

# A Conceptual Framework for Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction

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There are many ways in which one can view social studies curriculum and instruction—past, present, and future. One way, which may well be labelled the Social Foundations of the Social Studies, identifies a number of ideological camps and compares and contrasts these camps as they answer key questions about the social studies. This process of conceptual model-building affords the student of social studies the opportunity to become engaged in dialogue about the way things have been, should be, and can be. It is hoped that such discussion will influence one's course of action.

In 1967, this senior author's *Alternative Directions for the Social Studies* provoked a good deal of discussion by identifying two major camps, one of which was labelled the "good citizenship" position, the other the "social science inquiry position."<sup>1</sup> Basically, the

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two camps reflected the different goal orientations of educationists and social scientists, the former including professors of education and teachers of the social studies.

James L. Barth and S. Samuel Shermis expanded the two-camp model into a model that focused on three traditions: (1) social studies as citizenship transmission, (2) social studies as social science, and (3) social studies as reflective inquiry. Their model was the subject of a provocative article in *Social Education* in 1970.<sup>2</sup>

This article is another extension of the two previously mentioned publications. It is a five-camp model for analyzing social studies curriculum and instruction.<sup>3</sup> The five camps are: (1) social studies as knowledge of the past as a guide to good citizenship, (2) social studies

in the student-centered tradition, (3) social studies as reflective inquiry, (4) social studies as structure of the disciplines, and (5) social studies as socio-political involvement. A series of questions guided our inquiry into the nature of the five camps:

1. What provision is made for citizenship education?
2. What assumptions are made about the social and intellectual maturity of the pupil?
3. How is the content of the curriculum selected?
  - 3.1 What constitutes the body of knowledge for the curriculum?
  - 3.2 What are the sources of content for the curriculum?
4. How is the content of the curriculum utilized?
  - 4.1 What is expected of teachers in dealing with the content of the curriculum?
  - 4.2 What is expected of students in dealing with the content of the curriculum?

<sup>1</sup>Dale L. Brubaker, *Alternative Directions for the Social Studies*, (Scranton, Pa.: International Textbook Co., 1967). Some scholars felt that the two camps reflected the basic "... ambivalence built into the social science-social studies confrontation. . . ." "Report of the Political Science Panel," *Social Sciences Education Framework for California Public Schools* (Sacramento, Calif.: Statewide Social Sciences Study Committee to the State Curriculum Commission and the California State Board of Education, 1968), 7.

<sup>2</sup>James L. Barth and S. Samuel Shermis, "Defining the Social Studies: An Exploration of Three Traditions," *Social Education* (November, 1970), 743-751. Several doctoral students at Purdue University have written dissertations stimulated by the Barth-Shermis model.

<sup>3</sup>Two dissertations have been based on the five-camp model. Lawrence Howard Simon, "Toward the Development of a Programmatic Language for Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction," University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1973; and Jo Watts Williams, "A Conceptual Framework for Elementary Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction," University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1973.

- 4.3 What is expected of significant others (e.g., professors in academic disciplines, publishers) in dealing with the content of the curriculum?
5. How is evaluation of pupils and teachers with regard to curricular objectives accomplished?

In pursuing these questions within the five-camp model, we surmised that many teachers probably used a mixed strategy drawing from two or more camps. At the same time, we felt that their overall teaching approach would give primary emphasis to one of the camps.

### Social Studies as Knowledge of the Past as a Guide to Good Citizenship

Past and present advocates of this position share the belief (1) that history should be the major and/or integrating focus of study, and (2) that emphasis on sound knowledge and understanding of the past will serve as an effective guide to good citizenship. Beyond these two areas of agreement, however, there is a good deal of variance of opinion among advocates.

The view that knowledge of the past should play the central role in "social studies" instruction has its roots in the history-geography-civics tradition that emerged during the early history of our nation. "Teaching methods consisted chiefly of having children read passages aloud and recite memorized portions of the text."<sup>4</sup> Although the material to be memorized was treated as factual, it did in fact consist largely of moral prescriptions concerning "... the nature of man, his relation to God, and the manner in which he is to conduct his life."<sup>5</sup>

Independence from England and a burgeoning national consciousness introduced a secular religion—Americanism—with new texts that emphasized deeds of

American heroes, incidents in the life of the new United States, and partisan interpretations of political events. The Civil War, in turn, gave the greatest impetus to the study of history as an independent subject, with many Northern cities adding United States history as a required subject "... to emphasize American accomplishments, with the chief stress on the memorization of facts relating to our national heroes, wars, and political struggles."<sup>6</sup>

Some recent advocates of the "social studies as knowledge of the past" viewpoint, such as the Organization of American Historians, warn us of the dangers of being occupied with "presentism and history instruction that emphasizes concepts rather than facts."<sup>7</sup> Other historians "have become convinced that the use of a social science concept like status, social mobility, consensus, cultural change and alienation can be of great value to a better understanding of a historical event or a personality."<sup>8</sup>

A more extreme position concerning the central role that the acquisition of facts should play in learning about the past has been argued by Max Rafferty, former Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of California: "Classwork should include in all schools memorization and drill ... in historical dates and names of significance."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, however, "... the study of history as an uninterrupted chronological narrative is often boring ... and becomes the story of 'dry facts' and dates, taught superficially on the basis of inane textbooks."<sup>10</sup> (As Irving Morrisett has communicated to this senior author, "Logically, the emphasis on history and the emphasis on facts need not go together; in

practice they have to a very large degree.")

Who, then, according to this position, is the good social studies teacher? It is the person who believes that the study of the past should be the major and/or integrating focus of study so that this knowledge can serve as a guide to good citizenship. Some advocates of this position would argue that the teacher must move beyond this belief to explore creative and imaginative ways of teaching about the past, whereas others leave you with the impression that learning must be a tough intellectual disciplining process whereby a drillmaster puts his students through their paces by memorizing facts. Still others would provide the student with a mishmash of facts and generalizations that focus on the past. Many social studies textbooks demonstrate this latter approach.

Major criticisms of the "social studies as knowledge of the past as a guide to good citizenship" position are as follows:

1. The attitude toward authority(ies) taught by those who want to drill facts into students' heads creates bureaucrats who are expected to comply with commands from those higher up in the hierarchy. This attitude is reinforced by the assumption that (a) all ends are measurable, (b) there is consensus for reaching such ends, and (c) the causal relationship between means and ends is readily and concretely demonstrable.<sup>11</sup>
2. Studies in learning indicate that we quickly forget the many facts formerly memorized.<sup>12</sup>
3. Facts are not sacrosanct. Scholars disagree with respect to the validity of many facts, and facts quickly become dated with new findings.
4. Students are present-oriented and find most approaches to studying the past boring and irrelevant.
5. Students should be considered as citizens now, rather than as preparing for future citizenship by studying the past. New realities, such as economic and political power for youth, must be considered in this regard.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947), 399.

<sup>5</sup>"History Teaching Is 'in Crisis'," *Greensboro Daily News*, Greensboro, North Carolina, August 11, 1975, A2.

<sup>6</sup>Mark M. Krug, John B. Poster, and William B. Gillies, III, *The New Social Studies* (Itasca, Ill.: Peacock Publishers, 1970), 37. The ambivalence of historians in relating to concepts and the behavioral sciences is noted and discussed in Dale L. Brubaker, *Social Studies in a Mass Society* (Scranton, Pa.: International Textbook Co., 1969), 117-142.

<sup>7</sup>Max Rafferty, *Suffer, Little Children*, (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1962), 136.

<sup>8</sup>Krug, Poster, and Gillies, *op. cit.*, 162.

<sup>9</sup>R. Murray Thomas and Dale L. Brubaker, *Curriculum Patterns in Elementary Social Studies* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1971), 8. See, also, Erling M. Hunt, "Changing Perspectives in the Social Studies," in Erling M. Hunt et al., *High School Social Studies Perspectives*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), 3-28.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas and Brubaker, *op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>11</sup>Dale L. Brubaker and Roland H. Nelson, Jr., *Creative Survival in Educational Bureaucratic*. (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishing Co. 1974), 66.

<sup>12</sup>John DeCecco and Arlene Richards, *Growing Pains: Uses of School Conflict* (New York: Abelen Press, 1974), 36.

## Social Studies

### in the Student-Centered Tradition

Although the origins of the student-centered tradition were in the decades immediately following the Civil War, the tradition is best illustrated by the progressive education movement which flourished during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> As suggested by its title, at the heart of the tradition is the student who should be nurtured in his natural growth. He or she is viewed as the source of all content in the social studies program, with curriculum and instruction based on his or her nature, needs, and interests. The whole person, not just the cognitive person, should be the concern of the social studies educator. Knowledge is therefore instrumental and secondary, for it is useful only as it serves the student's interests and needs.

The classroom is expected to be a "miniature society" with the student acting as a citizen in this *simulated* society. Advocates of this curricular focus believe that students pass through a variety of developmental stages, and that their growth rate during these stages is not uniform with respect to any personal characteristic. Nevertheless, students of all ages are assumed to have a sufficient measure of social and intellectual maturity to play a central role in determining what educational experiences are most appropriate for them.

The content of the student-focused social studies curriculum begins with the personal experiences of the student in his or her total environment. Vicarious experiences of the person are also included. These experiences are then springboards into other new areas of interest for the student. One can see that emerging curriculum was of considerable importance to the student-centered educator. The "expanding-communities-of-man" curriculum model, often associated with Paul Hanna, illustrates the student-centered curriculum.

According to this position, the good teacher is one who teaches the whole student, rather than just

teaching facts or academic disciplines. This teacher can work with the student in order to integrate the various learnings that emerge from new experiences into the everyday living of the student. Accordingly, evaluation of the student should be a shared, subjective assessment of pupil progress in light of the total development of the person. This should include a subjective determination of change in the student's personality, social attitudes and skills, and his or her physical well-being.

Some of the criticisms of the "social studies as student-centered" position are:

1. It is too self-centered and does not teach the student to be responsible for social action outside the school.<sup>15</sup>
2. Related to the first criticism is the fact that the student-centered curriculum and experimental schools that practiced this curriculum wanted to protect students from the hard realities outside the school by limiting enrollment to "nice" people. Students were not encouraged to wrestle with problems in their natural environment; so these schools became antiseptic islands in the midst of agonizing social problems.
3. Student-centered educators tended to "go off the deep end" and emphasize the student's present interests at the expense of important learnings of others in the past. Afraid to impose anything on the student, the educator failed to transmit a rich and varied culture from the past. Student-centered education therefore had a tendency to become "wishy-washy" and aimless.

### Social Studies as Reflective Inquiry

Industrial and technological advances in the United States have provided American youth with more and more cultural alternatives. There is a diminution of culturally fixed mores and values—with traditional values, founded in Puritan morality, the work-success ethic, and individualism and achievement being supplanted by emergent values based on sociability, consideration for others, happiness, and conformity.<sup>16</sup> Given these cultural realities, social studies educators must be responsible for creating conditions whereby

students can inquire into beliefs, values, and social policies, as well as assess the consequences and implications of possible alternatives. Social studies as reflective inquiry provides a means for students to participate in the inquiry process.

Above all, social studies as reflective inquiry emphasizes process over product. Its main concern is with students learning a generalized method of problem solving. That method would include sensing a problem, articulating it, hypothesizing a plausible solution, gathering data, testing the hypothesis, and drawing appropriate conclusions.<sup>17</sup> These acts would not necessarily be in sequence; and shortcuts might be taken, as, for example, when one plays out a hunch.

With this view of social studies curriculum, citizenship is defined as a process of decision-making within the socio-political framework afforded by our form of democracy.<sup>18</sup> In selecting content, no one set body of information is considered essential; rather, the emphasis is upon an organized, directed search. The teacher's role is that of fellow inquirer who invokes doubt in behalf of the inquiry process.

In order to assist teachers and students in the inquiry process, publishers have been challenged to produce many and diverse multimedia packages. Some publishers have successfully met this challenge, while others have simply introduced the label "inquiry" in their textbook titles and advertisements.

Student progress, as might be expected, is evaluated rather subjectively by teachers and students based on their participation in the reflective thinking process.

Criticisms of the view of social studies as reflective inquiry have

<sup>14</sup>Byron Massialas and C. Benjamin Cox, *Inquiry in Social Studies* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), 7. Correspondent Theodore White argues that the Nixon men were basically men of the old culture who did not adjust to the cultural changes of the sixties; the result was a credibility gap between the White House and the citizenry. This thesis is a provocative one for the social studies educator to consider. Theodore H. White, *Breach of Faith* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1975), 331.

<sup>17</sup>John Dewey used the term "reflective thinking" to describe his problem-solving model. John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1933), 106-118.

<sup>18</sup>Barth and Shermis, *op. cit.*, 748-749.

<sup>13</sup>John DeCecco has strongly supported this position in his writings on social studies education. See, for example, *ibid.*, 43-86.

<sup>14</sup>Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), viii.

<sup>15</sup>George Counts, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* (New York: John Day Publishing Co., 1932).

come from many quarters. Such criticisms include the following:

1. Although students should be engaged in the reflective thinking process, they should go beyond thinking to acting on behalf of their beliefs in the school and outside the school. In fact, thinking about a problem can sometimes leave the student with the mistaken impression that he or she has actually done something about the problem.
2. Not enough attention is given to the emotional side of learning, for there is a definite bias toward scientific reasoning. Leaders in society simply do not act as professors say they should. Scientific reasoning is too antiseptic.
3. Learnings from the past are often ignored.

### Social Studies as Structure of the Disciplines

Increased involvement of social scientists in the social studies occurred in the sixties as a result of government and private funding. Social scientists' principal concern was with students learning the basic concepts and methods of scholarly inquiry in their respective disciplines.<sup>19</sup> It was argued that concepts would serve as "handles" that would help the person organize newly acquired learnings wherever such learnings were possible.

Support for the "structure of the disciplines" approach came from psychologist Jerome Bruner, who asserted that "... there is no reason to believe that any subject cannot be taught to any child at virtually any age in some (intellectually honest) form."<sup>20</sup>

With this view of the social studies curriculum, students are not considered citizens in the present. Rather it is argued that the structures learned and the inquiry methods used will transfer to the student's adult life so that he or she can discharge his or her duties as a citizen.<sup>21</sup> One may infer from the

<sup>19</sup>Some historians have argued that many, if not most, of their colleagues are uncomfortable with conceptual approaches. See Edwin Fenton's statement in Irving Morrisett, ed., *Concepts and Structure in the New Social Science Curricula* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), 52; and Mark M. Krug, *History and the Social Sciences* (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1967), 47.

<sup>20</sup>Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 47.

<sup>21</sup>Barth and Shermis, *op. cit.*, 747-748.

"structure of the disciplines" position that it would be presumptuous to expect the student to build his or her own structures, for university academicians have been specially educated to engage themselves in this process.

The good teacher, according to this position, is one who keeps abreast of the most recent research and can effectively teach the structure of the disciplines and their methods of inquiry. The teacher is aided by various media designed to teach structure of the disciplines.

The student is evaluated on the basis of his or her ability to define and apply key organizing concepts in different situations. He or she is also expected to ask the kinds of questions asked by scholars in the various disciplines.

Although the "structure of the disciplines" approach has had a significant influence on social studies curriculum and instruction in the sixties and seventies, criticisms such as the following have been directed at the position:

1. Citizens in the world do not divide their decision-making into various disciplines. The gas station attendant, for example, does not say to his customer, "For the next few minutes I would like to talk to you as a sociologist would, after which I will talk to you as a geographer would," etc. "Our students," some teachers say, "are not going to be university professors."
2. Emphasis on scholarly activity in the disciplines can actually serve as a substitute for action in the world outside the school. Students' feelings are often left out of the curriculum in universities in the name of objectivity. Today's generation of students will insist on the importance of affect in their decision-making, and the "structure of the disciplines" approach too often does not accommodate such affect.
3. Students should be actively involved in building their own learning structures. It is too easy to substitute the memorization of concepts for the memorization of facts.

### Social Studies as Socio-Political Involvement

The individual's attempt to face conflict squarely is central to the "social studies as socio-political involvement" position. In order to deal with conflict-ridden situations, one must feel confident that one's

own beliefs are realized in one's actions. Credibility, as reflected in others' faith in oneself as a person and leader, depends on this.<sup>22</sup> The teacher of the social studies and social studies students must therefore be actively involved in the valuing process; and for a person to hold a value, he must act repeatedly in behalf of his professed belief.<sup>23</sup>

How does the student learn to be an active citizen? He learns *now* in his immediate environment. He or she can be active as a decision-maker in his or her school and community(ies) outside the school. The good teacher, according to this position, is one who facilitates this involvement and is personally active himself. Students are encouraged to disagree with each other and with the teacher, but the highest compliment they can pay their teacher is that he acted in behalf of his professed beliefs. Of course, active involvement will at times be controversial, but the rationale for living one's professed beliefs is clearly in our democratic heritage. It is also true that a lack of a working knowledge of politics (conflict resolution and reconciliation) and a certain temerity on the part of many teachers add to the controversies when those who teach social studies initially try out socio-political involvement.

A critical assumption of this position is that students are capable of socio-political action. Their sophistication levels will vary, of course, and the teacher will have to make clear his own responsibilities because of his role in the socio-political systems of which he is a part.

All of the reflective inquiry techniques, such as simulation games and case studies, can aid students' involvement; this depends, however, on the teacher making a conscious effort to link teaching and

<sup>22</sup>Theodore White's thesis in *Breach of Faith* is that former President Nixon failed to honor the trust people placed in his leadership. White, *op. cit.*, 322.

<sup>23</sup>Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon, *Values and Teaching: Working with Values in the Classroom* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1966), 28-30. There are several articulate spokesmen for the social action position, including Anna S. Ochoa, Patricia L. Johnson, and Fred M. Newmann. Ochoa and Johnson have prepared papers and speeches on a social action curriculum. Fred M. Newmann's *Education for Citizen Action* (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1975) may well become a classic work on social action for secondary school students.

learning in the classroom to community(ies) outside the classroom. Significant individuals from such communities can help the student.

According to this position, students can be evaluated on the basis of their participation in the reflective action process. This will create controversy in the school at times, for students are presently involved and evaluated in their roles as incipient scholars. Teachers should be evaluated for their success in actively involving students in reflective action in class, in the school, and outside the school.

The "social studies as socio-political involvement" position has emerged in recent years in response to cultural change in our nation. As such it is very controversial and has been criticized for many reasons, including the following:

1. Colleges and universities have not prepared teachers for this approach to social studies instruction.
2. The school as a socio-political system simply will not tolerate students as active citizens, nor will the communities outside the school.
3. Students already vent their emotions too much. Allowing for greater expression of emotions will be detrimental to schools and learning.
4. This position too easily tends to neglect the great learnings of the past. It tends to be anti-intellectual.

### Conclusion

The rhetoric of any era in a nation's history tells us a great deal about people and events. Much of the terminology of our age points to distance between people and their beliefs. In fact, one might describe recent history in the United States as the period of "gaps": the generation gap, the credibility gap, the leadership gap, etc. A more balanced view, however, is that important progress has been made in bridging these gaps. At any rate, the challenge to those of us interested in social education has never been greater. In order to meet this challenge, we must involve ourselves in vigorous dialogue and reflective action in behalf of our beliefs. We hope that this article has been helpful in stimulating thinking and action concerning ends and means for social studies curriculum and instruction. ■

## Facts and Impressions of a National Survey

(Continued from page 200)

### Scenarios of the Future

And what of tomorrow? Today tea leaves must be read while the tea is still in the pot; a crystal ball must be revolving. I hesitate to forecast; but I believe that the list in Table VII portends several alternate scenarios. What we social studies educators do or do not do in the immediate future will make a great difference in ultimate outcomes. I still hold that our destiny remains to an extent in our own hands; but options and the time to make them are running out.

One possible future includes a steadily declining curricular field, diffused and balkanized, often turning backwards and up panacea alleys, increasingly delimited because of its own lack of purpose and direction and by the failure to agree upon a core of socio-civic learnings. It is staffed by personnel who seem to have little professional concern or élan, let alone much faith in what they are doing, who have lost the vision and the will to forge a comprehensive and articulated social studies program functioning at the heart of a liberating education for young Americans.

Another option promises renewed and unified efforts at convincingly defining the fundamental contributions of the field toward helping meet essential individual and societal needs. In this future, teachers, parents, and concerned civic organizations and agencies collaborate in developing efficacious programs which can be evaluated, and in extending timely offerings which attract pupil popularity and increasing enrollment. This surge of interest reflects the enthusiasm of mentors who know where they are headed and why, for they are certain that the social studies are more basic to the maintenance and extension of democratic values and to the future of this nation than is any other disciplinary area.

But which future emerges remains up to each of us, individually and in concert with our colleagues, in the actions we take and in the decisions we make in the days right ahead. ■

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