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you have made a very good beginning
of a piece of rough work on
the Psychological Basis
of the Child-mind subject

1. The Adolescent-mind
2. The Individual Mind
3. Things Common to all minds.

605

II Purposes of Curricula in Secondary Schools

1. To give to each those things good for all
2. To enable each individual to find himself
3. To make the best possible out of each

III Instructional Means.

1. By prescribed Courses leading to definite goals.
2. By absolute freedom of choice of subjects by each pupil
3. By a "core" of prescribed subjects and freedom of choice by pupils
4. By prescribed course for a number of years and freedom of choice to follow

IV Limitations

1. To 1, 2, 3, & 4. of III.

Limits to the Elective System in Secondary Education.

I find, when it is too late, that I have attempted to solve in three weeks a question that needs at least three years. I am not sure I agree with all I say in this paper. The truth is this question is at the bottom of all education and until we settle upon some definite school philosophy we cannot hope to reach a satisfactory conclusion on the subject of electives.

I have read many many pages of matter bearing directly or indirectly upon this question and have attempted in what follows to develop the ideas that have made themselves felt. I do not feel that my conclusions are conclusive. In fact the paper is to me anything else than satisfactory.

Every human mind from its beginning in the pre-natal stage to maturity passes through the different stages of development marked by the evolution of the race. Psychologists have divided this into stages or periods. For our purpose we shall note only two, the Child mind from six to twelve years and the Adolescent mind from twelve to eighteen. These divisions are not iron-clad but are to represent the average mind at about these years. I fully realize that one mind is as well developed at ten years as another at twelve, the development is a matter of physical as well as mental growth and people do not grow or develop at the same rate tho they do change constantly. The person is quite a different being when he receives his

high school Certificate from what he was when he entered the elementary school.

It is not necessary for me to tell in detail the Characteristics of child-mind; for this has been gone into by many psychologists. I shall point out only a few of the generally accepted Characteristics. As the brain centres are being connected up the child is forced to give close attention to each new stimulus consequently this age may be characterized as specific, concrete, definite, individual, personal and selfish. The child's attention is centred very largely in the objective instead of the subjective. The earlier instincts are developing and becoming a part of him. He is neither moral nor immoral but unmoral. The brain is coupling up its centres and getting ready for future activities, but he is a "wretch concentrated all in self". He does not see

things in their proper relations but only in the light of his own narrow experiences

During the period of adolescence the mind becomes more mature. Morality laws upon the individual and he sees things in a different light. It is no longer the ego but the individual in his relations to others. The mind is no longer purely objective and individual, but is more general more subjective. Other individual and things mean more to him now than formerly. He realizes that in a sense he is his brother's keeper, also that "man cannot live by bread alone". He begins to reason out why things are as they are. He wishes to do things in his own way. He has a preference with a reason for it.

While the above facts are true in a general way for all children and all adolescents, yet each child and each

Adolescent has peculiar characteristics that mark him as an individual. With all of our similarities there are no two of us exactly alike physically or mentally. "If every individual of a new generation were exactly like its parents, evolution would be impossible." "No two organisms, from the tiniest leaf, or seed, and the smallest bug to the most complex of all beings, - man, are exactly alike." This is necessary for physical evolution or social progress. So in our dealings with pupils we must keep in mind at all times the fact that we are dealing with separate individuals.

Yet there are many physical and mental functions common to all. We all grow up thru infancy, childhood, adolescence and finally into full grown manhood. We all pass thru the stages of fear, play, imitation and a multitude

of others. We learn to walk, to run, to express ourselves by spoken or written words, to reason to feel, to love and to hate. Therefore tho we are to be dealt with as individuals there are certain mental traits common to all - certain educational needs common to all, so we can be dealt with in groups.

In selecting a group of studies there it would seem possible to provide subjects that will cover those functions common to all and impossible for any one person to select the subjects suited to all the functions of any one pupil. Of these subjects common to all i.e. suited to meet those functions common to all. Mr. C. D. Schmidt, in an article in Vol. 9 pp 92 & ff of the School Review, says there are four, Language, history, mathematics and the Sciences. Language is common

Harris?

to all and so should be included. History is included in the list because no one can be a good Citizen without some knowledge of his own Country and its Government. Mathematics should be taught because a certain amount is necessary also on account of its mind-developing qualities. The Sciences are included because we need to know from a purely practical point of view some of the truths of nature as revealed thru them. If it were true that these four groups are common to each individual mind — if each high school pupil had a sense for language, mathematics, history and Science and needed to be taught all four of them during the entire high school career, our problem would be easy of solution. But the facts are against the theory.

No person knows his likes or

dislikes, his strength or his weakness until he gives himself a fair test. It is the duty, therefore, of our secondary schools to provide the means for testing its pupils. The curricula should be such that in the earlier years the pupil the pupil will be able to judge for himself where his strength lies. It should be so varied that each pupil can find for what he is best fitted mentally.

Happy is that individual who finds himself early in life. If possible this should be done between the ages of twelve and fourteen. — High school methods should be introduced, in part at least, at the age of twelve. When the pupil once finds for what he is best suited — when he finds some line of work that is not work but play, some field of activities in which he gets real pleasure, then the question

of providing for that pupil's future is solved. To do this is the most difficult as well as the most important problem in education. "Purpose is as necessary to the determination of education, as education to the determination of purpose." Give us the purpose then teacher and pupil can easily determine the curriculum necessary to make the most out of the student.

We see therefore a threefold obligation upon the man who determines the content of a school curriculum.

First, to give to each pupil those subjects that are good for all.

Second, to make it so broad that each pupil can find in it that field of mental activities for which he is best suited.

Third, so to arrange it that when the pupil has found his place in

the world's activities for which he is best suited he can prepare for that work.

The evolution of school curricula is a most interesting study. Educational periodicals for the last twenty years have been filled with articles for and against current curricula, most of them, however, have been against existing practices. "The danger of American education undoubtedly lies in our tendency to swing to enormous extremes, to exalt some one method of instruction, principle, or innovation as the panacea for all our ills." The two contending forces in the field of curricula are (1) for a prescribed course of study leading to a definite goal and (2) absolute freedom in the choice of subjects by the pupil. The conservative element of teachers has taken the mean between the two ideas and has given us an elective course with a core of prescribed

subjects. I shall deposit a fourth plan — A prescribed course for a definite number of years and freedom of choice for the remaining years of the Secondary School. Let us see the limitations to each plan.

The prescribed course is based upon the following ideas. The principal of the school being older and more experienced in matters of education knows best what is for the good of the pupil. Also any rational course of study is good for all pupils. There is a modicum of truth in this. Experience and professional training are worth something and should not be totally disregarded. But to say they alone should be the determining factor in a curriculum is to lean out of count the individual to be taught. No man with all of his psychological and pedagogical erudition can tell within himself

exactly what is best for each and every individual. In other words, no one prescribed course of study can best meet the needs of all minds." We shall never have a system of education based upon any one principle, doctrine, or method that may be safely applied without limitation; for life is varied and courses of study to be efficient must be equally varied.

If on the other hand, we adopt the idea advanced by Mr. C. G. Cooley in these words: "The student should form his own course of study, choosing what branches he pleases, as many or as few of them as he pleases, and continuing them as long as he pleases" we have gone to an extreme that even Mr. Cooley or Mr. Wightingale does not hold to in practice. The New York Harlem Evening High School and the Galveston High School (In 1901. I do not know how they are now) are the only schools, so far

as I know, with absolutely free election. Not even English is prescribed in these schools. Granting that the pupil alone can determine for what he is best suited, to turn the Curriculum of the school over in this way into the hands of the pupils is to say that experience and training are worth nothing in planning a course to meet the demands. It also encourages that few who are disposed to seek "snaps" in their efforts to avoid work. It is good for each individual to have to do a few things in school that are not fraught with pleasure. Life will have some drudgery in it for us all and the faculty necessary to sustain us at such times should be developed as well as the others. A certain amount of stick-to-itiveness is good, but is necessary for success.

The elective course with a core of prescribed subjects seems to have

met with more universal approval than any other plan. It is based upon the idea that there are certain subjects so valuable to all that no one should be allowed to do without any one in the "Core". If this is true then what are the subjects in the "Core"? When we begin to study curricula to find just what these subjects are we find ourselves in a maze of difficulties; for there is no one subject found to be universally accepted. Usually, however, we find language, history, mathematics and science. But these are far from being universally accepted. This idea, however, carries with it a combination of training and experience on one side and individuality or freedom of choice on the other, and certainly is a step in advance of the prescribed course. But it has its faults; for in the prescribed "Core", the Supt. or principal may have

a "hobby", often does, and so the individual is given many things not for his good.

Let us turn to the fourth plan — a prescribed course for a certain number of years and freedom of choice the remaining years — and see how that will work out.

At the outset let me say my idea here is that we shall take the pupils into the Secondary school at end of the twelfth year. If we do not make the transfer from building to building the course of study is to be a unit from twelve to eighteen. It is the six year high school idea; for four years is not enough to try this plan. All the pupil at the end of the sixth grade is at that age when he should begin to find himself. Let the first four years of the course be prescribed but let it be so broad that the pupil can try

each phase of human knowledge now offered in secondary schools. If this be done in four years the individual can surely find himself. Then at the end of the fourth year open the whole curriculum to him and allow him to take whatever he wishes. This has the following advantages. The pupil is forced to try the different subjects and by actual experience discover for what he is best suited, when this is done he is left ad libitum to build in his own way.

But even here it is not well for him to do without the experience of the teacher, principal and parent, otherwise he may make mistakes—mistakes of judgment ^{not} of intent.

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