THE PLANNING OF
THE RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN IRAN
AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

BY

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CURRICULUM PLANNING IN RURAL IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Iran is primarily an agricultural country and, being so, the great majority of her people reside in rural areas. The Iranian peasants suffer from an extremely low level of living, the absence of proper public health and the lack of an adequate education. Due to ignorance and illiteracy, the peasants have not developed an appreciation of the resources in the community and the environment, and they do not strive to alter this undesirable situation.

Regarding the betterment of community life in rural Iran, schools have so far not been able to contribute efficiently. The type of educational offering offered to the child through the school curriculum as implemented by the existing method of instruction does not help the pupil to become a capable citizen of his community and does not provide him with vocational skills. Furthermore, the educative process is not conducive to the overall development of the child - intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially. Being subject-centered and prescribed by the educational authorities, the school curriculum stresses facts, information, and knowledge and is devoid of agricultural training in the case of the majority of rural schools. Such a traditional curriculum results in rote memorization, verbalism, and undue emphasis upon the intellect. The school curriculum cannot take into account individual differences or the possibilities of adaptation to local conditions. In designing the curriculum, relatively little concern has been shown for the

development of a wholesome character, socially desirable attitudes, or a sense of responsibility in the pupil.

The method employed in the study is analytical. A survey of social, economic, and political conditions in rural Iran is undertaken and the impact of change upon rural life is described. The major needs and aspirations of the people is discussed, with particular emphasis upon the role of education in meeting the peasants' needs. In addition, the present curriculum of the primary schools is analyzed in terms of its social, psychological, and philosophical foundations. Similarly, the existing curriculum is explained with an eye to its appropriateness under the prevailing social conditions of rural Iran, the needs of the learner, and the aspirations of the people.

Analysis reveals that the curriculum followed at present by the primary schools in rural Iran is not free from defects. The curriculum seems to have been designed in large part according to outmoded psychological theories and traditional philosophical conceptions. It places the primary stress on subject matter and the transmission of the racial heritage, at the expense of a well-balanced personality for the child. Teachers have no voice in the planning of the curriculum. It is set forth by the members of the High Council on Education. As regards methods, the present assign-study-recite method of teaching cannot be said to contribute to rural school efficiency.

In the light of the above survey and analysis a broad field curriculum is proposed. In the broad field approach, the current social

and economic problems are the basis for organizing the school curriculum, and the needs and the interests of the learners are the points of departure in the selection of educational experiences. It is suggested in the revised curriculum that if the learning experiences are organized into units of work, they will be more meaningful to the learner.

The revised curriculum places much emphasis on the development of the whole child and provides the teacher with latitude to digress, thereby betterfitting the learning experiences to individual and local variations. It is inspired by the belief that learning takes place when children are intrinsically motivated to achieve their goals and when they participate directly in the various activities undertaken with this goal-seeking in mind.

Finally, it is recommended that the new curriculum be introduced step by step. Its introduction should become the joint venture of the Ministry of Education and education offices at the local levels. Adequate provision should be made for the preparation of and a continuing supply of qualified teachers.

It is hoped that if the revised curriculum is properly implemented, the young people in rural Iran will live a richer and a fuller life and will be more able to face the problematic situations of living.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Iran is an Asian country of 628,000 square miles, about one fifth of the size of the United States.[1] The population of Iran as stated in census taken in 1955, was around twenty million. Of this number around eighty per cent are living in rural areas. These rural residents depend upon a primitive and ailing economy and they work the land under a semi-feudal system.[2] The country's greatest resources are agricultural products.

Rural communities in Iran are much lacking in respect to education. The peasants suffer from an extremely low standard of living and they do not enjoy basic amenities of life. Their problems are of long standing and are produced by illiteracy, lack of knowledge to make most of the available resources, and sometimes unfavorable natural conditions.

The Problem and Its Importance

Rural elementary schools in Iran follow a traditional subject-centered curriculum which is lacking agricultural training[3] and prede-

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[1] Herbert H. Vreeland, Iran, 1957, p. 28.

[2] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Point Four and Education in Iran," School and Society, Vol. 84, 1956, p. 99.

[3] Apart from some newly established elementary schools which offer agricultural training, the curriculum of old-type schools does not contain agricultural training.

termined by educational authorities. Such a curriculum is rigid and does not adapt itself to local variations or to the differences in pupils. In short, imposed as it is on rural schools, the curriculum has hindered their functioning in a way which would contribute towards the betterment of community life in rural areas. As a consequence, rural schools have gradually become alienated from their communities and indifferent to the needs of the people. This failure on the part of schools to establish a close rapport with society is mainly due to the fact that schools are incapable of producing vocationally oriented young farmers and efficient citizens for the communities.

The present study is an attempt to suggest ways and means for the improvement of rural school curriculum. No doubt, the present curriculum of elementary schools should be revised so that it may become responsive to the needs of rural communities and of individuals. Such a revision ought to be implemented in the light of modern philosophies of education, recent psychological findings, and the economic, political, and social circumstances of rural Iran. Thus, in this research some basic principles and recommendations will be presented for curriculum planning, the application of which may modify and improve school curriculum.

The Objectives Sought

The present curriculum in the rural elementary schools need to be examined in terms of the expectations of rural people and the needs of rural communities. Undoubtedly, the rural curriculum should be revised

if education is to help people lead abundant and happy lives. The following objectives, therefore, are suggested as guide lines for curriculum revision.

The need for a child-centered curriculum. The present curriculum in the elementary school is subject-centered and prescribed by the members of the High Council on Education. The teacher is obliged to follow the logical order of the subjects and the student has, accordingly, to memorize the required material. Apparently, the old theory of disciplining the mind is behind the present method of teaching. Intellectual growth of the child is presumably the main purpose of schooling. The teacher imparts the knowledge to the child - an empty pitcher to be filled at a full fountain! An American educator once wrote that

> The existing educational philosophy was an extreme form of the traditional French model. There was extreme centralization of authority; a policy of ruthlessly discarding all candidates who were unable to meet certain highly formal examination requirements; the creation of a tiny intellectual elite with great social status and political power; and the imposition of an impossibly extensive and erudite required curriculum.[4]

As a result, there exists a striking dualism between the child and the curriculum. The curriculum teaches traditional theories, heaps of information and verbalism, instead of a set of practical skills and functional attitudes. Moreover, if learning is a change in behavior as

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[4]Robert King Hall, "Seven Year Plan in Iran," The Year Book of Education, 1954, p. 285.

the result of new experiences, then the outcome of such a program is little learning on the part of students. It seems that curriculum planners have neglected the fact that education is a process through which the child can achieve full development - mentally, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Little provision, if any at all, has been made for child's self activity as part of the educational process. Thus, there is no wonder that parents have frequently criticized the kind of programs set forth in the elementary schools. They have gradually come to understand that education is a necessary part of their life; but what they see to the present schooling is nothing but a waste of time.

The need for flexibility. Rigidity is the noticeable characteristic of the present curriculum. The school curriculum is crammed, superficial and inflexible. It is uniform all throughout the country regardless of the needs of communities and individuals concerned. If the teacher considers the necessity of dealing with the pressing problems of the community or those faced by children, he is not given latitude to deviate from the prescribed way. Nor can the students escape the rigid fulfillment of certain academic requirements.

Educational authorities have so far made no differentiation between the curriculum of an urban school and a rural school, except in the case of some new elementary schools in rural areas which have agricultural courses for the fifth and sixth grades. Such inflexibility and uniformity in the school curriculum would require a rural youngster, who is usually expected to be a good farmer, an efficient live stock

breeder, and an effective member of the village community, to study the materials set forth for an urban boy whose father may be a doctor and whose future profession may demand high intellectual ability. As a consequence, when the student finishes elementary education, he finds that his accumulated knowledge is unsuited to the practical needs of his community and that it is only worthwhile in the classroom.

The curriculum of the elementary schools should be flexible so as to become an effective instrument for the fulfillment of students needs. Schooling will have then a new meaning to those who receive it and to those who send their children to school. In other words, flexibility of the curriculum enables the teacher to relate the courses of study to life procedures and actual situations of living.

The need for a community-centered school. Rural communities have their own characteristics which make them different from urban communities. Sanitary and health conditions, so essential for living, are fairly underdeveloped. People are not taught how to make most of the resources which they have. For example, peasants have not come to understand the opportunities which cooperatives offer in the cultivation of more lands, in the joint ownership of the expensive farm machinery, and in more effective marketing. Similarly, they do not have access to simple techniques to purify drinking water for the protection of their lives which are constantly at the mercy of communicable diseases.

Adhering to the traditional type of curriculum, schools have so far failed to contribute to the development of rural communities. The

traditional education puts emphasis on providing rudiments of literacy, on mental training, and on the acquisition of facts and information. However, since such aims are inadequate for the full development of the child and, therefore, for the betterment of community life, educators in recent years have taken the view that "the school must play a dynamic, leadership role in the improvement of community living now."[5]

There are some reasons for this new trend in education. In the first place, the school cannot be indifferent to the problems of the environment in which it exists. In fact, the matters outside the school will definitely influence the mind and behavior of the child more than his school atmosphere in which he may spend a few hours a day. Factors in the community such as sanitation, housing, amusements, and social organizations will affect the child's curious mind. In view of the many deficiencies in community life, would it not be permissible for the school to participate in the affairs of the community for the sake of children?

Thus, in addition to the teaching of young people, the school should become concerned with the education of all citizens in its broad meaning. By the help of the school, people will not only develop an understanding of the academic requirements, they will also acquire knowledge of all forces which affect the life of communities.

> Education, then, becomes a constant interaction between school and community, a cooperative program that utilizes

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[5]U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Education for Better Living, 1957, p. 2.

> the skills, the abilities, and the efforts of the entire citizenry toward the solution of common problems, thereby improving community living.[6]

The second reason for the new task of the school in regard to community is this: it has been generally realized by many modern educators that basic skills and facts, intellectual development and an understanding of cultural heritage by themselves do not help the student to be an efficient member of his community in the future.[7] The fact is well borne out that, although the possession of skills and knowledge is valuable, young people should be trained to assume responsibility toward their community, to find skills in human relations, and to work cooperatively with each other. In order to promote these goals and equip the students with such skills, students should directly participate in community life and acquire first-hand experiences. To state it differently, the school should play the role of a small community which is organized in terms of democratic principles whereby students can learn things by doing. A well-planned and articulated curriculum can guide students through its extra-curricular activities, and group work, provided they are combined with effective teaching.

Limitations of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to examine the social,

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[6] Ibid., p. 3.

[7] Ibid.

political, and economic foundations of the rural school curriculum in Iran, and to suggest on the basis of this analysis ways in which the present curriculum might be improved. Furthermore, in the light of cultural characteristics, educational philosophies and psychological findings, some applicable suggestions and recommendations will be presented for the improvement of the rural elementary school curriculum.

The writer will critically analyze the present curriculum in rural schools. Although the specific problem is that of curriculum planning, nevertheless it seems appropriate and fruitful to touch briefly upon the method of instruction and the preparation of rural teachers. The reason is clear; the method of teaching and curriculum planning are closely interrelated. It is impossible to study and make suggestions for one, while ignoring the other. However, the preparation of rural teachers and the adoption of a new method of instruction will be discussed as briefly as possible so as not to lengthen the study.

Method of Study

The present thesis is aimed at improving the rural school curriculum in the hope that it may become more consistent with the actual conditions of living in rural Iran and more responsive to the needs of individual pupils. This research necessitated (a) a survey of the general characteristics of rural Iran, (b) a review of the present educational practices in rural Iran, (c) an analysis of the present curriculum in elementary schools, and (d) a presentation of some bases for curriculum

planning. The method of study, therefore, is a critical, analytical, and suggestive approach to the present curriculum, based on the available literature in the field. As such, pertinent educational books and treatises have been used as the main sources of information. In addition, personal teaching experiences has been drawn upon.

S U M M A R Y

The Iranian peasants live under special conditions which characterize rural life in Iran. They need to improve the sanitation of their environment and public health, to increase the productivity of the land, and to gain knowledge and skills for the better control of their environment. Regarding the needs of the people in rural areas, education can play a significant role: deplorable as it may seem, at present rural schools are incapable of catering to the crying needs of the peasants. A traditional subject-centered curriculum in rural schools is a major factor to increase the inefficiency of such public institutions and to prevent them from keeping pace with the social changes.

The present study is an attempt to make recommendations for the revision and improvement of the curriculum in rural schools. The present curriculum should be altered so that rural schools may become community centered as well as child centered. To deal with the problem, the writer will describe the general characteristics of rural Iran, analyze and criticize the present curriculum, and suggest ways and means for the

improvement of the curriculum.

The next chapter will discuss general characteristics of rural Iran.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL IRAN

> In order to understand, appreciate, and evaluate the real meaning of the educational system of a nation, it is essential to know something of its history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organization, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development!"[1]

In view of this fact, it seems appropriate to present briefly some aspects of political, social, and economic life of the Iranian people which have direct hearing on the education system of the country.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF RURAL PEOPLE

As might be expected, rural people depend on agricultural products. Due to many factors, only one tenth of the land is arable. "Of the ten per cent that is arable only a fourth (or approximately three per cent of the country's total area) is under crop at any one time, the rest lying fallow (in alternate years or every three years)."[2] This type of economy is fairly primitive and ailing. So long as the economy and the semi-feudal system are deterrent factors to the over-all development of the rural life, there is little hope for much progress on the part of peasants.

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[1] I. L. Kandel, Comparative Education, 1933, p. XIX.

[2] Herbert H. Vreeland, Iran, 1957, p. 174.

It will be useful then to examine the main factors which have some bearings on the rural economy.

The Land, the Landlord, and the Peasant

Hoping to gain much and live better, the farmer tills the lands and takes care of the crops until harvest time. However, the system under which the peasant lives is neither promising nor fair. The villager is seldom the owner of the land which he works. "It is estimated that about half the claimed land in Iran is owned by absentee landlords, a fourth by religious shrines and endowments, one-tenth by the crown, and the remainder by peasants themselves."[3] Landlords show little interest in the development of the land or in the welfare of peasants. Besides, landlords suspect the peasant of cheating. To treat the peasant kindly, landlords believe, is a sign of weakness and may provoke the peasant to neglect his obligations. Only a few landlords have found it necessary to provide education for villagers and alleviate their troubles. Above all, frequently the landlord does not provide the peasant with an adequate living and thus the farmer is forced to supplement his income by some outside work or go into debt.

Level of Living

The foregoing discussion may have revealed, at least vaguely, the

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[3] Ibid., p. 135.

unbelievably low level of living in rural Iran. Traditional ways of tilling the land and the scarcity of water provide such a meager product that it becomes difficult for the peasant to live decently. Equally important are the low fertility of land and the semi-feudal system, both of which affect the farmer's level of living. Consequently, the low level of living influences every aspect of the peasant's life, particularly education. Here it should be pointed out that "... the higher the standard of living, the greater the improvement in educational offerings, and the better the education, the even higher the standard of living."[4] Unhappily the reverse is true in rural Iran.

Means for Producing Energy

Contrary to an industrialized society where machines are the means for producing energy, in rural Iran the peasants are the sources of power, that is, instead of producing energy by machines for a change in the environment, peasants act on their surrounding while equipped with traditional tools. The peasant works on his farm, which may be very far from his home, from dawn till sunset.

The rural labor frequently complicates the conditions of unemployment in the country. Many of the peasants, whose economic conditions compel them to leave the village, join the great number of unskilled workers in the cities. Looking forward to getting adequate

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[4]John S. Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, 1950, p. 167.

wages, they come to cities and soon realize that the employment conditions in cities are not favourable. Some of the peasants will eventually find jobs but the rest will return to the villages.

Domestic animals are assets to the peasant in his daily work. Plowing is mostly done by the help of oxen and mules. Similarly, mules and oxen help the peasant in threshing the wheat and pounding the grain. Horses, camels, and donkeys are used for transportation. In some places, however, a few farming machines have been newly introduced by the landlords as a result of the pioneer work done by the Ministry of Agriculture and Point Four.

THE FAMILY

The most important and stable social unit in Iran is the family. Rural families are usually composed of the father and his brothers or sisters, the mother, children, and the daughters in-law. The family usually lives in one village for several generations. Each member of the family has certain obligations toward his family, and whoever causes shame is regarded as a disgrace to his family. It is unquestionably accepted by the members of the family to help one another and to enhance the position of their family in the community. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that most of the difficulties and differences which may exist among the people in a village will be settled through the family relationships. Moreover, the status of the family determines the partici-

pation of its members in social affairs. The greater the family is in size and status, the greater its share in community affairs.

The father in the family is aloof and respected. He makes all the decisions and is responsible for the welfare or the misery of his family. He may dignify his family, if he is brave, decisive and forceful, or he may be a source of shame, if he is idle, weak, and timid. Men are supposed to discipline the children when they do not behave well.

Women are, in general, busy with the household routine and child rearing. In some places, they weave rugs whenever they have free time. In rearing their children, women play a more permissive role; the mother is the source of love and affection, while the father reminds the child of discipline.

SOCIAL VALUES

Nationalism

Iranian nationalism is an offshoot of the Iranian national culture. The strength of this national culture, and therefore of Iranian nationalism, lies in the fact that it has been produced within a long history, during which the people strived vigorously to preserve their national autonomy. Furthermore, Iranian culture is the accumulation of traditions, customs, and religion of the preceding generations, which possessed a common language and a common racial origin. These peoples lived in a marked geographical area for many centuries. Within the last few decades,

nationalistic indoctrination by the government reached its peak in Iran and was used as an effective instrument to counteract political ideologies which were penetrating the country.

Iranian nationalism is reflected in the verses produced by the great Iranian poet, Ferdusi, and is sometimes represented in the cuneiform writings which exist in various sections of the country. The names and the memories of national heroes also strengthen the national unity and lead the people towards national solidarity. In fact, had it not been for such a strong national feeling, Iran would have lost her independence in different crucial instances. For example, the country was overrun and destroyed by Alexander in 331 B.C.; later on the Arabs conquered Iran in the early years of the Islamic period, and so did the Turks and Mongols. In spite of all the means employed by the conquerors to annex Iran to their lands, the Iranians succeeded in preserving the independence of the country.

Cooperation

The Iranian peasant is a cooperative individual with regard to social, political, and economic affairs. He has developed this cooperative attitude partly through religious commandments and partly through his family life which fosters cooperation. According to Islam, the principle of brotherhood and equality should be the basis for the people's relations. Each Muslem, therefore, should regard the other's trouble or happiness as his own. During religious rites, when a number of people

assemble on Fridays, each Muslem should inquire about the other's situation, discuss public affairs, and seek the people's advice. Psychologically speaking, the entire community is therefore strongly bound together and trouble for any individual brings the others to his aid. The content of Persian literature, produced with due regard to Islamic principles, has also a deep effect on the minds of the Iranians. The reader will frequently be reminded of the supreme value of cooperation in reading the literature, both prose and verse.

KATKHODA: THE HEADMAN IN THE VILLAGE

Rural Iran includes some forty thousand small villages and hamlets which hold seventy to eighty per cent of the total population.[5] The village is usually small and is composed of about fifty families. It contains a clump of houses made of mud bricks, surrounded by walls, and having a court yard in the front. A network of irregular lanes provide the ordinary means of communication in the village. Essential to each village is the water channel passing through it which is used constantly for various purposes. In nearly all villages the mosque, the tea house, and the home of the religious leader (mullah) or of the schoolmaster are recognized as social centers where informal gatherings frequently take place.

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[5]Jahangir Amuzegar, "Point Four and Education in Iran," School and Society, Vol. 84, 1956, p. 99.

"The civil organization of the village, like most others in Iran, is legally the joint responsibility of the owner [the landlord] and the national government."[6] The top authority in the village is the headman (katkhoda). Theoretically, he must be approved and assigned by the next administrative unit, though this is not always the case. The headman is not paid by the government; he is usually selected and paid by the landlord, and thus he has to play a double role. On the one hand, he should be an aid to the gendarme, help the tax collector, and supply the government with necessary information; on the other hand, he finds himself responsible for getting things done according to the landlord's orders. The headman also tries to solve the problems of the villagers, disciplines the deviants, and supervises the distribution of water. Although he may delegate some of his duties to others, his word is final. There is a Persian saying which well describes the headman's influence in the village; it goes like this "First see the katkhoda.... then fleece the village."[7]

RELIGION

Religion is an essential part of every Iranian's life. The peasant can live without paying attention to the wordly things, since he is extremely concerned with the supernatural. To him, God is the father,

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[6]Lyle J. Hyden, "Living Standards in Rural Iran," Middle East Journal, Vol. III, 1949, p. 145.

[7]Herbert H. Vreeland, Iran, 1957, p. 251.

good and omnipotent. People would not begin work without saying "God blessing." When the peasants find themselves miserable and disappointed, they will ask God to have mercy on them and change their fate. In the case of terrible events, peasants will attribute it to "God's will," thus there is no use worrying. Rural people are more concerned with their prayers and religious rites than the urban people. In villages, the men of religion are more powerful than in cities, although they usually reside in towns.

The accepted and official religion of the country is Shiah, a sect of Islam. The constitution of the country is based upon it. Some minority groups like Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews are recognized by the government and permitted to have representatives in the parliament. At the present time, nine out of ten Iranians are followers of the Shiah sect. For a thousand years, people have favored this religion and have incorporated it into their nationalism. Through a long history, Islam has deeply affected the Iranian culture and as a result, much of the religious literature has been produced by learned men of the times.

In rural areas, religious instructions is of paramount importance for educational affairs. No school can function in the village without being devoted to religion. Nor can the teachers teach if they are not good Muslems. School days usually begin with a group act of prayer and every child is expected to participate. Religious teaching has been highly regarded in the school curriculum. Through an emphasis on religious principles, it is hoped that students may appreciate moral and spiritual

values. Moreover, it is considered that religious instruction will enable the school to build up a wholesome character in the child, and make him sympathetic toward others.

AGRICULTURE

Irrigation

Although the irrigation system in rural Iran has an ancient history, much skill has been shown in its making. Because of the scarcity of rainfall and river water, peasants have made a number of underground canals, known as qunat. By the help of these qunats, which might carry the water as far as thirty miles, the peasant has compensated for the lack of water. Every sixty or fifty yards, peasants have provided wells along the canals in order to dredge the qunat if necessary. Earthquakes, invasions, and sometimes the ignorance of the landlords have caused, here and there, the destruction of qunats. Hence, a whole community has been compelled to more to a new place in the search of water.

In recent years, the goverrnment has undertaken some projects for building some big dams for the conservation of water. These dams are in different parts of the country and are supposed to supply the peasants with a sufficient amount of water. Similarly, a number of deep wells have been drilled in some villages.

Live Stock

Live stock is another source of income for the villagers. Domestic animals depend mainly on crop residue, and because the peasant cannot obtain much crop residue, he can rarely increase the number of his live stock. As sanitary conditions are lacking in the village and the peasant has no access to veterinary service, a good number of animals are lost every year.

Sheep and cows are the most common and preferred animals. Pigs are not raised, because Muslems are prohibited from eating pork. Horses and donkeys are used mainly for transportation and in cultivating the land.

Pest Combat

Unfortunately, every year many of the crops are destroyed by insects and diseases. Vineyards and orchards are also affected by such harmful insects. So far, the fighting of pest has been done in a traditional way which is inefficient, unscientific and sometimes harmful to crops. Because of these factors, the land becomes less productive and the farm product is not of a high quality.

It has been only recently that the government has taken serious measures to help the peasants wipe out farm pests and has been cooperating with neighboring countries in destroying the locust swarms. Necessary arrangements have also been made for the distribution of spraying machines among those who have accepted the new farming methods.

SANITATION AND HEALTH

The peasant's food is very inadequate so far as vitamins and calorie-producing substances are concerned. Statistical figures are not available to show the inadequacy of vitamins and minerals in the bread, vegetables, and the fruit of his diet. Doing manual work on a farm requires an adequate diet, and since the peasant cannot afford a balanced diet, he soon loses much of his strength and becomes susceptible to various diseases. Consequently, malnutrition along with harsh work have left their mark on his body. It is easy for an observer to recognize the peasant's situation and know that his immediate need is food.

The Iranian peasant would avoid eating forbidden foods such as pork, hare and frog, even if he were starving. When asked about his avoidance, he refers to the Koran. Similarly, a Muslem does not drink alcoholic beverages. Since religious commandments are obeyed, drunkness is not a problem in rural areas.

Except in the northern part of the country, where rice is preferred to bread, the staple food in rural areas is bread. Bread and tea with sugar are the basis of every meal. Where bread is customary, rice is considered delicious; and in the rice area, bread is unimportant. Meat is not within the reach of the Iranian peasant, and similarly, chickens and most of the fruits are for the market and not for local consumption.

Diseases

In the northern part of Iran, around the Caspian Sea, malaria has long been a deleterious disease of the people. Not until recently have governmental projects and Point Four programs succeeded in controlling this disease. Reports from different hospitals show that the number of patients treated dropped by one-third, as the result of DDT spraying.[8]

Due to the lack of hygienic conditions, various intestinal diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, and paratyphoid are prevalent among rural people. The unsuitable drinking water is, in most cases, the main cause for spreading different communicable diseases. Tuberculosis, particularly in the northern part of the country, also poses a problem for the government. Such diseases are more harmful when the peasant has no access to medicine and clinics.

EDUCATION

In rural areas, illiteracy, together with a low level of living, is very common. There are no precise statistics to show the proportion of illiterates to the entire country, but when one takes into account the shortage of teachers and schools and the unimproved economy the probable proportion of illiterates is very high. The following quotation reveals the condition only in the southern part of Iran, but it suggests that

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[8] Herbert H. Vreeland, Iran, 1957, p. 234.

conditions elsewhere are also deplorable: "The first authentic census was taken recently in Fars Ostan and revealed that over 97% of the rural people of that area are illiterate. In 700 villages out of 2800 not a person could read or write."[9]

It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Education has a compulsory attendance law for elementary schools. However, the educational authorities are unable to enforce the law, mainly because there are neither teachers nor schools enough for all.

The Ministry of Education directs and manages all the educational activities in the country. It deals with the organization, administration, and the finance of all public schools. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education issues rules and regulations and supervises the execution of educational policies. The private and foreign schools should function under the inspection of the Ministry of Education to ensure the fulfillment of minimum standards. The preparation of teachers, the closing and the opening of the schools, the appointment or the dismissal of teachers also lies in the hands of the Ministry of Education.

Objectives of Elementary Education in Iran

The objectives of elementary education in Iran have been stated in a bimonthly report published by UNESCO - Iran. The following is a condensed version of these objectives:

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[9]Hoyt J. Turner, "Education and Point Four in Iran," National Education Association Journal, 1954, p. 152.

The main objective of elementary education in Iran is the full development of the child, in the interest of individual well-being and social progress. In the pursuit of this goal, then, the child's physical, intellectual, and social growth, ethical character, aesthetic appreciation, and economic competency become of paramount importance for the educational process.

Physical growth of the child refers to the development of sound health and an active interest on the part of the student to contribute to the sanitary improvement of his surroundings.

The intellectual growth of the child implies that the student should be objective and acquainted with scientific methods through observations, experimentation and rational thinking. Further, the child's intellectual growth must help him solve his daily problems of life and communicate with others effectively.

By social growth is meant the child's development of sympathy for his community, and of his understanding of the essence and the limits of his freedom.

Ethical character implies an appreciation of religious principles and an understanding of national and international culture through which the child may develop a well-balanced personality.

Aesthetic appreciation enables the child to consider and value the beauties of his surroundings, and consequently he may be abler to apply his sense of beauty to whatever he creates and evaluates.

Economic competency, as a necessity for the abundant life,

means that the child must acquire knowledge of different occupations in his environment and become aware of the dignity and the value of work.[10]

The advocates and supporters of modern objectives of elementary education have tried to reflect these aims in poems, maxims, and stories which are found in the textbooks used in the elementary grades. However, little concern has been shown for the development of a scientific attitude in the child, formation of good habits, and instilling aesthetic appreciation. Analysis of the types of subjects duscussed and presented in the textbooks reveals that the most important objectives stressed are: developing social sensitivity, learning mathematical procedures, and learning about the glorious past of the country.

Moreover, it is felt by many modern educators that an authoritarian attitude on the part of the teacher toward students will certainly mould the child's behavior so that he will tend to obey others unquestioningly, to be devoid of self confidence, to be a docile follower rather than a leader.[11] The authoritarian attitude on the part of the teacher also hinders the achievement of other important objectives; namely, the building up of good character, strengthening religious concepts, and the cultivation of ethical principles.

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[10]UNESCO - Iran, A Bimonthly Report, 1956, p. 3.

[11]John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 1947, p. 168.

Public Elementary Schools

The establishment and the management of public elementary schools in Iran is an important responsibility of the Ministry of Education. In elementary schools no fees or other expenses are charged, and in some places students are provided with hot milk at midday. As has been frequently pointed out, elementary schools in rural Iran, which usually consist of four grades, are by no means adequate, so far as numbers of schools and teachers' qualifications are concerned. For example, "in one of the more progressive areas of Iran there are thirty schools in a district of 800 villages. In another district there are twenty schools in 500 villages."[12] Yet even the existing schools are not properly equipped with educational facilities. Furthermore, the school building has usually not been erected for educational purposes; in most cases it is a shabby building and an unsuitable place for children.

The number of students attending schools varies from place to place, depending on parents' economic conditions and the availability of schools. The people of those villages which are located in the vicinity of cities have become more aware of education for their children, and a fairly large number of their youngsters go to school. Broadly speaking, the shortage of schools and unsatisfactory economic conditions in rural areas have deprived the rural people of access to an education.

Teachers' qualifications and training in the rural areas are

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[12] Harold Boughton Allen, Rural Education and Welfare in the Middle East, 1946, p. 40.

extremely poor and need a thorough change. Most of the teachers are transferred to cities after one or two years' teaching, and those who remain in the village are unqualified teachers. In spite of the fact that normal schools train a good number of teachers every year, this number cannot meet the needs of existing schools in the country. As a consequence, it is extremely difficult for a school to achieve any worthwhile goals.

Probably the most defective aspect of Iran's elementary schools is the prevailing uniformity in the curricula of all public schools, including urban and rural schools. Strange as it may seem, a rural youngster studies the same subjects which are set forth for an urban boy whose living conditions are quite different. Such an iron-bound curriculum cannot prepare students as efficient members of society, for it has not taken into account the differing needs of communities and individuals. When, in addition, such a subject-centered curriculum is put into the hands of an untrained teacher, the outcomes of school activities are conjectural at best.

In view of these difficulties, the Department of Rural Education was set up by the Minister of Education during recent years. This Department, being advised by American educators, deals specifically with rural education, and strives to reorganize rural schools in the light of modern educational concepts and the needs of communities and individuals. As a result, a few elementary schools were established with modified courses in the fifth and sixth grades, in the hope that such schools

might function more efficiently for the betterment of rural life. These new elementary schools have been so organized that they may encourage improved agricultural practices and encourage the child to remain on his farm. Apart from achieving these basic goals, the school teacher is supposed to serve as a guide for the peasants and acquaint them with new agricultural techniques, especially those which deal with pest control.

In these new schools, the curricula of the fifth and sixth grades are revised in order that the child can receive agricultural training and study simple natural facts. In addition to general courses, similar to those of old-type schools, students have theoretical and practical agricultural training twelve hours a week. The number of these schools and their enrollments have increased considerably within the past few years. In 1954, the number of new-type rural schools was 129 with a total enrollment of 4209. This number has now increased to 258 schools with a total enrollment of 8544.[13] It has been decided by the officials of the Ministry of Education that all of the old-type schools be changed as soon as financial possibilities permit. Concerning this project, special financial help is being given by the Seven Year Plan Organization for the provision of more school plants and facilities.

Private Schools

In contrast to private schools in towns, which are generally

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[13]The Ministry of Education of Iran, Departmental Report, 1958, p. 34.

managed by competent directors and render the children better services, private schools in rural areas are extremely primitive in kind and inadequate in education offerings. In some villages anyone who can write and read may set up a "school" and charge fees. In such schools benches are not available for students to sit on, and they must sit on the floor. As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, such schoolmasters are generally priests, and being so, they put primary stress on the teaching of the Koran. Besides this they sometimes teach subtraction, addition and multiplication. Often the knowledge of the teacher is hardly more than that of his students. To discipline the child and gain the confidence of parents, the schoolmaster firmly believes that he should not "spare the rod and spoil the child". Yet, not all of the children are fortunate enough to attend even these schools.

Secondary Schools

Very few secondary schools exist in rural Iran. Only in the central village of a district is a secondary school likely to be found. "Of every 100 pupils fortunate enough to receive their sixth grade certificate, only seven will have the opportunity to go to high school and only one to college."[14] Even those who finish their secondary schooling are not able to apply what they have learned. Instead of being efficient members of the community, they demand white-collar jobs,

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[14]Jahangir Amuzegar, "Point Four and Education in Iran," School and Society, p. 99.

in keeping with the academic education they have received. Vocational training has long been ignored and manual work has been considered disgraceful.

In recent years, some vocational institutions, containing the first cycle of secondary schools, have been established with a view to giving agricultural training to young farmers. Students who finish their elementary education, whether in old-type schools or in new elementary schools, may enter such agricultural training centers. The curriculum of these institutions contains much theoretical and vocational training so that young peasants may increase their farm productivity in the future. The courses offered at these schools are: general science, mathematics, religious instruction, animal husbandry, gardening, and rural sociology. Each one of these vocational centers is supplied with farming machines and at least five hectares of arable land. It has been decided, according to the Seven Year Plan, that every year ten additional schools of this kind will be set up in collaboration with the Seven Year Plan Organization.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGE

During the last two decades, many attempts have been made to better the community life in Iran. To overcome the persistent problem of illiteracy and poverty in rural areas, the government paid considerable attention to health, education, and agricultural practices. The initiative of the Shah in distributing the crown lands among needy peasants may

be regarded as an effective measure which facilitated the further promotion of community development projects. Equally important was the constant contribution of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education toward the fulfillment of different plans which dealt with fundamental education, extension services, and the distribution of the land. Another item which cannot be overlooked, is the valuable help given by the United States Operation Mission in Iran and the Near East Foundation in assisting the government in the implementation of various projects in rural education and development.

Community Development

In 1949, the Near East Foundation, which is a private and non-religious organization, began working in rural Iran. Lyle J. Hayden gives a clear picture of the purposes of the Foundation. He writes

> The ultimate aims are two-fold: first, the improvement of economic conditions, not so much from the standpoint of earning more money as from the standpoint of having more to eat, more to wear and more desirable living conditions; second, the improvement of health.[15]

A demonstration area was chosen in the Veramin plain, 25 miles south-east of Teheran. At first five villages were selected as demonstration areas for the district; but later on this number increased to thirty-five. In fact, the primary aim of the Foundation was to select some

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[15] "Living Standards in Iran" Middle East Journal, Vol. III, 1949, p. 146.

experimental villages and thereby acquaint the people with new ways of living. Secondly, they wanted to make the village workers the nucleus for further development and help them take over the job of extension service in the future.

To begin with, the Foundation engaged in agricultural activities so as to meet the pressing needs of the peasants and to gain their confidence. For this purpose, direct demonstration was employed. As a result, peasants got some ideas about new seeding practices, better crops and an improved irrigation system. Later on, when progress was made in agricultural practices, the less obvious aspects of rural development were added. Simple sanitary techniques were employed for the control of harmful insects and the cleanliness of water supply for drinking. The sanitary programs were also carried out in collaboration with rural schools. Having gained the confidence of peasants, the Foundation started home welfare instructions among the women of the villages. Thus after some years of work and through a slow process some fully rounded programs were started for rural development. The job was later handed over to governmental agencies.[16]

Distribution of Land by the Shah

In February 1959, the Shah transferred part of his royal estates

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[16] For further information see, J. S. Baden, "Progress of Rural Development in Iran," The Year Book of Education, 1954, pp. 179-183.

to the Imperial Organization for Social Welfare, to be parcelled out on convenient terms to the poor peasants. These estates are located in different parts of the country. On the whole, "the total land distribution is about 120,000 hectares, portioned among 8589 village families."[17]

Although this is an experimental project, the influence of such innovation in rural Iran will be great in the future. The new group of small landholders, who have become more independent and active, can increase the national income and thereby contribute to the over-all development of the country. Furthermore, the king's initiative has had profound effect upon the relation between landlords and villagers in nearly all villages. However, many of the large landlords did not appreciate this new plan and revealed their objection from time to time. The reason why landlords undermine and hinder the scheme is clear: they fear that the distribution of the land, together with the peasant's growing economic autonomy, would considerably lessen the landlord's power in both political and social affairs. If the landlords lose some of their sources of income, they believe, their social prestige and status will be weakened accordingly, and they can no longer be the determining factor in the machinery of local as well as national government. But the rapid growth of industry and trade has inevitably given rise to a middle class which is trying, at present, to occupy all the key positions in political and public affairs. In this case, the big landlords sense a threat which is aiming to terminate their power, and they feel the distribution of the land was the beginning.

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[17]Pahlavi Estate Department, Distribution of Pahlavi Estates Among Peasants, n.d., p. 7.

Councils and Cooperatives

One of the concessions made to the villagers during the recent years is the right to organize a village council. Each village council consists of five members: the landlord's agent, the headman, and three others from among the villagers who are elected by the peasants. The council is supposed to manage local affairs and to be a means for settling the disputes between villagers and landlords. The council is also to deal with social affairs and plans for community development. There are some 40,000 villages in Iran and it was estimated that more than half of these had established village councils by the summer of 1955.[18] Evidently, the functions of such newly organized councils will be of much benefit to the villagers.

It is noteworthy to mention that village councils are supposed to organize cooperatives whose functions are to support the peasants and are financed by taxes both from landlords and villagers. Through cooperatives, villagers are able to buy farming machines and pay the cost by installments.

S U M M A R Y

The economic, political, and social forces in rural Iran have significant implications for the school curriculum. This is so because

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[18] International Cooperation Administration, Community Development Program, 1955, p. 31.

the school is influenced by the environment in which it exists. For example, a poor economy, based upon primitive agricultural practices, deprives many youngsters of educational opportunities. Ill-health, undernourishment, and illiteracy have caused situations detrimental to the public welfare. Similarly, in rural Iran the striking shortage of elementary schools, the lack of proper educational facilities and the lack of qualified teachers cannot be overlooked. Finally, the educator should realize that rural life is undergoing rapid changes, examplified in the schemes for land distribution, for community development, and for village councils. He should also understand that community and the social atmosphere are reflections of the social values found in the institutions of the community - the family, the religion, landlordism, etc. Because the school has certain obligations toward the people, the lack of understanding of peasants' needs will ultimately result in chaotic situations.

The next chapter will discuss the general characteristics of rural school curriculum in Iran.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN RURAL IRAN

The elementary school curriculum, prescribed as it is by the members of the High Council on Education, reflects the Iranian culture more than any other aspect of public education. The curriculum as such is based upon the long-standing Iranian tradition and the principles of the Islamic religion. Furthermore, it incorporates the ideas and ideals of Iranian nationalism, the supreme value of good character and the worth of individuals as human beings. The curriculum has also been planned and oriented in the light of the essentialist theory of knowledge and the process of learning based upon faculty psychology.[1]

In order to implement the elementary school curriculum in Iran, the Ministry of Education publishes uniform textbooks for all grades. The pupils in grades I, II, III and IV study various subjects from their little books, which contain the subject matter for the whole year. The students literally memorize these meager books. In the fifth and sixth grades, there are different books for geography, history, mathematics, science and civics. The subject material in each grade repeats a great deal of the same materials discussed in the lower grades. This is done in the hope that students may get a better grasp of the ideas presented

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[1]The essentialist viewpoint in education and faculty psychology will be discussed later in this chapter.

through repetition. Important concepts are usually visualized by pictures which are found in the textbooks.

Courses of Study

The teaching of the Persian language is of great importance in the elementary school curriculum. It includes reading, writing and spelling, plus grammatical rules in the fifth and sixth grades. In the first four years, the teaching of Persian is implemented by simple sentences, stories, and verses which discuss the obligation of children toward parents and teachers, the advantages of honesty, courtesy, and perseverance, and the disadvantages of lying, laziness, cruelty, and selfishness. Being paralleled by grammatical rules in the fifth and sixth grades, the Persian course embraces passages of prose and verse which deal with the lives of great men at home and abroad, the geographic discoveries made by noted explorers, and the advantages of commerce and agriculture. The teaching of the Persian language not only gives students a tool with which to express themselves clearly, to write correctly and to understand others properly; it also enables youngsters to acquire a better understanding of Persian literature. Equally important is the valuable contribution of the Persian language in the elimination of provincial dialects which are constantly creating conflicts among communities. Thus, the acceptance of a common language by the people is a tremendous asset to national solidarity, for it enables the people to communicate effectively and to share their common interests.

History and geography are stressed heavily in the primary school curriculum. The teaching of history is included in the program in the hope that it may enable the child to develop an understanding of the customs, beliefs, and traditions of the preceding generations and the influences of such cultural traits upon modern life. It is also felt that the teaching of history arouses the interests of children in the study of history-making events and the biographies of noted people. Furthermore, an awareness of the country's history and of the great sacrifices made for the preservation of the country's independence will gradually instill and strengthen a sense of patriotism in children.

The courses of history include explanations about pre-Islamic and post-Islamic dynasties in Iran, with much emphasis upon the biographies of great kings at different times. These courses are also concerned with the study of Muslem Caliphates in Arab countries, especially those in Baghdad. The biographies and works of some Iranian men of letters and science are also presented in the history book. In the teaching of history there is much emphasis upon Iran's shining civilization and victories in the past at the expense of a sound understanding of historic events. The study of the history of other nations has been overlooked to a large extent. Therefore, it seems that the teaching of history tends to foster a chauvinistic attitude on the part of students because of its overemphasis on the history of Iran.

In the lower grades, geography teaching deals with immediate surroundings and simple geographic terms, concepts, and understandings.

In the upper grades, it provides the pupil with some information about his locality and the provinces of the country. The geographic characteristics of foreign countries such as England, France, Italy, and the United States are discussed in general. The geography of Iraq, Turkey, India, Russia, and Afghanistan is studied in particular, since these countries are Iran's neighbors.

According to the elementary school program, the aim of physical training is to provide the child with those activities and games which facilitate his physical and mental growth. The innate potentialities and abilities of the child should be developed so that he may become more able to cooperate and to compete in various activities. It should also help the child to foster a spirit of sportsmanship which will be observed not only during school life but also in the future.

In practice, however, physical training in the elementary school is fairly rigid and formal. It includes exercises of a military type and is considered of relatively little importance. Students participating in physical training are directed and dominated by their instructors. Being forced to do these routine exercises, students become quite dissatisfied with the type of physical training they receive. This is so basically because students do not see any similarity between the exercises imposed upon them and the free plays and activities which they crave.

Health instruction is offered through fables and maxims in the lower grades, and through the study of simple facts about sanitation in

the upper grades. In elementary grades it deals with the cleanliness of body and clothing, the necessity of rest and sleep for the preservation of health, and the harm caused by contaminated water, bad food and unsuitable residence. In the fifth and sixth grades, health instruction is concerned with communicable diseases and preventive measures against them, the proper use of personal property, and simple facts about the human organism.

In actual practice, however, there is generally little, or no, effort made on the part of teachers and principals to assist students in developing sound attitudes toward health. For example, the general conditions of classrooms are not in accordance with hygienic principles, especially in cold weather, and care is not given to the supply of proper potable water or to the cleanliness of toilets.

The study of religion, being an integral part of the school program, is compulsory for every Muslem child. It is implemented through readers which contain religious commandments and selected passages from the Koran. As the program of elementary schools explains, the study of the holy book, the Koran, should help the child uphold the principles of Islam and abide by religious commandments. The basic shortcoming of the religious instruction is that the teacher and his students oftentimes do not understand the meaning of the Arabic sentences and thus this type of teaching turns out to be a drudgery and mere verbalization for both students and teachers. It is being generally realized by the Iranian educators that unless there is a Persian version to substitute for the Arabic passages, it will be difficult to overcome the problem of Arabic textbooks.

The science program in the elementary school has been designed to give the child some understanding of his environment. Besides, scientific concepts and facts satisfy the curiosity of the child, regarding natural phenomena. In the early years of elementary school, children receive some information about plants, animals, and the human organism. As pupils move up the educational ladder, their science program offers more important facts about the human organism, animals, minerals, plants, and weather. In addition, children study something about thermometers, kerosene and electric lamps, railroads, automobiles, telephones, and the telegraph.

The directions for the implementation of this science program require that science should be taught in simple words, concepts, and explanations. It should be related to life, and it should arouse the interest of the child. However, the teachers in elementary schools generally talk about scientific facts without doing experiments or using audio-visual aids. At the conclusion of a class session, the teacher requires the child to do his assignment which, when taken to class, often shows that the child has not been able to understand the concepts.

Music, arts and crafts are also included in the curriculum. The purpose of these courses in the elementary school is to develop an appreciation for creative arts and the beauty in the environment. To achieve this goal, children should begin to draw the shapes of simple objects found in their surroundings, to sing interesting songs, and to practice simple crafts. Gradually, they will be required to select

buildings, views and people as models for drawing, and to practice native crafts.

Practically, however, little attention has been given to the development of creative and fine arts. In the teaching of arts, the teacher does not take into account the interests, emotions, and the inclinations of children. Consequently, the art program does not foster aesthetic appreciation or creative expression on the part of the pupil. On the contrary, it tends to belittle the importance of arts and crafts.

Mathematics, including arithmetic and geometry, is given due consideration in the curriculum. It is intended to develop the intellectual capacity of the child through the help of mathematical procedures. Besides learning fundamental processes and essentials of arithmetic and geometry, students are expected to solve mathematical problems, especially in the upper grades. As might be expected, the teacher puts considerable emphasis upon this subject and spends much of his time teaching it. Probably this overemphasis upon the importance of mathematics is due to the fact that many traditional educators have overestimated the value of mathematics as an instrument for general intellectual improvement.

It is also felt by the Iranian educators that the development of wholesome character, sympathy toward community and civic consciousness on the part of students can be achieved through the study of fables, stories, and maxims which form the main content of elementary textbooks. In the books, there is much written about the advantages of honesty, perseverance, cooperation, and other such moral values. The class atmosphere, however,

is not conducive to the realization of these ethical goals. The teacher does not guide students' behavior toward the appreciation of these principles; rather he suspects his students of being lazy, impractical, and cheaters. Accordingly, the social climate of the school is not favorable to the fostering of cooperation, friendship, and group sympathy.

Calligraphy in the program is aimed at improving the legibility and the beauty of the child's writing. To begin with, the child is drilled in reproducing the alphabet. Later on he attempts to copy simple sentences from a book. In the upper grades, the child receives lessons on calligraphy. The teacher tries to show children the accurate techniques of good writing and helps them correct their mistakes. Students then reproduce specimen sentences written by the teacher.

Civics is offered in the sixth grade as a separate course. It provides the students with information about the freedom and equality of individuals, different types of government, the nation and national autonomy and compulsory military service. It also includes material about constitutional monarchy, the qualification and the election of the parliamentary representatives, and the administrative hierarchy in the country.

It is noteworthy that there is no mention of extra-curricular activities in the syllabus of the elementary schools in Iran.[2]

Table I (page 46) and II (page 47) represent the program of studies

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[2]The description of courses of study has been summarized from Courses of Study of Elementary Education, Publication of the Ministry of Education of Iran, 1937.

for the elementary school in Iran. Table I shows the time allotment for the courses of study in old-type schools, which at present form the majority of rural schools. As the table indicates, in all grades the major share of time is devoted to the Persian language and to physical training. Health, science, history, and geography are studied along with the Persian language and in the same classes, except in the fifth and sixth grades where history and geography have special hours. In the upper grades, the time devoted to the study of the Persian language decreases, while in the same grades the time allotment for mathematics increases. Civics instruction is offered only in the sixth grade.

There are 28 attendance hours per week for all grades except for the first grade, which meets 22 hours per week. The school day, starting at 8 o'clock in the morning and concluding at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, includes five hours of class attendance, plus a break of two hours and a half for lunch. Each week contains five and one-half days of school attendance for all students, except for first graders.

Table II represents the new program of studies for the fifth and sixth grades of elementary schools. To make time in which to offer agricultural training, animal breeding, and manipulating farm machines in elementary schools, curriculum planners have decreased the time allotment for the study of the Persian language, history and geography. Similarly, the total hours have been increased from 28 to 30 in a week. In the new program, provision has been made to offer science and health as separate subjects, not in connection with the Persian language. Calligraphy has also been omitted from the syllabus. Field work refers to land cultivation, pest control, and horticulture.

TABLE I

THE PROGRAM OF STUDIES FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN IRAN*

Courses of Study	Time Allotment in Hours per Week					
	Grade I	Grade II	Grade III	Grade IV	Grade V	Grade VI
Persian Language	14	16	12	12	8	7
Mathematics	2	3	4	4	5	5
Physical Training	5	6	6	6	6	6
Religion	0	0	2	2	2	2
History and Geography	0	0	0	0	4	4
Arts and Crafts	0	2	2	2	1	1
Music and Songs	1	1	1	1	1	1
Calligraphy	0	0	1	1	1	1
Civics	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Hours	22	28	28	28	28	28

*Source: The Ministry of Education of Iran, Courses of Study of Elementary Education, 1937, p. 24.

TABLE II

NEW PROGRAM OF STUDIES FOR THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN IRAN INITIATED IN 1950*

Courses of Study	Time Allotment in Hours per Week	
	Grade V	Grade VI
Persian Language	5	5
Mathematics	4	4
Natural Sciences and Health	5	4
Religion	2	2
Physical Training	2	2
History and Geography	2	2
Arts and Crafts	2	2
Civics	0	1
Animal Breeding	2	2
Field Work	4	4
Manipulating Farming Machines	2	2
Total Hours	30	30

*Source: The Ministry of Education of Iran, Courses of Study of Elementary Education, 1950, p. 15.

Method of Instruction

The method of instruction in the elementary schools is an additional factor which contributes to the general inefficiency of the school curriculum. The traditional recitation method is commonly employed by the teachers. The teacher talks about an assigned subject and students listen. Then, the teacher calls the pupils up to his desk "to say their lessons." The lessons are cited in the book and children are supposed to recite them. Apart from some questions raised by the teacher, students are not given opportunity for self-expression and critical thinking. Nor is there an attempt to have the pupils participate in group work. Audio-visual aids have almost no place in the educative process. In all classes students are loaded with daily homework.

The outcomes corollary to this traditional method are excessive stress on detailed information, rote memorization, and exclusive preoccupation with the intellect. The development of the child's personality, the creation of a sense of objectivity, and in short the overall growth of the child have been neglected to a large extent. As a result, there are many cases of truency, drop-outs, failures and maladjustments, the causes of which should be sought not only in the social backgrounds of the students, but also in the inefficiency of teaching practices. Consequently, those children who are hardy enough to endure the difficulties of the school, consider their schooling uninteresting since there is a big gap between their interests and needs and the goals of teachers which are imposed upon them.

Furthermore, equipped as he is with a thoroughly authoritarian attitude, the teacher firmly believes that he is the only one who can decide class activities, outline home assignments, and punish those who lay behind in their studies. Frequently, the teacher resorts to corporal punishment, sarcasm or other negative means of control - means which are being abandoned in modern education. This is so mainly because

> Iran is a highly authoritarian society. People are brought up to expect authority in certain places, and accept it when placed under it. One way or another, most of them are under authoritarian figures most of their lives: elders, employer, landlords, village headmen, superior officers, governmental officials and teachers.[3]

This prevailing authoritarian attitude in communities and social groups penetrates into the school. Yet, in spite of the existing authoritarian attitude in the society, there are signs of cooperation among the members of extended families in rural areas. The school should emphasize and strengthen such values.[4]

In the lower grades, a single teacher is usually found responsible for teaching all the subjects. In the fifth and sixth grades, different subjects are assigned to different teachers. For example, history and geography are taught by one teacher, while reading, writing and spelling by another, depending upon their qualifications.

The outcomes of this ineffective instruction is measured by a written and oral examination at the conclusion of the cycle of elementary

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[3] Herbert H. Vreeland, Iran, 1957, p. 254.

[4] See sup. p. 14.

education. The pupils in grades I, II, III and IV are promoted automatically without examination. In the fifth and sixth grades, they are asked to pass examination designed by their teachers. In order to be promoted to a higher class, students are expected to secure a minimum grade average of ten out of twenty and at least seven for passing any one course. A failure in one course compels a student to repeat the same class, including all courses he previously passed.

Foundations of the Present Curriculum

Unlike the primary aim of education in the United States, which is the preparation of students for effective citizenship, the primary objective of elementary education in Iran is to develop the intellect of the child. In other words

> the present Iranian curriculum is aimed at training the mind, giving information, and providing skills. The criterion of social utility has not as yet been introduced into the Iranian system of education, though there are signs that the system is moving toward its use.[5]

Philosophically, the Essentialist viewpoint underlies the school curriculum. According to this school of thought, certain "ingredients of human knowledge" whose values are universally accepted and which remain changeless through the ages should be presented to the child. The Essentialist educator firmly insists that the child should acquire this

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[5]Abbas Ekrami, A Program for the Improvement of Elementary Education in Iran, 1953, p. 152.

body of knowledge. A considerable part of the curriculum planned in the light of such educational philosophy should be prescribed. The educator also believes that students' interests should not take precedence over essentials. "If a child has a genuine interest in the essentials, well and good. If not, pressure must be brought to bear to incline him in that direction."[6] Hence, education should afford the child necessary discipline to mould his behavior in a proper way. Similarly, educational freedom may be denied to a child who does not display interest in his studies, while it is offered to a child who has learned to discipline himself through the mastery of the subjects.

Thus the curriculum of the elementary schools has been designed to transmit the Iranian culture accumulated during a long history. The purpose of transmitting the cultural heritage through elementary education is to help children develop an awareness of the history of the civilization of the country and a genuine sense of national feeling. Furthermore, the importance of the racial heritage justifies these learnings, even-though their significance for present living cannot be understood. The experience of the race should be learned, until some necessary occasions appear for its application. To present this stock of meaning to the child, the racial experience is classified into different subjects. These subjects are deemed desirable by adults and should be set forth for children to learn. As might be expected, religion has come to reinforce

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[6] John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 1947, p. 308.

this traditional philosophy, because Islam also confirms the validity of eternal truths and changeless principles. The result of such a philosophic stand in the field of pedagogy is that current social problems are not discussed in class, and that the needs, interests, and emotional dispositions of students are ignored entirely.

Psychologically, the curriculum has been planned with due regard for the outmoded theories of "faculty psychology" and formal discipline. This traditional view implies that there are separate elements, or faculties, in the mind such as memory, will, and cognition which can be trained by practice in a specific field. In this view lies the assumption that the content of the subjects to be learned is less important than the disciplinary value of what is practiced. Similarly, the educator believes that if a subject is somewhat "tough", then it can better train the child's intellect. It is also maintained that sciences and mathematics are significantly useful in sharpening the faculties.

The teaching-learning process prevalent in elementary schools indicate

> that the curriculum in Iran has been designed, quite contrary to the principles of modern psychology and education, to train and discipline the mind of individuals under the assumption that later in life they will be able to cope with any situation, no matter how different it might be from the situation under which they have received their training.[7]

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[7]Abbas Ekrami, A Program for the Improvement of Elementary Education in Iran, 1953, p. 153.

As has been stated by many modern educators, such "learning" does not touch the behavior of individuals; rather, it tends to be superficial, meaningless, and sheer memorization.[8] It is quite probable that such schooling is the main cause for the excessive number of drop-outs in Iran. The stress put on intellectualism at the expense of all-around development of the child causes many students to drop out of the school before they have a chance to develop their potentialities. Furthermore, such overemphasis upon the training of the intellect deprives many children of equal educational opportunities. This long-studying issue of education, that is, the provision of equal educational opportunities, implies that every child should be offered a proper and adequate education for the development of his abilities and potentialities. This principle of education does not, however, mean equal education for all; rather it refers to that kind of education which is in accord with one's abilities. Equality of educational opportunities is a concept not limited to the primary level; it also concerns with secondary and university education.

Socially, the curriculum of the elementary school has been designed to provide a common ground for national unity, for social prosperity, and for the individual's welfare. The foundations of elementary education in Iran were laid during the reign of Reza Shah who took keen interest in the education of the common people and regarded this as an important aspect of national progress. Under educational projects many elementary schools were established which enroll students from different

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[8] John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 1947, p. 308.

strata of society and inculcate them with the same ideas. The present elementary education is designed to enable the child to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; to provide the child with mathematical, vocational, and scientific skills which he may need in his daily life; to increase his understanding of public and personal health; and to help him develop positive attitude and sympathy toward his family and the society in which he lives.

Elementary education in Iran prepares the students for the secondary schools; that is, students may enter secondary schools provided they hold the certificates of elementary schools. There is no entrance examination for elementary school graduates who wish to register in a secondary school. It follows that elementary education in Iran, particularly in urban areas, is conceived of as a preparatory stage for the secondary schools.

Practically, elementary education in rural areas serves an elite group of pupils. The shortage of schools and teachers in most villages and the financial difficulties of parents have deprived many youngsters of an adequate education. Under such circumstances, only a small number of rural children are able to attend elementary schools. There is no precise and accurate data to reveal the proportion of pupils to the total number of rural children, but the great number of illiterate people in rural areas shows that it must be fairly small. Yet, those few students who do finish a rural elementary education are most often forced to discontinue their studies because secondary schools are rarely found in rural Iran.

This being the case, elementary education in rural Iran has mainly concerned itself with the provision of the three R's - the rudiments of literacy. The term literacy as used here refers to an ability to do simple reading and writing, plus an understanding of fundamental processes in mathematics (subtraction, addition, multiplication and division). Undoubtedly, the provision of the three R's per s e cannot be considered as the sole aim of elementary education. The school should strive at fostering new attitudes of mind in youth, at stimulating their initiative, and at widening their horizon of thought. It should produce good citizens, productive people, and sympathetic individuals who can increase national wealth and thereby live a full life.

Prescribed Subject Matter

The present curriculum in rural schools, as has been pointed out earlier, is essentially subject-centered, logically and chronologically organized, and predetermined by the members of the High Council on Education. Instead of regarding the subjects of the curriculum as supplementary sources for further information in the educative process, school subjects are fixed and heavily relied on under the assumption that students may acquire necessary understandings if they study these subjects. The various subjects are taught in isolation. Knowledge and information are emphasized more than understandings, generalization and problem-solving. As might be expected, such a curriculum with its method of instruction does not stimulate initiative or a sense of responsibility on the parts

of students. On the contrary, "in a subject-centered curriculum, the stress is on facts and skills, teacher or adults needs, conformity,... externally-imposed values, and externally-controlled personalities."[9] Again, it emphasizes intellectualism, bookishness, memorization, repetition, and imposed discipline.

Lack of Flexibility

The present curriculum can also be criticized on the grounds that it is rigid and inflexible. That is, it cannot be modified to take into account the matters of interest in daily life, the problems of different localities, and the developmental stages of the learners. Nor does it permit the teacher to deviate from the prescribed course of study, if the teacher finds it appropriate to focus his attention on the problems of the individuals concerned. Further, since the teacher has no voice in curriculum planning, he remains indifferent, even careless, about the content of the curriculum. As a result, what is being taught in the classroom is nothing but verbalism, instead of functional knowledge.

It seems that the curriculum-makers have been particularly concerned to mould all individuals according to one pattern, and to steep youngsters in a strong national feeling, which is indispensable for the maintenance of national autonomy. But, at the same time, they have neglected the development of the child's personality which is necessary for

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[9]Thomas L. Hopkins, Interaction, 1941, p. 357.

the overall growth of the child - intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Such a narrow concept of curriculum is a deterrent to community development as well as to the democratic way of life. A curriculum based on this traditional concept may retard a considerable amount of potential talent which is lost for purposes of the welfare of the individual and of the society. Furthermore,

> The minimum grade requirements, the imposition of the same standard on all, and the attempt to obtain homogeneity and make all students alike creates situations detrimental to the mental health of both the gifted and the dull. The more able students are not challenged, do not work up to their capacities, waste time, and become bored; the less able must try beyond their capacity, fail, and become discouraged.[10]

Lack of Vocational Training

Contrary to the widely-accepted principles that the rural school curriculum should contain agricultural courses, the curriculum of rural elementary schools in Iran is devoid from vocational training, except in the case of some newly established schools which offer agricultural courses in the fifth and sixth grades. The lack of vocational training is a serious drawback in the present curriculum. It is the responsibility of the school, as a social institution, to provide the children with skills and understandings so that they may be abler in the future to make the most of their natural resources and thereby lead an abundant life.

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[10]Abbas Ekrami, A Program for the Improvement of Elementary Education in Iran, 1953, p. 172.

If the schools in rural areas do not offer agricultural training in the field, it is doubtful if other social institutions will assist in acquainting youngsters with improved agricultural practices. In so far as the situation remains unaltered and the school is unable to meet the agricultural needs of the community, it is no wonder to see that educated children are in general less vocationally oriented than uneducated ones; and that they look on manual work with disdain. Consequently, the outcome of the present curriculum appeals neither to parents nor to children and this being so, parents generally consider the schooling of their children as a waste of time. Therefore, necessary measures should be taken to remedy the lack of vocational training in the curriculum of rural schools.

S U M M A R Y

The elementary school curriculum in Iran reflects the Iranian culture. Principally it is aimed at transmitting the racial heritage and training the mind. The philosophical basis of the curriculum is the Essentialist viewpoint in the field of pedagogy. The obsolete theory of mental discipline, based on the faculty psychology, provides its psychological foundation. Similarly, national solidarity and the public welfare have been conceived of as the social basis of the present curriculum.

Regarding the school syllabus, various subjects provide students with some information, facts, and knowledge which they may need in the future. The traditional recitation method has been employed by the

teachers to implement prescribed courses. The curriculum and the method of instruction result in rote memorization and verbalism. It seems that the present educational offerings in rural Iran do not exceed the rudiments of literacy. It should be pointed out that although the provision of the three R's is basic to the education of the child, the school should also aim at fostering new attitudes, developing wholesome character traits, and providing vocational skills which will serve the student in their lives and thus make education more attractive to the pupils as well as to their parents.

The next chapter will discuss some basic factors to be considered in curriculum planning.

CHAPTER IV

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN CURRICULUM PLANNING

An effective education depends to a large extent upon a well-planned curriculum. The school program should be based upon a flexible, child-centered, and responsive curriculum, if the school is to meet the needs of the people and to keep pace with the social changes occuring in the country. There have been many difficulties and issues in formulating and defining the foundations of a sound curriculum, whenever curriculum makers have tried to do so. These issues will not be solved, nor will they become better, until there is careful preparation for this purpose.

The term "curriculum" has frequently been used to point out the things which schools intend to teach. However, we know that children learn habits, attitudes, and skills both from in-school and out of school situations. Therefore, the child's experiences in and out of school have an important place in the educational process, particularly curriculum planning. In view of this fact, we may say that curriculum includes "the total range of in-class and out-of-class experiences sponsored by the school."[1] As such, the curriculum concerns itself with the child's daily activities, and his experiences become the core of the curriculum. "The unit element in such a curriculum is neither facts and skills, nor subjects

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[1]Florence B. Stratemeyer and others, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, 1957, p. 9.

of instruction, but a novelly developing life situation."[2]

The foregoing definition of curriculum is in contrast with the idea according to which curriculum is conceived of as a body of subject-matter prepared in advance. The traditional type of curriculum, still common in so many places, does not take into account the interests and needs of the learner. It is based on "the body of information contained in textbooks, courses of study and other printed instructional material issued to teachers for their use."[3] It is fairly rigid, chronologically and logically organized (lacks psychological organization), and in most cases overloaded. In following this type of curriculum, the educator tries to fit the child into the curriculum instead of gearing the curriculum to his needs.

In this chapter some basic foundations of curriculum planning will be discussed. Although it is difficult, and hardly feasible, to present all the viewpoints fully, an attempt will be made to reveal the importance of the child and his society in curriculum planning.

SUBJECT-CENTERED CURRICULUM VS. CHILD-CENTERED CURRICULUM

Many educators consider the school as an agency through which students should study the cultural heritage and find its values. With

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[2] John S. Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, 1947, p. 226.

[3] Philippine Association of School Superintendents, Education in Rural Areas for Better Living, 1950, p. 196.

this premise, educational experiences would be selected on the basis of necessary skills for life and an understanding of man and his place in the world. In addition, students should know about the great literature of the world; they should go through the history of man, and ought to know basic facts of science, mathematics, etc. This is, of course, a dualistic approach to curriculum; the child is thought of as an immature individual and the curriculum as the reflection of society. Of the two, it is the society that is favored in determining the nature of the curriculum.

According to this traditional concept, the main task of a curriculum is the transmission of the racial heritage. To provide the students with opportunity and means to acquire knowledge, this stock of learning is classified into various subjects such as history, geography, mathematics, sciences, and the humanities. These subjects are logically organized and set in advance. Learning, then, becomes mastery over subjects or the disciplining of the mind. Consequently, the curriculum which is viewed and treated in this way would have no place for the interest and the point of view of the learner. The only important thing is that the teacher supports the curriculum, and he himself is "backed by the authority of the centuries."

Believing that the children and their needs must be served in schools, other educators maintain the view that school experiences should be selected according to their usefulness and significance for the students concerned. Thus, the school would not continually attempt to acquaint

students with so many aspects of the cultural heritage; nor would it concern itself with teaching knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The important thing is that education is no longer considered to be a preparation for life, it is rather viewed as one with life. The child's experiences in life and his studies in school, then, become "the two interdependent aspects of a single process - education, life."[4]

Contrary to the former type of curriculum, the curriculum designed in the light of this modern educational theory takes into account the whole child, his needs, growth and interests. In modern education, the growth of the pupils has become a direct objective of the teacher. In this case, subject matter is called in to help and serve as a source of information when a problem has arisen, not as eternal truths and unchangeable ideas. The following quotation explains succinctly the characteristics of a child-centered curriculum.

> The curriculum is not simply a series of printed pages written in some central offices for the information and guidance of teachers in the classrooms. Such published materials are often extremely helpful to teachers in their work, but the curriculum itself is not what is written but what is done. It should be the result of careful thinking and planning, and should be subject to continuous critical appraisal. Some parts of the curriculum are better planned much in advance of the learning itself; others are planned almost as the learning takes place. It is never supposed that the curriculum is made when a book is published; rather it is made as children live.[5]

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[4]John S. Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, 1947, p. 227.

[5]Philippine Association of School Superintendents, Education in Rural Areas for Better Living, 1950, p. 202.

SOCIETY AS A GUIDE FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING

According to the great American educator, John Dewey, the theoretical basis of the educational process is as the following:

> The fundamental factors in the educative process are an immature, undeveloped being; and certain social aims, meanings, values incarnate in the mature experience of the adult. The educative process is the due interaction of these forces. Such a conception of each in relation to the other as facilitates the completest and freest interaction is the essence of educational theory.[6]

In the educative process, therefore, considerable attention must be given to the child, the society, and the interaction between the two. In view of this fact, every curriculum must take its roots from cultural patterns and social aspirations on the one hand; and an understanding of the child's nature, on the other hand.

The school is generally recognized as a social institution. Being so, it is an agency through which a society perpetuates and develops its solidarity. Moreover, a school does not exist in a vacuum; rather it represents a social order as it is functioning in a particular time and in a certain place. Then, in order to establish schools and gear them to the needs of the people, the educator must consider the values which should be fostered by the school, or the expectation of the people in regard to the future of their children.

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[6]John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum, 1902, pp. 7-8. (As cited in J. Galen Sayler, and others, Curriculum Planning, 1956, p. 113).

Some of the major social factors in rural Iran which have direct bearing on school function are discussed below. However, a detailed account of other factors, including social, economic, political and educational forces, can best be worked out through a thorough study of different localities in rural Iran.

Rural Iran is passing through a transitory stage toward further development. Especially in so far as rural economy is concerned, there is a constructive movement, exemplified in the various projects undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the United States Operation Mission in Iran. Some of these projects are essentially agricultural, designed to give the peasant information about improved agricultural practices, better systems of water supply, new ways of fighting pests, and better animal husbandry. Some of these projects are also for home welfare through which women are being acquainted with home beautification, new techniques of child rearing, simple facts about sanitation and preventive measures against diseases. Radio, press, films, and public lectures are the media employed to implement this country-wide instruction.

It seems that the diffusion of new agricultural methods and the introduction of home welfare have stimulated the parents to demand that their children in school should receive vocational training.[7] Also, because the great majority of rural youngsters will remain on the farm in the future and need to make their living from agricultural production,

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[7] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Point Four and Education in Iran," School and Society, Vol. 84, 1956, p. 102.

parents expect their children to become competent farmers when they finish with their elementary education. The father wishes to see his child, when educated, become familiar with new ways of cultivating the land, of agricultural marketing, of productive marketing, and of animal husbandry. The mother, too, will take pride if she considers that her girl has acquired new skills in handicrafts, in cooking, in weaving rugs, and in managing the household. In short, parents desire to bring up vocationally oriented youngsters with the help of the schools. It is because of this fact that the task of the school has become increasingly great and a new challenge is facing the school.

To help the peasant distinguish truth from error and right from wrong, Islam has played a great role in the spiritual life of the Iranian villagers. Essentially, Islam advocates the ideas of equality of man, of brotherhood among people, of cooperative action and of trustworthiness. It commands the Muslems to strengthen their characters by showing perseverance in work, by gaining knowledge, and by curbing their whims which may be misleading. Similarly, the Koran contains certain commandments about health and sanitation requiring, for example, each Muslem to avoid eating taboo foods and drinking alcoholic beverages.

Traditionally, the peasants hold the view that it is only through adherence to Islamic religion that they can become worthy individuals, find salvation in this world of perplexities, and be blessed in the other world. Therefore, peasants are extremely concerned to see that their children become religious-minded, that they uphold the principles of Islam,

and that they develop a wholesome character. Likewise, at present villagers understand more and more that it is possible for children to promote personal cleanliness and to develop a right attitude toward health in the community through an understanding of Islamic commandments. To the demands of parents must be added the considerable insistence of Mullahs that the school should devote much time to the teaching of religion.

It should be emphasized at this point that in order to formulate a religious program for elementary schools it is necessary to call upon those religious leaders whose command in the field is well-recognized and whose contribution will enrich the school program. Without the help of qualified persons, the curriculum planner can hardly spell out the details and specific topics of the program. The curriculum planner should, of course, seek the advice of capable people in the community if religious courses are to embrace fundamental principles of Islam.

At the same time, if the curriculum is to be based on the values of society, curriculum planners need the advice of experts on Islam in order to better define and state the religious foundation of the school.

Iran's long history has produced a particular national character, based upon traditions, customs, beliefs and mores of the preceding generations. Patriotism, respect for national freedom and autonomy, and loyalty to the constitution and monarchy have been long appreciated by the Iranians and are reflected in the verses written by the great Persian poet, Ferdusi. Again, the supreme value of hospitality and character, the importance of the rights of individuals, simpathy toward community

and respect for elders and betters are the social values in which the people have faith. Accordingly, the villagers show great concern for the family household and the obligations of children to parents.

Thus, the transmission of the Iranian cultural heritage, as the villagers consider it, is of paramount importance to parents. The people expect that with the help of schools youngsters should learn how to raise the norms and standards of the community, to appreciate the accomplishments of their predecessors in different fields of human endeavor, and to strengthen their loyalty to their motherland. This expectation is all the more true when people look upon the school as a social institution whose function is to perpetuate the society. In this regard, the school should select and strengthen those elements of the social heritage which are useful for present living and gradually discard those non-essential customs, beliefs and habits that are outmoded and deterrent to rural progress. The school is also faced with the inevitable conflict between preserving the old and introducing the new - between continuity and change. Recognizing this real challenge and making adequate provision for both responsibilities is critical in determining an effective curriculum for modern living.

> Education can therefore be wholly devoted neither to tradition nor to experiment, neither to the belief that the ideal in itself is enough nor to the view that means are valuable apart from the ideal. It must uphold at the same time tradition and experiment, the ideal and the means, subserving... change within commitment.[8]

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[8] General Education in Free Society, Report of the Harvard Committee, 1952, p. 51.

Another major social value in rural Iran is that every young boy should be trained so that he may become aware of, and involved in, the life of the people of which he is a part. Unless people learn how to take part in social life and to share their common interests, it is difficult to maintain a healthy social atmosphere. Through cooperative action there are great many possibilities for the people to erect schools or mosques, to improve the housing system, to improve the sanitary conditions of the village and to finance agricultural projects for the betterment of community life. In fact, the basic assumption in delegating the affairs of the community to a village council is to help villagers take advantage of cooperation in buying farm machinery, in acquiring skills in farm management, in securing qualified teachers for the village school, in establishing an electric plant, and the like. This participation of the people in the affairs of the village seems to be even more necessary today, since with the great improvement of human communities and the changes in conditions of life, people have become greatly interdependent. Furthermore, the cooperation of the people has long been recognized as a source of community development and greater happiness. Thus, the school should maintain a democratic social climate whereby students are helped to foster a spirit of group work and cooperative action.

The community also expects the young people to develop a sense of objectivity, to be critical, and to make their judgments on a rational basis. Indeed a type of education can stimulate the interests of parents which produces critical, initiator, and creative young boys, who have

better understanding of the world around them and of the people with whom they associate. The educated young boy should be able to communicate effectively with other people, through understandable speech, correct writing, and sound comprehension. Similarly, he should be able to share his interests and to exchange his views with other members of the community, for democracy exists in and by communication. The educated young boy needs skills and knowledge to tackle his day-by-day problems of life, which continually appear and which are invariably novel and unfamiliar to him. Moreover, to live up to the expectations of parents, the educated young farmer should possess a wide horizon of thought and a clear outlook as to the affairs of life.

The foregoing discussion reveals, in short, the basic demands of every democratic society. To plan a responsive curriculum for the school, the educator has to see whether these fundamental features are taken care of or not. Undoubtedly if such factors are attended to in curriculum planning, the school will be more able to contribute to the betterment of community life.

EDUCATIONAL AIMS AND CURRICULUM PLANNING

Curriculum planning implies certain choices made by curriculum makers. Obviously there must be some grounds for these choices. No doubt one's conception of the educational goals and objectives in society will underlie and determine his choices. Thus, the foremost consideration

in curriculum planning is the formulation of some educational objectives which, although general, can be regarded as polestars for curriculum planner.

In determining the results, or the desired outcomes of school experiences, we should consider three factors.

(1) the learner

(2) the society

(3) the interaction of the two as a foundation for setting educational goals.

Therefore, three alternatives may appear when one decides to determine educational experiences. First, the social-personal needs of the individual and his ongoing purposes might be the ground for curriculum planning. On the other hand, school outcomes may primarily be oriented to the society - the cultural heritage and the value system of the people. And the third approach is to consider the individual interacting with his culture. In this last approach, the characteristics of the learner, his needs and interests, and the expectations of the society are the significant factors to the educator.

Many educators and laymen have tried, at different times, to formulate some comprehensive educational objectives based on a recognition of the individual child as well as of society. In this respect, during the early parts of the twentieth century, the problems of education in the United States and the desirable outcomes of democratic education concerned many people, particularly professional groups. Their joint

efforts, resulted in the statement of some general objectives which they regarded suitable for a democratic society. The most widely known set of objectives was forwarded by the Educational Policies Commission known as "Purposes of Education in American Democracy". A brief summary of these purposes is the following:

I. Objectives of self-realization: inquiring mind; skillfulness in observation; language and arithmetic; good physique and sound information about health; intellectual interests; development of personality and character; integrity; initiative and self-reliance.

II. Objectives of human relationship: cooperation, courtesy, considerateness, conservation of family ideals.

III. Objectives of economic efficiency: appreciation of good workmanship, wise selection of vocation and success in it, planning of personal economics, wise use of economic resources, and products; being economically literate.

IV. Objectives of civic responsibility: understanding of the social structure and correction of unsatisfactory conditions, fairness and toleration, respect for law and order, acceptance of civic duties and responsibilities.[9]

There is much consensus among educators that the implementation of these educational objectives through the school program is an effective step toward the preparation of good citizens. The purpose of such educational objectives is the full development of individual according to his abilities and the exposition of the child to necessary skills, habits, knowledge, and attitude of mind which will enable him to live better.

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[9] J. Katul, Methods of Educational Administration, unpublished, p. 9.

THE LEARNER AS A GUIDE FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING

Each learner, due to his uniqueness, demands especial consideration. Some are intelligent and physically sound, while others may be low in intelligence or physically unsound. Because a good curriculum takes into account individual differences, the curriculum planner has to concern himself with the differing characteristics of the learners.

Each Learner Is Unique

Physical and psychological differences of individuals have been recognized since the time of Plato and Aristotle. But in the light of recent psychological research, educators have come to understand more and more about individual differences. As a result of continuous research, it has become clear that there is a positive correlation between the child's intellectual growth and his body improvement, class marks, and physical soundness. This is not, however, the general rule. It is possible to have an extremely intelligent boy in the class; but he might be the smallest student in the group. A skillful teacher must, therefore, plan for diversities in the abilities of students; whether such variations in different abilities appear in individual himself, or in comparison with that of others.

In recent years the attention of psychologists has been focussed on another important fact - the way the child looks at himself. Consideration of one's own abilities, personal worth, and self-respect will

certainly affect the child. Such uniqueness in the estimation of one's self is of paramount importance for those who attempt to meet the needs of students through a well-planned curriculum.[10]

Behavioral Patterns

In general, the period of childhood may be regarded as extending from three to puberty. Childhood has its peculiar characteristics, and children show special behavioral patterns at this time. The drive for manipulation, creation, and activity is the common trait among children. In the early years of childhood, children prefer to compete and they are less likely to cooperate. They enjoy direct participation in activities in order to collect first-hand experiences. They are enthusiastic to perform dramatic plays and particularly take much pleasure in playing the parts which they like best. They are interested in reading stories and in singing songs. Children desire to possess objects and, therefore, gratify the ego-centrism which is easily discernable in children. Children are not aware of sex differences, but as they grow they show great attachment for their own sex until puberty after which they like to associate with the opposite sex. The peculiar characteristic of growth in children is a desire to be advanturous and daring, a tendency that may lead some of them to commit serious offenses. As children approach adolescence, they develop a sense of responsibility and greater independence.

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[10] Florence B. Stratemeyer, and others, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, 1954, p. 53.

Besides, they better organize their activities, they become deeply inquisitive, and they exibit vocational interests.

Needs

The major human needs may be summarized as physical and social-personal needs. Physical needs include hunger, thirst, activity, rest, sex, temperature regulation, urination and defecation, avoidance of pain and injury. Social-personal needs may be classified as needs for status, security, affection, independence, achievement.[11] Although theindividual's physical needs may be gratified and satisfied for a short period of time as in the case of hunger and thirst, most of the social and personality needs are more complex and often require varying means for satisfaction. A person constantly seeks to bring about equilibrium in the ever changing situations in which he finds himself. Needs are the basic factors in moulding one's behavior, interests, and desires. Thus, while being deep-rooted in the human organism, needs give different shapes to desires and interests of individuals and despite the satisfaction and realization of interests, needs will continue to play their significant role in bringing about new interests and desires.

This being the case, physical development and behavioral patterns of individuals during childhood demand various activities. Children need to assume responsibilities, no matter how incomplete these responsibilities may be. Since youngsters have generally unstable desires, and short attention spans, there should be a frequent change in the activities so

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[11]Glenn Myers Blair, and others, Educational Psychology, 1956, p. 328.

that they accord with children's interests to some extent. The growing and maturing minds of children need opportunities to manipulate things and to solve problems. They also require work in a group to identify themselves with their group mates.

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING

Findings obtained from recent psychological research imply that learning occurs through experience. Such a theory of learning is a basic concept in the philosophy of progressive education which was developed by John Dewey. The process of learning, then, may be defined as the following: "Learning consists of the changes in an individual - his knowledge, skills, attitudes, ways of his own behaving - that result from his experience."[12]

Such a theory of learning implies that the learner capitalizes on his past experience whenever he encounters a problem in his daily life. If his past experience suffices to deal with a new problem so much the better; if not, the learner will make an attempt to discover new ways to achieve his goals. The failure to solve a problem, therefore, may sometimes cause trial and error activity until the learner, through this process, finds workable ways for attaching the problem. Then, as a result of a successful solution, the learner may begin to develop a new pattern of behavior. Through repetition and practice, the arts which belong to

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[12] J. Galen Sayler, and others, Curriculum Planning, 1956, p. 188.

such newly acquired behavior will be gradually differentiated and integrated, until this pattern of behavior finds a sort of stability and strength.

Characteristics of Learning

Learning includes all in and out-of-school experiences, which may affect the experiences of the child in various ways. Most often, out of school situations result in lasting learning, mainly because of their goal satisfying nature. Nowadays communicative media, such as radios, movies, theatres are strongly drawing the attention of students from the school. Unfortunately, some of the programs presented to the public by these media are inculcating the youth with ideas which are in general undesirable. The outcome of such discrepencies between in and out-of-school experiences may lead to some degree of maladjustment on the parts of students.

Learning is developmental and gradual; it usually does not occur all at once. The transfer of learning and the readiness to learn are the two important factors in the learning process. In other words, the effectiveness of any learning is determined largely by the child's readiness to receive new experiences. And the readiness is the combination of many factors including previous experience and maturation. In the educative process, it is quite necessary for the teacher to have a clear idea about the readiness of the child so that he may be able to start where the child is.

The theory of learning accepted today points out that the child

responds physically, intellectually, and emotionally in any learning situation. The child is an integrated organism and all his interests, skills, and intelligence are functioning together in acquiring new experiences. The child acts, reacts, and learns in terms of his total organism. It is a well-established fact that apart from the achievement of certain objectives which the teacher may have in mind many concomitant outcomes will accompany the learning situation.

Finally, motivation plays a great role in the process of learning. Motivation may be extrinsic or intrinsic. Some extrinsic types of motivation are threats, punishment, material rewards, grades, sarcasm, and rivalry. These external motives by themselves are of little educational values.

However, the intrinsic type of motivation implies that the child must have intention to learn, that is, he should be motivated through an incentive or goal to change his behavior. In fact, little learning, if any, takes place without an incentive. On the contrary, when the learner sees his goal ahead and is motivated to achieve his goal, then he is more likely to act and strive vigorously for its attainment. His rewards are self-satisfaction, personal achievement, and increased self-confidence. The more a learning activity is goal centered, the greater is the intensity of learning and its permanency.

The learner does not only respond to a situation as a total organism, he also responds to a whole situation. That is, the whole learning situation is more meaningful to the learner than its constituent

parts. Thus, the learner learns easily and more readily when he considers the whole situation as a single process. It is, therefore, important for the teacher to consider the learning situation as a unit; rather than as a series of discrete parts.

Transfer of Learning

In order to investigate the question of transfer of learning and to gain further insight into the problems of learning, psychologists have so far performed some systematic research in the field of educational psychology. The theory of transfer of learning is of paramount importance for education, since every suggestion made by educators for school experiences is ultimately based upon the assumption that learning will be carried over to life outside the school.

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the early theory for explaining the transfer of learning was that of mental discipline. According to this theory, which was based on faculty psychology, educators believed that if the intellect of the learner was trained and sharpened by any "tough" subject, there would be a maximum amount of transfer from one faculty to another. "Increase in power from the exercise of a faculty in one field of endeavor was thought to 'transfer' automatically or at will to endeavor in other fields."[13] This theory was seriously challenged during the early twentieth century. Thorndike's experiments

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[13]John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 1947, p. 140.

shook the very foundation of faculty psychology, on which the theory of mental discipline was based. Thorndike "believed that the apparent superiority of mathematics and science in producing good thinkers was an artifact that better students take these courses. If better students were to study vocational arts and social sciences, these subjects would appear to produce the best thinkers."[14] Furthermore, it has been generally realized by many modern educators that the value given to geometry on the assumption that it develops a problem solving ability depends on whether geometry is taught with problem solving skills or not. Grammar is useful if it is applied for correct usage of a language. On the other hand, knowledge of grammar will not assist the learner if it is taught as an end in itself. Thus, the contribution of any subject to the development of mind depends upon the method by which it is taught, not in the inherent merits of the subject itself.

Nevertheless, the work of Thorndike and his followers revealed that there is much carry over from one situation to another when there are similar elements in the two situation. In other words attitudes, feelings, interests, skills, techniques or methods and facts which can be learned can be transferred, provided a similarity exists between the two situations. Such carry-over may be the transfer of identity from one situation to another. For example, a child who has learned to call his father "dada", calls other men "dada". A student who does not like to read a textbook may extend this disposition to other books too. Likewise,

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[14] Glenn Myers Blair, and others, Educational Psychology, 1956, p. 246.

the dislike of one teacher may transfer to another teacher in a different classroom. A single incident in the class, laboratory or playground may be the cause of good or bad impressions received by the student. If the incident results in the development of a negative attitude, the student may actually resist the teacher in different occasions; and if a positive attitude appears in the learner, he would endure many difficulties of schooling which would otherwise be boring. The term used for this kind of transfer is stimulus generalization.[15]

Quite similar to stimulus generalization is the transfer of a general principle from one situation to another. This is readily discernable in the case of children who, before being aware of it, begin to generalize the rules they have learned in the English language. For example, children learn to pluralize a noun with "s", hence we can frequently hear words such as "feets" and "sheeps" used by them. Also, the fact that "ed" makes the past tense of verbs leads to such constructions as "beated" and "runned". In this regard, psychologist Judd made some experiments and showed how the principle of refraction of light influenced the behavior of students. Judd selected two groups of students and instructed one group about the refraction of light when it travels from one medium to another. After this training, Judd had the two groups shoot at targets underwater. The two groups did equally well when the targets were fixed; but the instructed group excelled when the targets were moved to a new depth. This experiment showed that the

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[15] Ibid., p. 250.

learning of the principle had made the first group more adaptable under changed conditions.

Finally, transfer of set plays an important role in the process of learning. One's previous perceptual learning is a determining factor for interpreting a new situation. That is, each person has a certain expectation or a frame of reference in terms of which he would respond to any situation. A child who commits an offense is constantly looking forward to being penalized by his father or mother. Hence, he interprets the acts of his parents in terms of punishment which may be inflicted upon him.[16]

S U M M A R Y

Curriculum planning implies the selection and the organization of educational experiences to be offered to the child, whether in or out of the school. School experiences must be selected on the basis of some educational theories, individual and group needs, and the community expectations. The curriculum must take into account the biological, social and personal needs of the children which are of paramount importance in the educative process. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the child and his behavioral patterns should be considered in curriculum planning.

Regarding the school curriculum, there are two extreme views in educational philosophies. Traditional philosophy emphasizes the importance

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[16]This discussion is paraphrased from Glenn Myers Blair, and others, Educational Psychology, 1956, pp. 241-256.

of racial heritage and the essentials of human knowledge. Modern education gives priority to the present life situations, the needs of the pupils, and their ongoing activities. The former tries to fit the child into the preconceived patterns and ideas, while the latter makes the experiences of the child and his interest the points of departure in curriculum planning.

A well-planned curriculum is also based upon the new concepts of learning. Recent psychological findings imply that learning is a constant reconstruction of experience, that the learner acts and reacts in terms of his total organism in any learning situation; and that intrinsic motivation is essential for thorough learning.

CHAPTER V

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE RURAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Probably nothing can better justify the need for the improvement of the school curriculum than the present social, economic, and political changes occurring in rural Iran. Such changes have been expedited through the schemes for land distribution, through the projects for agricultural development, and through policies for raising the level of living in rural Iran. This being the case, the education of adults and children is thought of as an effective instrument for the steady but slow progress of community development. On the educational side, therefore, different projects have been drawn up, including a fundamental education program, home welfare services, and adult education which offer abundant opportunities for rural people to change their age-old ways of life. Accordingly, there is now a tendency in the educational system of the country which stresses the importance of childhood and the recognition of the needs and interests of children.

Thus, the challenges which face the school are great and stimulating. The only direction appropriate for the educators to take is to gear the school to the needs of the people and thereby establish a close rapport between the society and the school. Failure to do so will result in the isolation of schools from communities.

In view of this fact, rural schools should gradually become community-centered and child-centered as well. It is difficult to portray and describe various factors which lead to the establishment of a community school. But nevertheless the important point to be borne in mind is that a community school does not emerge all at once and without preparation; it is rather accessible through careful planning and it is always in the process of becoming.

In order to give the present schools a proper slant in the direction of communities, educators may employ two approaches. According to one approach, the school indulges in some practical projects, derived from the needs of community and designed to remedy a situation. For example, in a region where people suffer from malaria, there is room for the school to take the lead in community development. The school teacher, being aware of this problem, collects information about the frequency of the disease in the community, discusses the problem with his students in the sixth grade, and takes the students (during the day, of course,) to visit swampy areas where the malaria mosquito usually breeds. The teacher and students, then, devise ways and means by which these infested areas may be cleared and cleaned.

In the second approach, the educator starts with theory, that is, he undertakes a careful study of the locality and makes changes in the curriculum to realize educational objectives. In other words, the educator makes a statement of the philosophy which underlies the school curriculum, of the needs of the community to be catered to by the school, and of the

interests and drives of the individual pupils. He anticipates the types and variety of educational experiences, the placement of these experiences in different grades, and the methods for the implementation of school experiences. Therefore, on the one hand, the school curriculum will be revised in the light of educational theories; on the other hand, social, political and economic factors provide a ground for curriculum improvement. It should be pointed out that each method has its own particular advantages. To capitalize on the advantages of each method, educators at present prefer a combined approach. By harnessing the advantages of each method and discarding the disadvantages, it is easier for the educator to anticipate the effectiveness of each project and the difficulties which may occur.[1]

Goals of Elementary Education

In the preceding chapter, some major social-personal needs of the children were discussed to serve as a guide for curriculum planning. In addition, educational aims were also presented so as to help the curriculum maker in the planning of an effective curriculum. To give a concise description of the previous aims and objectives discussed, it would suffice to outline the educational outcomes in rural Iran as the following:

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[1]Philippine Association of School Superintendents, Education in Rural Areas for Better Living, 1950, p. 77.

1. The educated young boy should be able to talk clearly, to understand others properly, and to write legibly. Besides, he should acquire necessary skills in mathematics and science which help him live better.

2. The educated young boy should show great concern for his health and try to improve the sanitation of his environment.

3. The educated young boy should be a worthy member of his family and of his society and a productive and a creative citizen.

4. The educated young boy should possess a wholesome character, respect the principles of religion, develop loyalty for his country, and respect the freedom of other people.

Rural Schools and Educational Experiences

In reorganizing the rural school curriculum the following points must be taken into consideration.

1. The instructional material utilized for teaching in a rural school must be drawn from the rural environment. At present, much of the content of textbooks pertains to urban life which is unfamiliar to the rural youngsters. For example, textbooks and courses of study talk about traffic rules, banks, governmental offices, theatres, clubs, and societies, of which rural life is devoid. Relatively little attention has been given to storing hay, preserving the forest, pruning the fruit trees, terracing the land and dredging the water canal, in which the students are directly interested. This is mainly due to the fact that most text-

book writers have not lived in rural communities and therefore know very little about rural life.

This principle does not imply, however, that the rural youngster should be shut off from urban life and its influences; rather it means that rural life should be the point of departure in curriculum planning.

2. The school should attempt to select and preserve those elements of the racial heritage which are basic to the realization of national aspirations. Obviously, it is a mistake to transmit all the traditions to the new generation, disregarding the fact that many customs and habits of our people that might have worked in a certain period of time, may not be applicable to the present situations of life. Thus, the curriculum worker should not hesitate to ignore those non-essential elements of the social heritage and to retain and strengthen those customs, mores, beliefs, and traditions which are useful. Of course, this is not an easy task.

3. The school should provide ways and means for the discovery and utilization of all possible resources of the community. The school cannot complacently depend upon those facilities and resources which are found in the school. On the contrary, it should take advantage of the entire community in the interests of the children and adults. The village farm, river, or forest, the town market, the group activities, and social organizations should be employed to provide those varied experiences that will improve individual and group life. It follows that the learning activities of children cannot be confined to the school; the pupils should

be taken to the outside environment where they can supplement class study in real life situations.

Similarly, in many of the villages there may be some people who are able to enrich the experiences of children. If such qualified people are invited to advise the school in some direction or to participate in class instruction, they will accept such invitations in most cases. A man who has much first-hand experience in raising poultry, can be of help in giving reliable information to the children. The town musician can likewise make suggestions for the music program of the school and organize a choir group from the students. Again, if the local physician comes to school, he will provide the pupils with much dependable data about communicable diseases, local epidemic, and preventive measures against them.

The Need for Vocational Education

In addition to a good general education which is regarded as an integral part of the child's education, the rural school curriculum should also include vocational education, specifically agricultural training. Agricultural training enables the child to "do better the things that he would do anyway". By the help of rural schools, children can acquire vocational competency and consequently remain on the farm because of the opportunity, independence and pleasure to be derived from village life. In so doing, our prospective rural inhabitants will be those who select rural life by choice and not by force or by fate. Agricultural training is not only vital to facilitate the fullest development of the individual,

it is also a tremendous asset to community development in rural Iran. It is a source of national prosperity and of better social morale, both of which can be utilized to provide greater educational opportunities in the village.

Agricultural training in elementary schools should comprise theoretical and practical training. It should give the child some information about simple natural processes as well as rudiments of agricultural sciences. He should also learn about the sources of energy to be employed by man and the dignity of manual work. Again, it should offer the child practical experience in land cultivation, improved agricultural practices, animal breeding, agricultural marketing and farm management.

The theory and practice of agricultural training should go hand in hand. They should supplement, modify and improve each other. As such, class discussions help direct and modernize agricultural practices; and field work can verify and modify agricultural sciences. In so doing, the student can acquire functional knowledge of agricultural practices which will enable him to take full advantage of natural resources.

Agricultural training needs to be flexible because of the varying conditions of rural areas and because of climatic differences. For example, the courses offerred at a school located in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea must differ from those given by a school situated in the south-east of Iran. The former school operates in an area where most of the people are engaged in fishing and in the cultivation of rice and citrus, while the latter school enrolls students whose parents cultivate palm trees, produce rugs and grow wheat, barley, and corn.

Within recent years, the Ministry of Education has worked out a program for rural elementary schools which includes agricultural training. However, only a few rural schools have been so organized. Consequently, much is left to be accomplished: agricultural training should be introduced in old-type elementary schools which at present adhere to a curriculum designed primarily for urban schools; and a careful study of the local circumstances should be undertaken by educational experts. The theoretical and practical courses need to be more integrated and harmonized so that the school can sponsor an effective agricultural training; and the present educational equipment should be replaced or at least supplemented by modern agricultural tools and audio-visual materials.

A Shift from Subject-Centered Curriculum to Broad Field Curriculum

The welfare and happiness of individuals depend, to a large extent, upon the new types of experiences which they receive through the school curriculum. In the educative process, the individual should be exposed to experiences that will enable him to understand and control his environment. School experiences should be based upon the maturation level of the pupils and organized around their centers of interest so that the content of curriculum becomes more meaningful to the students and related to themselves and their natural environment. In other words, different problems of life which children face at home, in the school, in the community, and in the society should be the bases for the selection and

the organization of curriculum. As such, the outcomes of learning will be more related, unified and integrated.

It is, therefore, realized that the present subject-centered curriculum in rural schools, which emphasizes the transmission of the cultural heritage, intellectualism and verbalization without due regard for the all-around development of the child, is not the most suitable curriculum for the education of the child. A type of experience curriculum should be substituted for the strict adherence to the subject-matter approach. The scope, sequence, and the organization of an experience curriculum or activity program will be determined in terms of the maturation level of children and their activities, experiences, and problems in daily life.

Thus, an experience curriculum, which is compatible with new concepts of learning, should be considered as a polestar toward which the whole education system must move. Its introduction should be carried out in a gradual manner and with extreme care. It is not advisable to drag the present unqualified teachers into a new procedure which is far different from the present program and for which they have had no training. Therefore, to provide the teacher with flexibility in the educational process and to help him break away from the present traditional curriculum, it is suggested that the rural elementary schools in Iran adopt a broad field curriculum.

BROAD FIELD CURRICULUM

The broad field curriculum represents a type of curriculum design which is a modification of the traditional curriculum. In spite of the fact that this type of design has much in common with traditional subject organization, it eliminates some of the potential weaknesses of the latter approach. The broad field design breaks the water-tight compartments which separate the subjects of the traditional curriculum; it seeks to bring together understandings pertinent to a whole area of study, and it integrates closely related subjects in one field of study. In other words, the broad field approach may be regarded as a subject approach, except that the bases for the selection and organization of the subjects are different from those used in the traditional curriculum.

> The scope of the curriculum is still determined by the traditional subjects, but the organization brings together content of related subjects. Specific topics or concepts within the broad area indicate the sequence from grade to grade. The same general research regarding maturation that guides the designation of sequence in design where subjects are separate is used in this organizational pattern.[2]

This type of design can be worked out at elementary, secondary, and college levels. In elementary schools, the individual subjects of reading, spelling, and writing have been replaced by a broader subject area known as languages arts or communication arts. Likewise, history,

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[2]Florence B. Stratemeyer, and others, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, 1957, p. 91.

geography, and civics have been amalgamated into a broader field designated as social studies. Mathematics and sciences, which form an integral part of the elementary school curriculum have not easily been made part of other subjects.

The traditional curriculum requires short periods of time in which different subjects can be taken up and discussed in the classroom. In contrast to this type, the broad field design facilitates the use of long periods of time during which instruction is offered in terms of the broad fields of the language arts, the social sciences, the general arts, sciences, arithmetic, and physical and mental health.

According to Hopkins, the broad field curriculum may be designed around the pressing problems of the day such as "improved housing, developing better social security for workers, obtaining employment for youth, decreasing crime, preserving agricultural lands from erosion, developing better relation between capital and labor, providing better public health, increasing consumer education and the like."[3] Thus, in an attempt to preserve the breadth and variety of present experiences in curriculum, the curriculum planner may relate school experiences to the important problems of the day. For example, if the health program aims at imparting to the child some information about personal and public health, this can be achieved through the study of sanitary condition of the village. Likewise, the social studies program may help rural children study religious institutions, public organization and the economy of their locality which not only provide useful experiences for children but also makes them aware

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[3] Thomas L. Hopkins, Interaction, 1941, p. 63.

of the social problems in rural Iran.

In developing broad field courses for elementary and secondary schools, curriculum planners have adopted certain procedures. In the field of natural sciences, for example, the suitable approach is to organize broad field courses around the basic principles underlying the whole area of science. In respect to social sciences, the program can be organized around the social institutions, political and economic problems of the day.

Social Studies

Social studies in this new program includes history, geography, and civics. As such, it deals with the relationships of man to man, the dependence of man upon the universe. It is designed to aid the development of good character in the students. Through basic generalizations underlying this broad field, students should obtain knowledge of how people act on their environment to make their living and of how the environment in turn affects human personalities and social institutions. They should gain an idea of the conditions and problems of life, and of man's past and present experiences.

A good social studies program aims at producing and training loyal and competent citizens for a democratic life. It cultivates those moral principles, right attitudes of minds, and interests which the individual needs for his every day contact with all people. As such, the preparation of good citizens is conceived of as the prime purpose of social studies

which transends the common notion that the aim of social studies is simply to impart facts about geography, history, and civics.

The material for the teaching of social studies will be drawn from history, geography, and civics. The learning activities based on these materials should result in the development of skills, attitudes, understandings, knowledge and abilities necessary for a happy and helpful life. The study of history and geography of various areas, centered around the problems of communication, transportation, production and consumption, will enable the student to acquire considerable understandings of the life of a nation. Furthermore, if a social studies program is well planned, it will give the children an opportunity to work individually and with each other in order to achieve some common goals and thereby contribute to the developments of moral and spiritual values.

The scope of each year's program, which refers to the breadth and variety of educational experiences, should be broad enough to acquaint children with necessary information about human activities. It should be based upon certain themes or generalizations which imply that all people and communities depend upon each other and that the life of each nation is influenced by the life of other nations. As children grow up, the sequence should be modified and changed in the light of various fields of human endeavor such as:

(1) Conservation and protection of life, property and natural resources.

(2) Production of goods and services and the distribution of production.

(3) Consumption of goods and services.

(4) Recreation.

(5) Communication of ideas and feelings and transportation of goods and people.

(6) Education.

(7) Expression of aesthetic and spiritual impulses.

(8) Public organizations and government.

Science and Health

The present century is marked by scientific discoveries and inventions, the applications of which have altered considerably the conditions of man's life. Along with scientific movements the status of science in the elementary school curriculum everywhere has received a great boost and consequently the science program has been gradually expanded.

In the elementary school, children should acquire some simple facts about their natural environment, living organisms, and the exploitation of natural resources for the welfare of humanity. They need to understand that man can control his environment, that there are many laws and facts yet unknown to people, that there are causes and effects for all natural phenomena and that nothing perishes from the universe. Children should also develop a scientific attitude. The scientific attitude is a systematic approach to the solution of a problem. It involves the recognition of the problem, the setting up of the hypothesis,

the gathering of relevant data, the drawing of conclusions, and the verification of the findings.

Children should also develop an understanding of some scientific apparatuses found in almost all places, such as clocks, radios, thermometers, pumping machines, telephones, farming machines, and so on. Through the manipulation of such devices, children may develop an interest and inclination for science. Similarly, the teacher should guide them to observe with scientific accuracy. All of the above help to make scientifically minded individuals.

No less than the need for the teaching of science in elementary schools is the necessity for a comprehensive health program. In fact, the mental and physical growth of the individual and the welfare of society depend to a large extent upon the condition of health at home and in society. Apart from the family in which the child should receive his first orientation toward health, the school is responsible for acquainting the child with adequate information about the causes of contageous diseases, preventive measures against various epidemics and teaching him how to avoid unsanitary practices which may run counter to public and personal health.

Under the guidance of the teacher, the exploration of health conditions in the environment gives the child first-hand experiences and enables him to sense the problems of ill-health in the community. The direct participation of children in public health should be so conducted that the child understands the importance of hygiene.

For the further enlightenment of the pupil, it is quite useful if the teacher touches upon those scientific discoveries which have helped man remedy and prevent various diseases. In other words, the teacher should relate science and health in a broad field. Particularly, because science has taken long strides to discover many parasites and viruses, to remedy tuberculosis, cholera, small-pox, and plague and to provide vaccines for the prevention of almost all diseases. Science has also discovered a host of facts about living organisms, the knowledge of which is essential for the preservation of health.

Arts, Crafts, Music and Language

Arts and crafts are the tools for self expression and provide an excellent means for enhancing the child's mental growth. They provide the children with an opportunity to appreciate beauty and to develop a sense of harmony. Furthermore, constructive work, creative arts, and handicrafts give the child breadth of interests and variety of experiences. They cultivate desirable taste, make leisure time colorful, stimulate craftsmanship, and exhibit the child's creativity. This aspect of a child's education, namely the stimulation of creativity and a sense of harmony have been most neglected in the past.

In new curriculum, it is necessary that the child learns and practices more crafts and expands his interests in this field both horizontally and vertically, that is, to practice new crafts and develop those he already knows. Crafts practiced at schools should be based upon native crafts and represent the Iranian tradition.

As an integral part of education, music should be also stressed in elementary schools. It should be considered as an indispensable tool for the development of creative expression. It should foster appreciation in the student, broaden his interests in music, and lay the foundation for the acquisition of music skills. By singing interesting songs and listening to pleasant music, the pupils should be motivated to share their experiences in music and to produce music programs.

Finally, the importance of language arts cannot be overlooked in the broad field of arts and the humanities. Through language, one is able to communicate with other people and, therefore, facility of expression and a good vocabulary seem to be most needed for the child. The elementary school pupil must be able to read with facility, to use books for information and for pleasure, to write legibly, and to express his ideas fluently. The captions and the oral description of pictures, the performances of dramatic plays, the declamation of passages, and the composition of songs by the students lend themselves to promoting the ability of students in the art of self expression.

Mathematics

Theoretically, it might be claimed that arithmetic and mathematical skills should be amalgamated with other courses to make a broad field subject. This may be feasible if one is concerned with the application of mathematical principles and skills in sciences, arts, and music. But because the drills and concepts of mathematics demand special consider-

ation and because of the high valuation put on arithmetic by the Iranian educators this subject cannot be fused in a broad field course at the present time. However, this does not mean that arithmetic should be abstract and detached from other educational experiences which the child undergoes in the school and in the community. The advocates of the broad field design, on the contrary, maintain the view that mathematical concepts should be developed by and integrated with other generalizations found in various courses so that the child may better understand the abstract ideas. Therefore, if the acquisition of perfect mathematical skills is the aim, they should be attained through functional experiences, in addition to systematized drill in mathematics as a tool subject.

Advantages of Broad Field Design

In this approach, the integration of various subjects is facilitated. The subject area provides the pupil with bodies of closely related knowledge and helps him understand the interrelationships of different subjects. Furthermore, the broad field design is a wider approach to the understanding of society and the problems of living as faced in day-by-day affairs. The primary aim of the educator in selecting such a program is to so organize the subject matter to make it more meaningful and more effective. Under a broad field design, students do not study history for forty minutes and, then, geography or civics for the same length of time. But they study them in the same class and in a longer period of time to acquire a body of knowledge which is more compatible with the actual conditions of living.

The broad field curriculum provides a more functional organization of knowledge. The selection of social problems as the point of departure in curriculum planning and the variety of subjects which are fused in a broad field indicate that the teaching - learning process will become more conducive to the development of child's abilities. Again, when subjects are grouped the teacher is given more latitude to digress from the formulated goals in the interest of a particular group or individuals. Consequently, such flexibility in the curriculum enables the teacher to consider both the slow and fast learner and, by taking into account the individual differences, make the learning process more meaningful.

Broad field design capitalizes on more subject matter and provides a broader understanding of modern affairs. Such a design is in contrast to subject type organization whereby a pupil can only study a limited number of subjects. Owing to the integration of a number of closely related subjects into a broader field, the pupil will gain insight into and understanding of some areas of knowledge which would otherwise be impossible to obtain. Broad field courses enable the student to have a greater awareness of the whole body of human knowledge and this is probably the chief contribution of the broad field design.

The stress on basic principles and generalizations is another characteristic of a well-conceived broad field curriculum. This approach puts less emphasis on the mastery of detailed information, data, facts, all of which may soon be forgotten. Because if the pupil collects heaps of facts and data, he must then make a synthesis out of this information

which is often times less likely to occur. But the teaching of principles and generalizations, which is facilitated by the broad field design, enables the learner to acquire a good working knowledge of the field.

Disadvantages of Broad Field Approach

Some educators oppose the broad field curriculum on the ground that it has certain shortcomings. It is claimed by some critics that the broad field approach provides the student with sketchy information about a number of subjects, but does not attempt to dig through in any specific field of study. Through this design, the pupil gets a general introduction to some areas of knowledge and because of the necessity of becoming acquainted with different aspects of a broad field, the pupil will not be able to acquire mastery in any one field. As a result, a pupil may have a general understanding about related subjects and quite a mass of information about another one, but he may lack thorough knowledge of any specific field.

It is also maintained that a broad field curriculum may contain too abstract concepts which are difficult for the average student to grasp. The critics argue that the concepts, principles, and generalizations in broad field courses are detached from their usual explanatory materials found in the textbooks, without which it is difficult for the pupil to interpret and absorb the ideas. This is all the more true, so they maintain, when the teacher attempts to cover as many essential principles and generalizations as possible, with minimum discussion and elaboration.

Still other problems are involved in this type of design. Poor learning and inadequate understanding may result if the teacher is not able to see the relationships among subjects and if he is not broadly prepared in the subject fields. Likewise, out of his excessive confidence in the mastery of a field, the teacher may disregard the maturation level of children, take them far beyond their understanding, and present generalizations which are inappropriate for students. On the other hand, a teacher may rely heavily on the textbook to acquaint students with facts and information which will consequently lead to rote memorization, intellectualism, and bookishness.

The difficulties and defects mentioned above do not specifically pertain to the broad field curriculum alone. Similarly, various types of curriculum design may be criticized because of the same shortcomings. The outcomes of educational experiences depend to a large extent upon the qualification of the teacher and the method of teaching which he employs. A qualified teacher is capable of conducting the class procedure in such a way which will result in permanent and desirable learning. He takes advantage of audio-visual aids, explains and discusses the subject effectively, and thus makes the ideas and concepts more meaningful to the child. With qualified teachers the broad field curriculum offers the advantages already discussed and would therefore be an improvement in the work of the school.

UNIT TEACHING

To implement the broad field curriculum in elementary schools, it is suggested that unit teaching be gradually substituted for the present assign-study-recite method. "A unit, or a unit of work, can be defined as a purposeful learning experience focussed upon some socially significant understanding which will modify the behavior of the learner and enable him to adjust to a life situation more effectively."[4] To state it differently, "a teaching unit is a pattern of experiences or activities which provide for the exploration of a central problem"[5] for which students and the teacher show concern. The solution of a problem involves a systematic approach, that is, the definition and recognition of the problem, the formulation of a hypothesis, the collection of pertinent data through research, observation or experimentation, the verification of the gathered data, and finally the application of the findings. Thus, the teacher and pupils draw a plan to attach a problem, put the plan into operation, and evaluate the outcomes in terms of the original purposes.

The planning of units should be the joint venture of the teacher and pupils. It should be bared upon the age, interests, and experiences of children. "The teacher's planning will give general direction and relate the unit to the purposes of education. The pupil's planning will

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[4] Lavone A. Hanna, and others, Unit Teaching in the Elementary School, 1956, p. 101.

[5] Nebraska Department of Education, Building Better American Citizens, n.d., p. 4.

provide an expression of their purposes and interests and provide a guide for them in their procedure."[6] All units utilize subject matter, employ activities and yield the child some useful experiences. Both subject matter and activities must be employed to modify and change the behavior of the child in terms of significant understandings, attitudes, appreciations, functional knowledge and skills.

A unit of work should take into account the personal and social needs of children. In planning a unit with a particular group of children it is quite advantageous that the teacher considers the varying social and economic conditions of the pupils. Although the scope of curriculum defines general needs and provides some guide lines as to the significance and health of units, the teacher should analyze the needs of his particular group and individual pupils as well. In so doing, he will be more able to meet the needs of particular groups and pupils concerned.

A unit is an effective way of organizing classroom activities, because it is based upon the new concepts of learning. Furthermore, since the desires and needs of learners are the basic factors in organizing a unit, the learning which takes place in a unit of work is purposive and therefore more effective. Motivation is thus high, due to the fact that the teacher and pupils cooperatively plan the unit of work and children consider the purpose of their activity. In the process of achieving their goals, children are apt to acquire some understandings, skills and

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[6] J. Murray Lee, Dorris May Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, 1940, p. 207.

values such as tolerance, openmindedness, and a sense of responsibility. Extrinsic rewards such as threats, sarcasm, punishment, are seldom, if ever, needed. Furthermore, the variety of activities in a unit of work, which suit the individual differences, give the child an opportunity to broaden and deepen his learning. Such activities, life-like, as they are, help the child see relationships between what he learns in school and what goes on outside the school.

A unit of work should be life centered. It is the responsibility of the teacher to develop those types of behavior in the child which are socially significant and which are compatible with life in the community. Obviously, to expose the child to such experiences, education must be based upon authentic samples of modern living. Regarding educational experiences, the community furnishes a laboratory whereby children can obtain first-hand experiences through explorations and excursions. Thus, a trip to the nearby factory, a visit to the demonstration farm, a study of the housing of the village, a survey of the irrigation system of the village and similar undertakings, all are the sources of information for children. Audio-visual aids, films, filmstrips, slides, bulletin boards can be also counted as excellent ways to make the unit more meaningful and close to reality.

Unit teaching lends itself to the social development of the child. As children cooperate in gathering information, in setting up the plans, in sharing their findings and in engaging in dramatic plays they learn to assume responsibility, to accept criticism, and to take

initiative. In the process of cooperative work, children develop flexibility which enables them to give orders at times, and to receive orders at others. Besides, through group work, they will foster a sense of sympathy toward other people and become more tolerant and openminded, all of which are needed in a democratic life.

The unit of work provides opportunities for the functional use of skills. In other words, a systematic approach to the solution of a problem, the types and nature of activities, and experiences acquired by the child require that his skills function in a meaningful fashion. Such skills as reading, writing, speaking, singing, drawing, computing, measuring, spelling, and reporting are the ordinary media to be used by children in their activities. Particularly, skills of the language arts will be frequently used in various units of work. Significantly, skills in manipulating the tools, in solving problems, and in human relations will be amply developed.

Finally, a unit of work provides for individual differences. It enables the pupils to work cooperatively for the fulfillment of their goals, despite the great variation in their abilities. Indeed, individual differences pose a complicated problem for the teacher. Some children, for example, can read all the books available and collect relevant data, while others are able to read only the simplest books and consequently gather meager information. Still many difficulties of this type exist. Therefore, the reader should be alert to make arrangements through differentiated assignments for individuals and groups so that each child

may have access to the needed information and take part in those activities in which he can succeed and at the same time be challenged. Those children, for example, who have difficulty with their oral expression should be given a chance to improve their spoken language and gradually participate in group discussion. Those who are not sufficiently practical and have little skill in manipulating objects should also be given opportunity to handle materials which suit their abilities.[7]

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A BROAD FIELD CURRICULUM

To change and improve the school curriculum is not an easy task to undertake, eventhough the goals and objectives may be well formulated.

> It is now recognized that curriculum change is a very complex process, involving the personalities of parents, students, and teachers, the structure of the school system, and the patterns of personal and group relations among members of the school and community. Change in the curriculum is in reality a major social change.[8]

In view of this fact, the proposed curriculum for rural elementary schools in Iran, that is, the broad field design should be introduced with extreme

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[7]For further information about the unit of work see, Lavone A. Hanna, and others, Unit Teaching in the Elementary Schools, 1950; J. Murray Lee, Dorris May Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, 1940, pp. 192-261; William H. Burton, The Guidance of Learning Activities, 1944, pp. 244, 263.

[8]B. Othanel Smith, and others, Fundamentals of Curriculum Development, 1950, p. 634.

care. It should not be launched all at once; rather it must be implemented step by step in order to safeguard against disturbance and chaos on the part of teachers, students, and parents.

To begin with, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education take a dynamic lead in prescribing the new curriculum and at the same time in making provisions for local adaptation. By the virtue of authority given to the members of the High Council on Education, they can formulate general objectives and basic foundations of a broad field curriculum and require education offices of various provinces to outline the details. Education offices may in turn invite teachers of different localities to participate in and contribute to curriculum planning.

This move from above, necessitates a parallel move from bottom, on the part of the people. Undoubtedly, the introduction of a new curriculum demands the intelligent support of the people to whom the responsibility of educational enterprise should ultimately be delegated. Unless parents show enthusiasm in the matters pertaining to the education of their children, it is difficult to bring about permanent changes, eventhough superficial alterations may be attained for a short period of time.

Thus, through parents-teachers associations and personal contacts, parents can express their views as to the education of their children, the values to be considered in curriculum planning, and the problems of the community. Parents can also help the school provide better instructional materials, qualified teachers and suitable school plants.

Following the introduction of a broad field design, which is not

far different from the present curriculum and bears similarities with subject-centered curriculum, it is suggested that the courses of study be taught by the traditional recitation method for at least two years. This is justifiable since it is hardly feasible to embark on a new program and method of teaching simultaneously in view of the fact that the bulk of rural teachers are not qualified and the majority of rural schools are poorly equipped.

Thus, the implementation of broad field design demands further preparation of both present and prospective teachers. As a matter of fact, the shift from the subject to the child in modern education has increased markedly the responsibilities and obligations of teachers. The more fully qualified the teachers are and the greater their faith in the teaching profession, the more desirable the educational outcome tends to be.

The teachers at work may receive professional training in summer vacations or else be provided with in-service training. The prospective teachers who are trained in normal schools should receive, on the professional side, a comprehensive study of the characteristics of broad field curriculum and of units of work. Such training should acquaint teachers with problem-solving techniques, the principles of group work, and a systematic approach to the exploration of a learning situation. It should encourage teachers to use audio-visual aids, to select a variety of instructional material and to be resourceful in the classroom.

After two or three years, when a good number of teachers are trained, it is advisable for rural schools to adopt the unit teaching method as the method of instruction. Pioneer attempts may start from newly established schools, whose staff and facilities are more satisfactory than those in ordinary types of elementary schools. Thus, the last phase in the present process of curriculum change is to integrate and combine the broad field design with unit teaching, the combination of which may be expected to yield a far more effective type of education.

S U M M A R Y

Iran is passing through developmental stages toward further progress and prosperity. The social, economic, and political changes rapidly occuring in the country characterize rural life in Iran. This being the case, the school is challenged to cater to the needs of the peasants. Undoubtedly, the degree to which the school can successfully respond to the expectations of the people depends upon a well-planned curriculum.

In view of this fact, rural schools should gradually evolve toward an experience curriculum which can better guarantee the welfare and happiness of the individual pupils. Since it is not advisable, for many reasons, for rural schools to deviate far from the present curriculum, it is recommended that a broad field design be adopted to substitute for the subject-centered curriculum. The broad field approach is a modification

of the traditional curriculum, organized around current problems and designed on the basis of certain generalizations or themes. It provides the student with functional knowledge and it is a step forward toward the adoption of an experience curriculum.

Unit teaching has also been suggested as the method of instruction for the implementation of the new curriculum. A unit of work takes into consideration the individual differences and it is compatible with the new concepts of learning. It is life centered, lends itself to the social development of the child, and provides him with necessary skills, attitudes and understandings.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the adoption of the broad field design become the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the education offices at the local level. In addition, it would be unwise for the rural schools to adopt a broad field design and a new method of instruction simultaneously. The new method of instruction should be introduced after two or three years when the preparation of a good number of qualified teachers for rural schools has already been completed.

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