and the subject are important in their relationship to each other. Both philosophies saw subject matter as the teacher's map of possibilities for extending the children's experiences. To prevent the mindlessness that may result from the child-centered approach that ignores subject matter, Plowden recommended

brief schemes for the school as a whole: outlines of aims in various areas of the curriculum, the sequence of development which can be expected in children and the methods through which work can be soundly based and progress accelerated.  
(para 539)

But flexibility is of first importance, "to make good use of the interest and curiosity of children" (para 540).

Despite his concern for continuity between the child's experience and formal subject matter, Dewey also saw the value of experiences that lie outside subject matter



categorization. Valuing "interests that do not fit under subject headings" (para 546) partially for their contribution to development of whole, real experiences, Plowden recommended integration of work as the way to achieve accommodation of the interests, as well as facilitation of experience-base building. Dewey stated that it is not necessary to know what a subject is "good for" in order to include it in the curriculum. The child's great interest in it can be reason enough for adding it. The "good for" may or may not become apparent at a later date, but avid interest by the children is proof that it is fulfilling some need. If, on the other hand, the students show no interest in a topic that would be expected to interest them, the teacher should present it either so that it has immediate value or as a way to reach a goal that has intrinsic value.

In warning that "life is its own excuse for being" (1916, p. 243), Dewey rejected the attempt to include in the curriculum only subjects that can be shown to have certain future usefulness. Plowden, too, stated:

It (the question whether the children are being fitted to grapple with the world which they will enter when they leave school) fails to understand that the best preparation for being a happy and useful man or woman is to live fully as a child.  
(para 506)

### Life Values

Dewey's third area of curricular aims concerned just this question of applicability to life. Dewey emphasized these general life values in an attempt to overcome the

isolation of the "various pursuits of life." The Plowden Report is likewise concerned with the fostering of necessary life values:

For such a society, children, and the adults they will become, will need above all to be adaptable and capable of adjusting to their changing environment. They will need as always to be able to live with their fellows, appreciating and respecting their differences, understanding and sympathizing (sic) with their feelings. They will need the power of discrimination and, when necessary, to be able to withstand mass pressures. They will need to be well-balanced, with neither emotions nor intellect giving ground to each other. They will need throughout their adult life to be capable of being taught, and of learning, the new skills called for by the changing economic scene. They will need to understand that in a democratic society each individual has obligations to the community, as well as rights within it. (para 496)

Dewey believed that the school should provide experiences which would encourage

executive competency in the management of resources and obstacles encountered (efficiency); by sociability, or interest in the direct companionship of others; by aesthetic taste or capacity to appreciate artistic excellence in at least some of its classic forms; by trained intellectual method, or interest in some mode of scientific achievement; and by sensitiveness to the rights and claims of others--conscientiousness. (1916, p. 244)

The two excerpts above demonstrate not only the shared concerns of Dewey and the Plowden Report regarding life values, but also the high degree of similarity of form and content between the writings of the two.

Traditional education supports isolation by presenting a tangled mass of separate interests and experiences rather than a smoothly woven fabric of unifying experiences that

are the product of an integrated curriculum. The narrow view of life that puts business in one sharply demarcated category and religion in another is disruptive and misleading. Dewey valued a mingling and blending of the different worlds of experience, which yield a life of richness and variety. By being integrated and whole the curriculum provides the basis of such a life view and experience. Education serves to give dignity to life. In doing so, it must be concerned not only with the means to survive (making a living) but also with the problems of humanity (the demands of living together). It must be concerned with social responsibility and social insight and interest. When life in school is experienced as a community in continuity with life outside of school, then school knowledge will be understood in terms of the essential social life in which all operate. It will not constitute an isolated, unusable body of knowledge but will be applicable to life in and out of school, in childhood and in adulthood.

## CHAPTER 6

### METHOD AND EVALUATION

#### Method

"Method means that arrangement of subject matter which makes it most effective in use" (Dewey, 1916, p. 165).

The Plowden Report does not include specific, detailed information about something that could be called "the method". This may have been a deliberate choice by the committee. Since 1918, one passage has appeared repeatedly in publications of the Board of Education:

Neither the present volume nor any developments or amendments of it are designed to impose any regulations supplementary to those contained in the Code. The only uniformity of practice that the Board of Education desire to see in the teaching of public elementary schools is that each teacher shall think for himself, and work out for himself such methods of teaching as may use his powers to the best advantage and be best suited to the particular needs and conditions of the schools. Uniformity in detail of practice (except in the mere routine of school management) is not desirable, even if it were attainable. But freedom implies a corresponding responsibility in its use. (Plowden, 1967, para 508)

By including it again in the Plowden Report, the committee renewed the dedication of British infant education to its essence. To set forth certain "methods" to be followed by all teachers would be a contradiction to this spirit.

Nevertheless, a common thread of recommended methods appears in the Plowden Report:

The school sets out deliberately to devise the right environment for children, to allow them to be themselves and to develop in the way and at the pace appropriate to them. It tries to equalise (sic) opportunities and to compensate for handicaps. It lays special stress on individual discovery, on first hand experience and on opportunities for creative work. It insists that knowledge does not fall into neatly separate compartments and that work and play are not opposite but complementary. (1967, para 505)

Concern for the individual child, the right environment, equal opportunity (in spite of handicap), individual discovery, experience, creativity, and the integration of the curriculum may be considered related to "method".

How does this compare with Dewey's writing about methods?

Reflection upon experience gives rise to a distinction of what we experience (the experienced) and the experiencing--the how. When we give names to this distinction we have subject matter and method as our terms. (Dewey, 1916, p. 167)

In practice, according to Dewey, they cannot occur in isolation from each other:

Under normal conditions, learning is a product and reward of occupation with subject matter. Children do not set out, consciously, to learn walking or talking. One sets out to give his impulses for communication and for fuller intercourse with others a show. He learns in consequence of his direct activities. The better methods of teaching a child, say, to read, follow the same road. They do not fix his attention upon the fact that he has to learn something and so make his attitude self-conscious and constrained. They engage his activities, and in the process of engagement he learns: the same is true of the more successful methods in dealing with number or whatever. (Dewey, 1916, p. 169)

When the method is not separate from the subject matter--i.e., when the experience is integral--the child learns.



Like the new British infant school, Dewey's method involved integration: of subject matter and experience, mind and body, play and work, learning and doing. The purpose of the method, for both Dewey and the Plowden Report, was to develop a thinking mind rather than a store of facts and skills. Methods are not "tricks of the trade" but an integral aspect of subject matter. Method is concerned with putting the abstractions of subject matter into "its concrete connections with the rest of the world of knowledge and culture and with the life of man in society" (Dewey, in Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, p. 362). One aspect of method would be the appropriateness of particular studies at various stages of development. Both Dewey and the new British infant school writings have treated this in terms of the role of experience in the development of subject matter (see Chapter 4).

What the school can do for children is to help them learn how to think. When the school tries to teach skill and information acquisition separate from training in thinking it foredooms its own efforts. Skill and information unrelated to thinking are worse than useless. The child is a victim of his habits and others' authoritarianism, rather than the agent of his own free thought. Methods of instruction must be centered "upon the conditions which exact, promote, and test thinking" (Dewey, 1916, p. 153). Thinking is the method of intelligent experience. However, to

be able to think one must have experiences, which the school can neither ignore nor assume. The method of initial approach to any subject at any age must be experiential, in order to be thought-provoking and not merely vocabulary-acquiring. From something to experience, something to do, the pupil can learn. But from something to learn, he can only acquire words without understanding.

Physical action is however not the only requirement. The experience must be sufficiently new to present a problem, yet related to prior experiences enough to bring out an effective response. Plowden says:

If the material is too familiar or the learning skills too easy, children will become inattentive and bored. If too great maturity is demanded of them, they fall back on half remembered formulae and become concerned only to give the reply the teacher wants. (1967, para 533)

The teacher can use the question: "What quality of problem does this experience involve?" to decide its value within the curriculum. The quality of the problem is measured in part by its relation to personal experience. If the problem is outside the student's experience and concerns, the solution will also be. In a classroom devoid of materials and active contact with them, questions will be unrelated to experience.

There must be more actual material, more stuff, more appliances, and more opportunities for doing things....And where children are engaged in doing things and in discussing what arises in the course of their doing, it is found, even with comparatively indifferent modes of instruction, that children's inquiries are spontaneous and numerous, and the proposals of solution advanced, varied, and ingenious. (Dewey, 1916, p. 156)

A student must have material--actions, facts, events, relations--to think things out; thought cannot come from an empty mind. As the Plowden Report indicated:

At every stage of learning children need rich and varied materials and situations, though the pace at which they should be introduced may vary according to the children. (para 535)

For materials as for experience there comes a time when the student's mind goes beyond these in searching for solutions. It may be at this point that the culmination of other's experiences, in the form of logically arranged subject matter, must be made available to the student, for his use in solving his problems.

The new British infant school particularly emphasizes Dewey's concepts of knowledge of the individual child, a range of approaches to each curricular area, and freedom of choice for both teacher and student. The teachers attempt to create a favorable atmosphere by establishing a relationship of mutual trust and respect with each child. In the course of this, the teacher learns how he can best help each child develop educationally. Blackie (1967) reminded us that there is wide variety in teachers' methods of establishing this relationship as well as in their ability to do it. Variance in permissiveness and discipline are wide and each teacher is encouraged to find the optimal combination that works in his or her classroom.

Within this framework the teacher first supplies a range of materials appropriate for the needs and interests of the

children in the class. How much, what, and when are important questions that must be answered. However, such materials are not the only way information is made available to the children. Both the Socratic method of carefully led group discussion and the set lesson are included as appropriate. The use of the set lesson for memory work (addition facts, multiplication, etc.) is preceded by work designed to help the student understand the relationships between the numbers.

The children have much freedom of choice within the constraints of the materials available, and the children quickly learn, when given this experience from the start of their schooling, to show initiative in choosing and directing their own activities. However, even though the teacher's role is not so obviously the dominant one, the demands on the teacher are heavy in terms of energy, knowledge, and skill.

In the British infant schools the head teacher has been delegated curriculum responsibility by the local educational governing body. The position of head teacher carries such authority that the school must follow the "head's" lead. This position is filled (by representatives of the governing body) from application lists usually open to anyone who wishes to apply. Methods of teaching, scheduling, curriculum content, texts, library books, methods of discipline, and management style are all decided by the head teacher. This degree of autonomy is tempered by the inability of the head teacher to go completely against the wishes of the staff.

In fact, the prevailing management style in the new British infant schools is democratic, with much input from the teachers. In general, the relationship between the head teacher and staff is friendly and cooperative and this results in happier, more relaxed teachers and classrooms. A rigid staff management style is incompatible with the relaxed, flexible, and purposeful classroom management so necessary to a successful new British infant classroom.

### Evaluation

Dewey had little regard for the type of evaluation with which Americans are most familiar--that is, examinations. His attitude toward them was expressed in such statements as:

Thus we have the spectacle of professional educators decrying appeal to interest while they uphold with great dignity the need of reliance upon examinations, marks..., and the time-honored paraphernalia of rewards and punishments. (1916, p. 336)

Similar remarks appeared in The Child and the Curriculum and The School and Society.

The values Dewey put on mistakes was incompatible with typical examination behavior.

It is more important to keep alive a creative and constructive attitude than to secure an external perfection by engaging the pupil's action in too minute and too closely regulated piece of work. (1916, p. 197)

An atmosphere which encourages the perfection of no mistakes



restricts initiative, reduces judgment to a minimum, and compels the use of methods which are so remote from the complex situations of life that the power gained is of little availability. (1916, p. 197)

The product that Dewey values is not a set of recitable facts, but an active, searching, judgmental mind, a thing which does not lend itself to measurement by standard examination.

Dewey failed to offer a packaged alternative for evaluation. However, when we view the terms in which he spoke: "experience of consequences," a "creative and constructive attitude," the clinical empiricism of Eisner (1974) seems to be the most appropriate and closest fitting approach. Dewey said that the accomplishments of mass groups of children could be viewed, in reality, only in terms of the individual accomplishment of each child. Dewey sought certain experiences for all children (particularly experiences of the historical-evolutionary nature of social life) but he believed that the value of these experiences could only be realized within the child, not within the mass of children. Although Dewey emphasized the social experience, rather than individual experience, social experience can only occur when individuals come together. Thus, the experiences, accomplishments, and direction of the individual must be evaluated. These were to be the measure of a valuable schooling. What a child could do with a paper and pencil is most often irrelevant to this type of evaluation.

Dewey emphasized the doing. Experience begins with doing, and knowledge to have value must end in doing. Group paper and pencil evaluations viewed from this perspective, are essentially passive, "being done to," and thus are useless. We can only find out what an individual is capable of doing and willing to do by watching him act on and in his environment. This is the point at which evaluation in the new British infant schools begins. To find out how well a child reads, the teacher listens to him read something that he has already chosen because he was interested in it. To assess his comprehension, she asks him questions about the material. In this way, she is able to quickly evaluate the child's ability to deal with this material. However, this means of evaluation does not lend itself to cross-group comparisons, t-tests, and other statistical ways of looking at children. Each child is compared not with a group of children his age or his grade from all over the country but with himself, a week earlier, a year earlier. Thus, the child's development is encouraged according to his real, personal needs rather than according to the perhaps spurious needs that can be more easily imposed on a group of children his age.

There are two important recognitions of the clinical empiricism approach to measurement that is advocated by Eisner as suitable for the new British infant school. First, "evaluation of educational progress does not have to take a

quantitative form," and secondly, "one does not need to specify behavioral objectives in order to have criteria for evaluating student performance" (1974, p. 64). The present writer feels that Dewey would have agreed with this approach to evaluation. Although Dewey had certain objectives for the students, these were broadly viewed in terms of what was to be accomplished, not today or this semester, but over the entire educational period. Teaching only for successful passing of an examination was as foreign to Dewey's philosophy as it is to the philosophy of the new British infant school.

For both Dewey and the new British infant schools evaluation emphasized qualitative judgments rather than quantitative ones. There was no perceived need for precise, "comparable" measurements on classroom after classroom of students. Each child was seen as unique and comparison on a standardized test would neglect and penalize uniqueness.

For Dewey and for the new British infant school, primary concerns for early childhood were gaining self-motivation for and satisfaction with the learning experience. Although Dewey advocated a more historical curricular approach to education, within these limitations, the new British infant school classroom would provide much the same experience to children as that provided in Dewey's Laboratory School. Students of both would be motivated by a desire to learn rather than a fear of tests and failure. Although an effective, standardized way to measure these types of achievements

has not been realized, this does not mean that evaluation is not an essential part of these models. Evaluation, indeed, is highly important, for it is by this means that each child's individual curriculum is tailored to fit his needs. All standardized evaluation can tell is how well a few specified needs have been met; it does not indicate how better to meet even these limited needs.

The Plowden Report deplores the practice of teaching to the exam. Nevertheless, it recommends two major methods of evaluation, one of which in particular, Dewey would have termed useless. However, the Plowden Report qualified its recommendation for "recurring national surveys of attainment" by an insistence that they, as well as other objective whole-class testing, be used "with insight and discrimination,...not assum(ing) that only what is measurable is valuable" (1967, para 551).

The support for judicious use of objective testing is one of the few major areas in which the Plowden Report, in speaking for the new British infant schools, deviates from the philosophy of John Dewey. Some writers about the new British infant schools do not share this support for objective testing, however. Blackie (1967), Eisner (1974), and Featherstone (1971) among others have rejected this position in favor of no objective whole-class testing. Brown and Precious (1968) do not even mention whole class objective testing. Their brief reference to testing is in terms of measuring the child against his own past performance, and self-evaluation by the child.

The second means of evaluation recommended by the Plowden Report is that done informally in the classroom of the secondary school (to which the children progress from the infant and junior schools) when comparisons are made between children with different school backgrounds. Although this evaluation is not of individuals, it should give some indication of how well a particular school functions in preparing its students for the secondary schools.



## CHAPTER 7

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPROVEMENTS

"The teacher must be absolutely free to get suggestions from any and every source" (Dewey, 1915, p. 120).

Dewey's writing on the role of the teacher was always focused toward more teacher control of the classroom and curriculum (Boydston, 1970). The teacher was to be an agent of educational and social change. She made the decisions about what was to happen in her classroom. In response to the argument that teachers are incompetent to determine curriculum, Dewey noted that the same argument had been used whenever democracy was being avoided--that the people are incompetent to determine their government. He argued that we cannot stop democracy short of the classroom, adding that if teachers are incompetent to determine curriculum, then they must be incompetent to carry out dictated tasks. If they are indeed so inept, the very nature of the responsibility for setting goals and duties would develop proficiency. Additionally, competent people withdraw from teaching because the conditions that result in little opportunity for decision-making are so repulsive that only inept people remain as teachers (Dewey, 1902). The British publications have not pushed the issue as far as did Dewey, though the new British infant school strongly supports teacher control of classroom

and curriculum (see Chapter 5). Britain's new infant schools seem to support Dewey's contention that teachers are competent when encouraged to act as decision makers.

Neither Dewey nor the new British infant schools isolate the teacher in her classroom, expecting her to be self-sufficient. In his writings Dewey acknowledged the importance of the role of administration in the school. He referred to subject matter, methods, and administration as the "trinity of school topics" (1916, p. 164). The role of school administration was

to secure the unity of the whole, in the place of a sequence of more or less unrelated and overlapping parts, and thus to reduce the waste arising from friction, reduplication, and transitions that are not properly bridged. (1915, p. 72)

Although he documented the necessity for this unity, Dewey wrote nothing about how this was to be achieved. The same is true of his writing in respect to the school's relation to the university. He apparently assumed that there was no need to specify the how of the "free interaction between all the parts of the school system" (1915, p. 78), including the university or that once the necessity was admitted for it to be so, the reality would follow. Whether this was his assumption, or whether this lack of attention to the "how" was the result of an inherent lack of interest in administration is not known. It has been suggested (Wirth, 1966) that as an administrator Dewey was not entirely successful, perhaps due to a lack of interest in this aspect of education. The brevity of the Laboratory School's existence under Dewey's

administration may have prevented the rise of a complex system of administrative/ancillary support for the classroom teacher such as that presently enjoyed by the new British infant school. It would seem that this kind of support would have met with Dewey's approval; however, direct comparison between the two philosophies in practice is difficult.

Much of Britain's success in terms of teacher quality is attributed to its advisory system. Her Majesty's Inspectors (H.M.I.), an elite group of advisors, form the core of the advisory system (Blackie, 1967). Working for the national government rather than for individual school districts, H.M.I.'s are in a unique position to work with teachers. Although not usually from the district, H.M.I.'s live there, usually for ten years, while carrying out their advising role. Not only are they familiar with a wide range of classroom practices, but also they gain the familiarity with the local area necessary for recommendations that are particularly applicable to that area.

The duties of an H.M.I. are numerous. He becomes familiar with the complete school. Where he recognizes problems (whether in equipment, facilities, material, teaching, or any other area), he reports these to everyone concerned--the school staff and managers, the local district authority, and the Inspectorate. He spends time particularly in classrooms, observing, listening, and talking to teachers. His only function is to advise; he makes no demands or restrictions. He is aware of the needs of particular teachers and

particular schools and he tailors his advice to the situation. He does not advocate a particular philosophy but tries to help each teacher develop to the best of her ability. A second role of an H.M.I. is the staffing of short courses (ten days) for in-service training, covering all subjects and phases of education.

As the number of H.M.I.'s is small (543) in proportion to the number of schools involved, about one-third of the Local Educational Authorities (L.E.A.'s) have established their own system of advisers. While frequently more concerned with administration than teaching, they too are involved with teachers and in-service training.

A third organization involved in improvement of teaching skills as well as curricular improvements is the Schools Council for the Curriculum and Examinations. The Schools Council has a guaranteed member majority of teachers, thus increasing the impact of actual classroom experience on recommendations. The Schools Council finances and undertakes projects and inquiries in various curriculum areas, as decided by different committees. The major difference between this organization and the H.M.I. and L.E.A. is the right of teacher control. The Schools Council is run by teachers; the H.M.I. and L.E.A. are basically authoritarian even though the actual relationship (particularly in the case of H.M.I.) is more of colleagues than supervisor-subordinates.

Within this framework the individual teacher has a great deal of autonomy, especially in the new British infant schools.

She is recognized as being the closest to and most knowledgeable about the individual child. The differing needs of children are recognized and respected, and no single program or combination of programs is regarded as being effective in dealing with the vast differences between children found in even the most "streamed" (ability grouped) classroom. The intent of the inspectors, advisors and Schools Council is to provide all teachers with the skills necessary to deal with a classroom of individuals.

#### The Role of Teacher Preparation

Dewey (1915) saw the professional school as a resource for the classroom. By coordination between lower and higher schools, students would be exposed to and learn things with meaning and truth, rather than trivialities and half-truths promulgated by a "partially educated teacher." Teacher preparation was to include not only the turn of the century concern of how to teach, but the what to teach that was inseparable from the how. In this way, teachers would convey the best available information with the best knowledge of how to relate this information to the lives of those being taught. Just as the child must experience while learning, so must the teacher. Rather than attempt to teach by lecture, the professional school should be intimately connected to the elementary school,

contributing to the evolution of valuable subject-matter and right method, while the school in turn will be a laboratory in which the student of education sees theories and ideas demonstrated, tested,



criticized, enforced, and the evolution of new truths. We want the school in its relation to the University to be a working model of a unified education. (1915, p. 93)

A teacher's professional education was to equip her with both insights and skills. Dewey conceptualized a teacher as one who would help children "grow intellectually, ethically, emotionally, aesthetically, and spiritually (Wirth, 1966, p. 54). Of the two methods of training teachers, Dewey preferred the laboratory method for producing teachers capable of further professional growth to the apprentice method that, while giving techniques for class control and management, overlooked the reality of the child. The laboratory method produces a teacher grounded in sound psychological and philosophical theory, rather than one who teaches to the moment, to what appears to produce smooth, even results. Further, the teacher must be knowledgeable in subject matter--the what--as well as in method--the how. Although the teacher was to be guided by the advice of the educational theorist, she was to be knowledgeable enough to be able to test the ideas in the laboratory of the classroom.

The new British infant school shares Dewey's philosophy of teacher education. Adequate knowledge in subject matter and adequate classroom experience are the foundations of their teacher preparation programs. Echoing Dewey, the Plowden Report says:

The purpose of teaching practice is to underpin and enliven theoretical studies in child development and education, and to provide sources from which theory can be derived....Through it, colleges and schools can learn about each others new ideas. (1967, para 985)

The Plowden Report recommends that students undertake concentrated study in one or two "main courses" of subject matter, outside the immediate area of education. "Students need resources of knowledge and judgment upon which they can draw both as teachers and individuals" (1967, para 972).

It is significant that in spite of a typically longer period of practice teaching than that usually found in America today or in the time of Dewey, the new British infant school is concerned especially with the in-service education of teachers. The concern begins with the first in-service year: all first year teachers, regardless of level of training, are considered probationary. As such, they are given special guidance and help from the administration, as well as, less formally, from fellow teachers. The Local Education Authority places special emphasis on their support and guidance and must approve all probationary teachers before they continue teaching the second year. Despite this support, the Plowden Report recommends strengthening and extending this program of support for probationary teachers to insure a strong educational system.

In-service training is of great importance:

The unique freedom of the English schools is defensible only if teachers prove themselves equipped to meet demands which are increasingly exacting. The three year course is no more than a basis. In-service training provides a necessary super-structure. (Plowden, 1967, para 1013)

In-service training ranges from the availability of local resource centers to year-long courses at colleges and

universities. Between these extremes are found short courses (day, weekend, week, hourly per week) and residential courses of various lengths. This emphasis on training does not appear just "on paper," but seems to be carried out in practice:

Two-thirds of all primary teachers had followed a refresher course between September 1961 and June 1964, and...on average these teachers had spent 13 days on courses. (Plowden Report, 1967, para 1024)

## CHAPTER 8

## THEORIES IN PRACTICE

What would a classroom look like that was guided by the theories of either Dewey or the new British infant school? As we have already seen, both models share a very similar philosophical base in terms of physical and intellectual development, the nature of knowledge and knowing, experiences and learning, and methods and evaluation. Three aspects of the classroom might be very similar: the teacher's role, the children's role, and the methods of evaluation. The room's physical layout and the curriculum might be somewhat different but still closely related. A difference (increasing with time) might be found in the age ranges of the children within a single classroom, as well as in the school itself.

In Dewey's Laboratory School and in the new British infant school models, the roles of student and teacher are cooperative. Neither sets the complete curriculum. Curriculum planning and direction is the result of cooperative decision-making by the student and the teacher. In both models, the teacher plans the overall program and its goals in terms of skills and abilities, but the means of carrying out these goals are worked out jointly. Choice is an essential part of the student role. The student takes an active part in the learning process, directing attainment of his

own goals, looking to the teacher as a resource person and supplier. The teacher acts as an environment structurer, a facilitator, and a materials supplier. By the materials she brings to the classroom, she suggests limits, restraints, and goals. Her suggestions and directions encourage initiative and independent judgment. Her primary concerns are not with large group instruction or lectures, but with the structured environment within which the children work and play. The teacher is not a passive bystander in the classroom. Within her planned structure of space and materials, she acts to structure time and counsel individuals. She attempts far less specificity and control than found in a traditional classroom, yet is an authority figure when necessary.

In both the new British infant school and the Laboratory School model, a teacher is a resource person for other teachers. Curriculum ideas are shared and problems, failures, successes, materials and methods are discussed. Both models provide not only formal encouragement in the form of regular staff meetings but also informal encouragement for this exchange.

Although the difference in speciality expectations is more apparent in the area of curriculum content than in teacher role, it seems appropriate to discuss it here. Both models recognize the need for in-depth knowledge by their teachers, rather than broad surface knowledge. The difference between the philosophies in practice lies in the way in



which the students come in contact with this special knowledge. The Laboratory School made a particular effort to ensure that each child would profit from each specialist, by scheduling and extremely close cooperation between all the teachers working with a group of children. In the new British infant school the approach is not as formally organized. A teacher with a math specialty will reflect this in the structure and materials of her room. However, "her" children are not typically tied to her room, but free, as the need arises, to go to work in another teacher's room, with a different high interest area, when their needs (as perceived by the students or teacher) are not being met in the primary room. Particularly in schools that do not use vertical grouping (five to seven year olds in the same class for the whole period of infant schooling), it is believed that as the students move from teacher to teacher over the three year period, exposure to different specialists will be adequate, and, indeed, more profitable. The teacher's contagious interest in her speciality will be more useful in bringing about interest and effective work on the children's part than periodic, scheduled exposure for set times. This will happen without causing the disintegration and compartmentalization of knowledge that periodic though more frequent exposure would cause. Dewey countered the charge of compartmentalization and disintegration by maintaining that "undue separation, which often follows teaching by specialists, is a result of lack of supervision, cooperation, and control by a unified

plan" (Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 36). Considering the teacher/pupil ratio and amount of coordination time allowed within each teacher's daily schedule, both of which are hardly feasible in a system that is overcrowded and underpaid, the new British infant school's answer may be not only the ideal answer, but also the best available under normal circumstances.

### Evaluation

Evaluation, defined as "the collection and use of information to make decisions about an educational program" (Cronbach, 1963), was the backbone of the Laboratory School as well as the new British infant schools. However, formal measurement of the pupils' learning as a result of a given program was not considered appropriate in the Laboratory School. Much evaluation occurred in the form of constant observation, comparison, and discussion by teachers and by all who regularly came into contact with the school--visitors, graduate students, professors, and Dewey himself. Weekly staff meetings focused these discussions, but so important was this process of evaluation of present work for planning and coordination of future work that twenty to thirty minutes of each teacher's schedule was left open each day for this purpose. In addition, each teacher compiled weekly reports about her work. Teachers who acted as departmental directors were trained in and did scientific observation and reporting.

The children's work at the Laboratory School was continually evaluated by observation, and future work (remedial, supportive, expansive) was planned on this basis. Work reports by the children began and ended each period of "academic" activity. Towards the end of a session children and teachers would gather to discuss what had been done, why, how, and what more needed to be done. For the younger students, the teacher would write up a report of this discussion, while older children did much of this work themselves. These reports would be the starting point for the next related session. Reading the written reports on following days gave an opportunity for practice in reading and incited further interest in reading, writing, and additional record keeping. Based on these reports, teachers and students together would plan for further work (Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 376).

Although the constant observation, discussion, and comparison (of teacher's structure, not of individual children) of the Laboratory School is also an integral part of the new British infant school, there are many more related kinds of evaluation on-going in the classroom and school. With a somewhat more flexible time-table than that found in the Laboratory School, the necessity for careful record keeping and evaluation is increased, to ensure balance between and progress within subjects. Each child has a folder for all his written work, and each teacher carefully observes and makes notes on each child's behavior and activities. As in

the Laboratory School, these observations and records are used to evaluate past work and to plan future directions.

Thus, evaluation in both models is essential and individual. It forms the basis for both day to day and longer term planning.

### The Physical Classroom

The classroom was not as central in Dewey's Laboratory School or in the present new British infant school models as in traditional education. The teacher continually reaches beyond its limits or seeks to extend the limits inherent in four walls. Field trips take the student into the "real world" and allow him to bring back objects, experiences, and inspirations to the classroom. The teacher also brings in guests from the outside world to talk with and be available to the children whenever possible and appropriate. Within the classroom itself are many artifacts of the real world provided by both students and teachers. These form not a haphazard collection of junk, but a carefully planned resource center. Sand tables were a frequent device in the Laboratory School to bring geography into the classroom. Both models make frequent use of the school grounds for gardening. Cooking is usually provided for in the classroom. The total environment with its available activities is the place where learning occurs. The classroom is understood to be an especially facilitating place for learning, though not the only place where it can occur.

The difference between the models arises when one looks at the physical organization of the classroom. As can be seen from Figure 1, Dewey's idealized school would have each class area devoted to a different occupation or use, whereas the new British infant school (Figure 2) is more apt to have a variety of activity areas within one classroom. This is in contradiction to the inclination of the new British infant school classroom to be centered around the teacher's interests. The grouping of children and the physical arrangement of the Laboratory School brings with it more of a timetable orientation which tends to compartmentalize and disintegrate the student's experience, as the compartmentalized resources must be shared with all appropriate groups. The making available of a variety of resources in a single classroom makes it more probable that a child will be able to meet his needs at his own time, within the framework of his own interests. Also, the lack of consistent grouping in the new British infant school helps facilitate a child's freedom to move to another area, either within his classroom or within his school, as needed.

### Curriculum

Of central importance to both the Laboratory School and the new British infant school is the necessity for knowledge and ability in the "3 Rs" to grow out of studies that the child perceives as interesting and important. (Hence the need for cooperative planning by the teacher and student.)



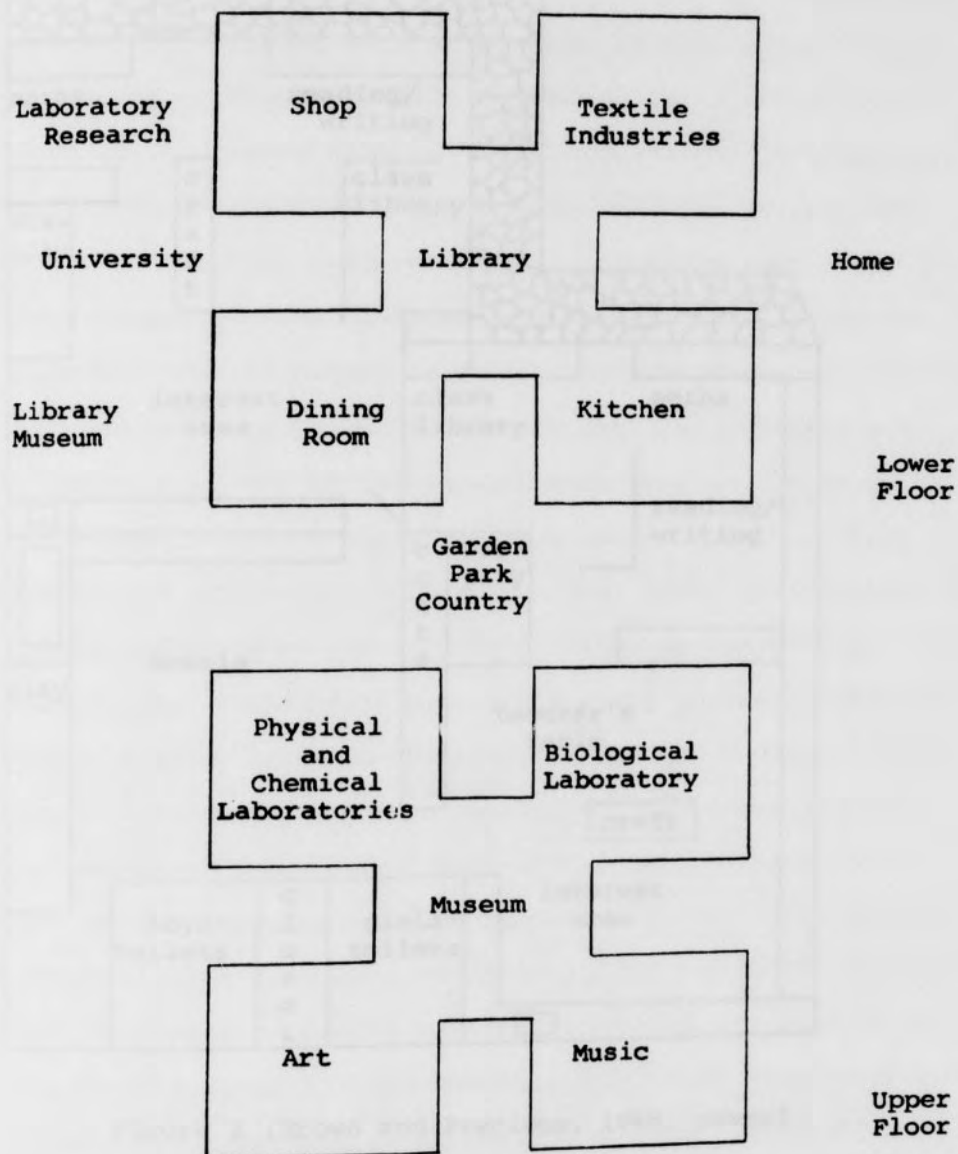


Figure 1 (Dewey, 1915, pp. 81, 87)

Ideal Classroom Arrangement  
in Dewey's Model

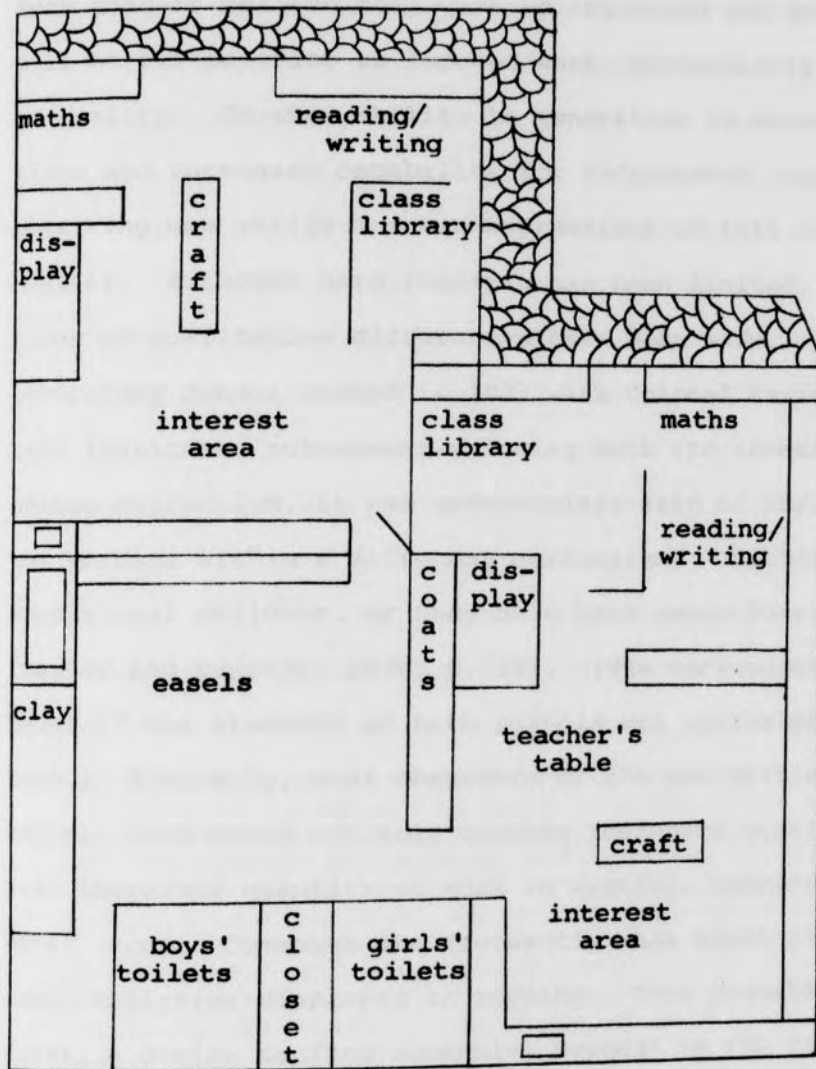


Figure 2 (Brown and Precious, 1968, cover)

Ideal Classroom Arrangement in New  
British Infant School Model

Both schools believe that work so organized and developed will be far superior to imposed work, particularly in terms of quality. Greater ability to generalize to other situations and increased capability for independent judgment in obtaining new skills are two expressions of this increased quality. Although hard research has been limited, observations of qualitative differences have been made. When the Laboratory School merged in 1903 with Colonel Parker's Chicago Institute, subsequently losing both its identity and unique curriculum, it was nevertheless said of its students, now working within a different curriculum: "Either these are exceptional children, or they have been exceptionally trained" (Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 18). (The socioeconomic level of the students of both schools was approximately the same.) Similarly, most observers of the new British infant schools have noted not only greatly increased quality but also increased quantity of work in writing, numbers, and other areas. Comments are frequently made about the somewhat lower abilities displayed in reading. This probably reflects first, a desire to find something "wrong" in the face of so many obvious "rights," and secondly, differing expectations of appropriate reading levels at the primary level rather than a real difference in the capacity of the schools to teach reading. The Laboratory School made no "special effort" to teach reading to six or seven year old pupils, unless the students themselves indicated a desire to read. The new

British infant schools are frequently as casual in their approach to reading, expecting the child to have a good start on reading by the time he enters the junior school at eight years of age, rather than by the end of his first grade year, as we now expect, almost without exception, in this country. However, observations suggest that, even with this "late" start, differences in reading ability quickly level out by the time the child is nine or ten. (This is not to imply that reading is universally poor at early ages. Most children in the infant school are achieving at "grade level"; the primary difference is in the early labeling of slow readers.)

Dewey clearly explained the philosophical rationale for this emphasis in 1897:

Seventy-five to eighty percent of the first years of a child in school is spent upon the form, not the substance of learning; is given to the mastering of the symbols of reading, writing, and arithmetic. There is not much positive nutriment in this. Its purpose is important, but it does not represent the same kind of addition or increase in a child's whole intellectual and moral experience that is represented by the positive subject-matter, now postponed to the later years of the child's education. (Dewey, in Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 25)

Although there is much similarity of approach, the teacher-pupil ratio of the two schools is markedly different. Dewey's school was not an attempt to demonstrate how to do it, but, rather, to find out how to do it. In order to accomplish this objective, he felt that optimal circumstances were necessary. Thus, a very low teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 5 or 6 existed. This was not a recommended figure for

other schools but rather was perceived to be the best way to carry out research and program development. Teachers were thus freed somewhat from classroom duties to help in the research and development of the school. In the new British infant schools, ratios of 1 to 35-40 are not uncommon; only rarely does the teacher-pupil ratio fall much below that. Neither are these teachers blessed with teacher aides. There may be one salaried aide for six to ten teachers. The head-teacher does share in teaching responsibilities, unlike the principal, and any adult coming in to the school is apt to find himself pressed into service in some child-related area or another. Other than these types of additional help, the teacher has little relief from the responsibility for large numbers of students. Dewey would have been gratified to see a program with so much common philosophy succeeding so well in the face of these numbers.

The Laboratory School curriculum was to encourage and take educational advantage of the "four native impulses" of the child: social, constructive, investigative/experimental, and expressive. For expression of the social impulse, children were encouraged to communicate in all possible ways--about themselves, their ideas, their families, about things in general. The constructive impulse leads first to play, rhythmic movement, and pretence, and then later to the use of raw materials to make things with which to work and play. Investigation and experimentation--especially orientated toward causation--yields an increasingly meaningful environment.



Finally, the expressive impulse is the refinement and manifestation of communication and construction. The role of the teacher was to provide "grist for the mill", to help channel these four impulses into ever more productive directions, to provide not only ideas on which the children could work, but the materials, time, space, and guided encouragement necessary for fruitful pursuit of the ideas. "All the utensils and materials necessary...were, therefore, at hand" (Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 28).

Although not so philosophically expressed, the new British infant schools' curriculum revolves around the same activities of childhood. In examining various classroom activities and behavior, it soon becomes apparent that Dewey's four impulses offer a satisfactory categorization. It is possible that in the new British infant school there is a more conscious emphasis on social communication in other than written and oral form: children draw, paint, model, construct, all in an effort to communicate to themselves and others their concerns from minute to minute or month to month. Thus the constructive and expressive are seen as important means of communication, in addition to oral and written communication. Within the area of constructive impulse, rhythmic movement is given much importance and consideration. While movement is seen as a major curricular area in most reports on the new British infant school, Dewey simply acknowledged the importance of provision for physical activity.

The educational problem was seen by the Laboratory School as well as the new British infant school as

how to utilize all these subjects and means of expression in an educative way, how to organize them about a common center, give them a thread of continuity, and make each reinforce the others. (Mayhew and Edwards, 1936, p. 43)

The answer is found in somewhat dissimilar ways. The Laboratory School sought to integrate the subjects and activities by means of central themes, with a strong historical-occupational approach. The child's natural environmental needs (food, shelter, comfort) were used to explore the present, understand the past, and lead to the future. The work of the Laboratory School tended to be centrally organized. Although many children worked independently on various aspects of the group project, this work frequently was planned and executed in reference to the common goal of the group. The new British infant school, on the other hand, is much less formally organized. Groups of children may choose to work together on a project, but the number involved is more often two to five or six, rather than the large group of the whole classroom. Even though the whole class may share a common experience, the work resulting from this experience is not organized by the whole class, but, rather, selected by individuals or small groups. At a particular time, there will probably be fifteen to thirty different, unrelated projects going on using six to ten different media or materials, rather than one project divided into as many aspects as there are different interests, as in the Laboratory School. One reason

for this difference may lie in the number of children in the room and the teacher pupil ratio. Getting forty children to work cooperatively on the same project would obviously be more difficult than doing the same with twenty children. Also, the number of adults in the Laboratory School classroom at any one time probably made group projects more feasible, in terms of encouragement and guidance for staying with the group task. However, this doubtless reflects a basic difference in orientation: for Dewey, the social organization; for the new British infant school, the individual.

The majority of new British infant schools would probably reject the group project approach, on the grounds that the diversity of interests and needs found in a single class would not accommodate itself easily to a single purpose, and a number of children would profit more from time spent on an area of more immediate concern than a group imposed project. The new British infant schools do not use the adaptability of children to different approaches as encouragement for insisting on adaptation. This is an area of major philosophical difference between the models presented by the new British infant schools and the Laboratory School. Dewey (and Dearden, for this question representing a minority new British infant school opinion) would see as more desirable the organization of the curriculum in terms of selected, specific content directions. The majority of new British infant schools have reached a working opinion that a skilled teacher does not need set directions of exploration to bring

about maximum student growth. Both models deny the desirability of information transmission with selected exceptions (for instance, those who agree with Dearden's thrust). The philosophical difference seems to concern the existence of a definite set of values that must be systematically passed on to future generations. Dewey affirms the transmission of values approach, designing his curriculum around the goal of passing down the cooperative, democratic ideal. On the other hand, the new British infant schools' avowed goal is to pass on neither specified values nor specified information, but a way of dealing with life that enables one to arrive at his own information and values. They are concerned with the how rather than the what of information, and by implication (their failure to structure a curriculum oriented to a single value position) of values. Of course, values do not arise in a vacuum; the school's and country's value system becomes a part of the hidden curriculum. Moral education, previously a rather vaguely defined affair, is beginning to deal specifically with the how of values, bringing this area systematically into the curriculum for the first time.

#### Grouping by age

It was Dewey's original intent to have mixed age grouping. However, after the first year, with increasing enrollment, he found it necessary to move in the direction of ability grouping based on common capabilities, interests, and intellectual capacity. The flexibility and changing of

group membership periodically through the day and week maintained a variety of contact among pupils as well as ensuring some cross-age mixing. In addition, the general assemblies in which the whole school would hear reports on the work of different groups and the half-hour weekly responsibility of the older children for activity work with younger children also preserved and strengthened cross-age associations.

Although the percentage of new British infant schools with multi-age grouping is small (13%-20% or about 6% of all British infant schools), the commitment within those schools is strong, and the Plowden Report recommended multi-age grouping as a desirable practice. Apparently the difficulties found at the Laboratory School (which have not been specified) have been overcome by those English schools and teachers who support this type of grouping. Numerous advantages are mentioned. A child has the opportunity of working at appropriate levels in all phases of his work, rather than at the level that characterizes only his own work or that of his age group. Children who are slow developers are not placed at a psychological disadvantage but have several years in which their development can catch up with that of their peers. Older children have a natural opportunity to take responsibility for younger children, while younger children have more teachers than one at any particular time. Younger children also have the models presented by the older children to pattern their own school behavior on, without the necessity for as great a degree of control and command by the teacher.



These advantages are seen by the new British infant school as outweighing the disadvantage of increased difficulty in curriculum management for the teacher.

On the whole, the degree of similarity between the two models in practice is not surprising, given the degree of congruence of philosophies that exists. Although the basic distinction between group and individual stress, and the importance of value transmission is very important from a philosophical perspective, the form of both models of education remains similar and compatible.

## CHAPTER 9

## SUMMARY

The similarities between the philosophies of Dewey and the new British infant school far outweigh the differences. Although Dewey's philosophy must have influenced the philosophical development of the new British infant schools, common social and cultural elements between the two countries are probably of greater importance in the somewhat parallel development of these two philosophies.

Both viewed physical development as necessary for intellectual development. Development was seen as a process that varied among children, proceeding at different rates at different times. This creates a need for the teacher to be able to both perceive and respond to a wide variety of developmental readiness in a single classroom, resulting in less dependence on standards of accomplishment for all children, and more insistence on individual expectations.

There are two notable similarities between the models' views of the nature of knowledge and knowing. Both see as a necessity an applicable and relevant curriculum that can be used by the children, both now and in their futures. There is a common emphasis on active, integrated experience with the things of the world as the first step in coming-to-know. This points up the common relationships between

experience and learning. Learning, that is, learning knowledge that is useful, cannot occur without experience with the physical realities of that knowledge. Characterized by active whole-person involvement, experience gives life to an otherwise dead collection of information, and builds upon the child's natural ability to learn, rather than fighting to stifle it. For learning to be complete, experience must eventually culminate in theory and concepts. Although both philosophies recognize the need for a bridge between experience and theory, there is disagreement concerning the components of this bridge. Dearden maintains that active pedagogy is the bridge, while Dewey mentions the necessity for guided experience without specifying that only a teacher can provide this guidance.

The essentials of the curriculum are similar for both models. The first expectation of the primary level curriculum is that it broaden experience and stimulate the child's own interest in intellectual progress. Subject matter content assumes a guiding role in primary work, rather than serving as the core. As experience culminates in theory, it is guided by the "road map" of subject matter, although not necessarily eliminated when it cannot be located on that map. Both models insist that fulfillment of avid interest on the child's part is necessary, regardless of the lack of obvious connection to relevant subject matter. A final expectation of the curriculum is that it be concerned with values. Dewey was more

concerned with the what of values (democratic value transmission), whereas the new British infant school, though showing some concern for the what, is much more concerned with examining the how of values.

Perhaps the primary difference between Dewey's approach and that of the new British infant school lies, however, in the area of curriculum. Dewey's emphasis was on education as related to the social body of the school and nation. The avowed purpose of the new British infant schools is to create an individual capable of functioning in whatever environment he may find himself, a perspective that separates the individual from his larger social reality. Dewey's purpose was focused on developing an individual nurtured in democracy who would be capable of supporting and living fully within a democracy which would still be existing, although in a more perfect form, in the future. Seeing the future of the individual as inextricably bound with the society in which he exists, Dewey emphasized that before the individual can find fulfillment within society, he must be educated to create an appropriate society.

Both Dewey and the new British infant school insist that the method used by the teacher must be chosen by her, as she is the best judge of what is most suitable for her own students. Although this choice would be made within the framework of concern for the child, the environment and integration of method and subject matter, the final responsibility

is the teacher's. Extensive use of materials is/was seen by both as essential for discovery, creativity, experience and integration to occur. However, when the student's mind goes beyond these in searching for solutions, the teacher must have available to the student the culmination of other's experiences (logically arranged subject matter) for his use in solving his own problems.

Another major difference lies in the use of tests as a means of evaluation. Dewey shared the assumption of the new British infant schools that informal evaluation is the best tool (and the only really useful one) for the classroom. However, the basic authority on the new British infant school (the Plowden Report) supports the judicious use of standardized testing for national achievement surveys, a practice to which Dewey does not seem to give support.

There is essential similarity in the approach to responsibility for instructional and curricular improvements. As this responsibility is viewed by both as lying finally in the hands of the classroom teacher, it is believed that there are no "teacher-proof materials." What happens in the classroom, for good or ill, is acknowledged as the teacher's responsibility. Even so, this does not relieve the educational system of responsibility for making the best skills (not just materials) available to the teacher in the classroom. Both Dewey and the new British infant schools view the first obligation of the educational system as teacher development rather than materials development.



The similarities between the philosophies and practices of John Dewey and the new British infant school are many. As indicated in this work, comparisons of physical and intellectual development, the nature of knowledge and knowing, experience and learning, the curriculum, methods and evaluation, and responsibility for improvement indicate a high degree of congruence between the models.

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