chapter 2

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CURRICULUM

Philosophy is an important foundation of curriculum because the philosophy advocated or reflected by a particular school and its officials influences its goals or aims and content, as well as the organization of its curriculum. Studying philosophy helps us deal with our own personal systems of beliefs and values: The way we perceive the world around us, and how we define what is important to us. It helps us understand who we are, why we are, and, to some extent, where we are going.

Philosophy deals with the larger aspects of life, the problems and prospects of living, and the way we organize our thoughts and facts. It is an effort to see life and its problems in full perspective. It requires looking beyond the immediate to causes and relationships and to future developments. It involves questioning one's own point of view as well as the views of others; it involves searching for defined and defensible values, clarifying one's beliefs and attitudes, and formulating a framework for making decisions and acting on these decisions.

Philosophical issues have always and still do impact on schools and society. Contemporary society and the schools in it are changing fundamentally and rapidly, much more so than in the past. The special urgency that dictates continuous appraisal and reappraisal calls for a philosophy of education. As William Van Til puts it, "Our source of direction is found in our guiding philosophy. ... Without philosophy, [we make] mindless vaults into the saddle like Stephen Leacock's character who 'flung himself from the room, flung himself upon his horse, and rode madly off in all directions.' "[1] In short, our philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions, choices, and alternatives.

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Philosophy provides educators, especially curriculum workers, with a framework or base for organizing schools and classrooms.

It helps them answer what schools are for, what subjects are of value, how students learn, and what methods and materials to use. It provides them with a framework for broad issues and tasks, such as determining the goals of education, the content and its organization, the process of teaching and learning, and in general what experiences and activities they wish to stress in schools and classrooms. It also provides them with a basis for dealing with precise tasks and for making such decisions as what workbooks, textbooks, or other cognitive and non-cognitive activities to utilize and how to utilize them, what homework to assign and how much of it, how to test students and how to use the test results, and what courses or subject matter to emphasize.

The importance of philosophy in determining curriculum decisions is expressed well by L. Thomas Hopkins:

Philosophy has entered into every important decision that has ever been made about curriculum and teaching in the past and will continue to be the basis of every important decision in the future.

When a state office of education suggests a pupil-teacher time schedule, this is based upon philosophy, either hidden or consciously formulated. When a course of study is prepared in advance in a school system by a selected group of teachers, this represents philosophy because a course of action was selected from many choices involving different values. When high school teachers assign to pupils more homework for an evening than any one of them could possibly do satisfactorily in six hours, they are acting on philosophy although they are certainly not aware of its effects. When a teacher in an elementary school tells a child to put away his geography and study his arithmetic she is acting on philosophy for she has made a choice of values. If she had allowed the child to make the choice she would have been operating under a different set of beliefs. Many persons believe that children can best be educated to live in a democracy by rigid authoritarian control through the adolescent period. Others believe that democratic interaction should be practiced as soon as the child is capable of distinguishing among subjects, situations, activities, which is a number of years before he usually enters school. When teachers shift subject

matter from one grade to another, they act on philosophy. When measurement experts interpret their test results to a group of teachers, they act upon philosophy, for the facts have meaning only within some basic assumptions. There is rarely a moment in a school day when a teacher is not confronted with occasions where philosophy is a vital part of action. An inventory of situations where philosophy was not used in curriculum and teaching would lead to a pile of chaff thrown out of educative experiences.[2]

Hopkins's statement reminds us how important philosophy is to all aspects of curriculum decisions, whether it operates overtly or covertly, whether we know that it is operating or not. Indeed almost all elements of curriculum are based on philosophy. As John Goodlad points out, philosophy is the beginning point in curriculum decision making and is the basis for all subsequent decisions regarding curriculum.[3] Philosophy becomes the criterion for determining the aims, means, and ends of curriculum. The aims are statements of value, based on philosophical beliefs; the means represent processes and methods, which reflect philosophical choices; and the ends connote the facts, concepts, and principles of the knowledge or behavior learned, or what we feel is important to learning, which is also philosophical in nature.

Smith, Stanley, and Shores also put great emphasis on the role of philosophy in developing curriculum; it is essential, they posit, when (1) formulating and justifying educational purposes; (2) selecting and organizing knowledge; (3) formulating basic procedures and activities; and (4) dealing with verbal traps (what we see versus what is real).[4] Curriculum theorists, they point out, often fail to recognize both how important philosophy is and how it influences other aspects of curriculum.

Philosophy and the Curriculum Worker.

The philosophy of the curriculum worker reflects his or her life experiences, common sense, social and economic background, education, and general beliefs

about him- or herself and people. An individual's philosophy evolves and continues to evolve as long as he or she continues to grow and develop, and as long as he or she learns from experience. One's philosophy is a description, explanation, and evaluation of the world as seen from one's own perspective, or through what some social scientists call "social lenses."

Curriculum workers can turn to many sources, but no matter how many sources they may draw upon or how many authorities they may read or listen to, the decision is theirs to accept or reject so-called explanations and truths presented. The decision is shaped by past and contemporary events and experiences that have affected them and the social groups with which they identify; it is based on values (attitudes and beliefs) that they have developed, and their knowledge and interpretation of causes, events, and their consequences. Philosophy becomes principles for guiding action.

No one can be totally objective in a cultural or social setting, but curriculum workers can broaden their base of knowledge and experiences, try to understand other people's sense of values, and analyze problems from various perspectives. They can also try to modify their own critical analyses and points of view by learning from their experiences and others. Curriculum workers who are unwilling to modify their points of view, or compromise philosophical positions, when school officials or the majority of their colleagues lean toward another philosophy, are at risk of causing conflict and disrupting the school. Ronald Doll puts it this way: "Conflict among curriculum planners occurs when persons . . . hold positions along a continuum of [different] beliefs and . . . persuasions." The conflict may become so intense that "curriculum study grinds to a halt." Most of the time, the differences can be reconciled "temporarily in deference to the demands of a temporary, immediate task. However, teachers and administrators who are clearly divided in philosophy can seldom work together in close proximity for long periods of time."[5]

The more mature and understanding one is, and the less personally threatened and ego involved one is, the more capable one is of reexamining or modifying his or her philosophy, or at least of being willing to appreciate other points of view. It is important for curriculum workers to consider their attitudes and beliefs as tentative—as subject to reexamination whenever facts or trends challenge them.

Equally dangerous for curriculum workers is the opposite: Indecision or lack of any philosophy, which can be reflected in attempts to avoid commitment to sets of values. A measure of positive conviction is essential to prudent action, even though total objectivity is not humanly possible. Having a personal philosophy that is tentative or subject to modification does not lead to lack of conviction or disorganized behavior. Curriculum workers can arrive at their conclusions on the best evidence available, and they can change when better evidence surfaces.

Philosophy as a Curriculum Source.

The function of philosophy can be conceived as either (1) the base or starting point in curriculum development or (2) an interdependent function with other functions in curriculum development. John Dewey represents the first school of thought. He contended that "philosophy may . . . be defined as the general theory of education," and that "the business of philosophy is to provide" the framework for the "aims and methods" of schools. For Dewey, philosophy provides a generalized meaning to our lives and a way of thinking; it is "an explicit formulation of the . . . mental and moral habitudes in respect to the difficulties of contemporary social life."[6] Philosophy is not only a starting point for schools, it is also crucial for all curriculum activities. For Dewey, "education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested."[7]

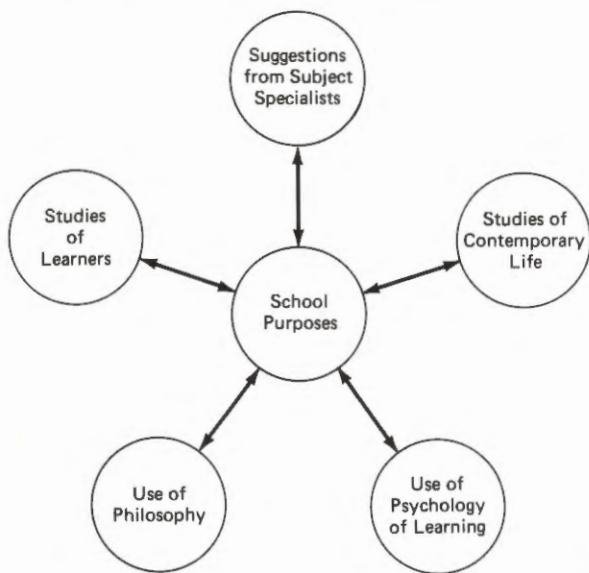In Ralph Tyler's framework of curriculum, philosophy is commonly one of five cri-

FIGURE 2-1   Tyler's View of Philosophy in Relation to School Purposes

teria for selecting educational purposes. The relationships between philosophy and the other criteria—studies of learners, studies of contemporary life, suggestions from subject specialists, and the psychology of learning—are shown in Figure 2-1. Although philosophy is not the starting point in Tyler's curriculum, but rather interacts on an equal basis with the other criteria, Tyler, highly influenced by Dewey, seems to place more importance on philosophy for developing educational purposes. He writes, "The educational and social philosophy to which the school is committed can serve as the first screen for developing the social program." He concludes that "philosophy attempts to define the nature of the good life and a good society," and that the "educational philosophies in a democratic society are likely to emphasize strongly democratic values in schools."[8]

For John Goodlad, there can be no serious discussion about philosophy until we embrace the question of what education is. When we agree on what education is, we can ask what schools are for. Then we can pursue philosophy, aims, and goals of curriculum. According to Goodlad, the school's first responsibility is to the social order, what

he calls the "nation-state," but in our society the sense of individual growth and potential is paramount, too.[9] This duality—society vs. the individual—has been a major philosophical issue in western society for centuries, and was very important in Dewey's works. As the latter claimed, we not only wish "to make [good] citizens and workers," but also we ultimately want "to make human beings who will live life to the fullest."

This duality—allegiance to the nation and fulfillment of the individual—is a noble aim that should guide all curriculum specialists—from the means to the ends. When many individuals grow and prosper, then that society flourishes since it is comprised of many individuals. The original question set forth by Goodlad can be answered now. Education is growth and the meaning that the growth has for the individual and society; it is a never ending process (so long as life exists), and the richer the meaning the better the quality of the educational process.

MAJOR PHILOSOPHIES

In any consideration of the influence of philosophical thought on curriculum, sev-

eral classification schemes are possible; no superiority is thus claimed for the categories used in the following discussion. The cluster of ideas as organized here are those that often evolve during curriculum development.

Labeling a philosophical idea, method, or proponent may give rise to argument. Differences within philosophical groups are sometimes greater than differences between groups. Also, anyone who embraces an extreme point of view may very likely be critical of other views.

Four major philosophies have influenced education in the United States: Idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. Here, we present short overviews to define and identify each philosophy. The first two philosophies are traditional, and the latter two are contemporary.

Idealism.

Plato is often identified as giving classic formulation to idealist philosophy, one of the oldest that exists. The German philosopher Hegel created a comprehensive view of the historical world based on idealism. In the United States, transcendentalist philosophers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau outlined an idealist conception of reality. In education, Fredrich Froebel, the founder of kindergarten, was a proponent of idealist pedagogy. William Harris, who popularized the kindergarten movement when he was Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and who became U.S. Commissioner of Education at the turn of the twentieth century, used idealism as a source for this administrative philosophy. The leading contemporary proponent of idealism is J. Donald Butler.[10]

Idealism emphasizes moral and spiritual reality as the chief explanation of the world. Truth and values are seen as absolute, timeless, and universal. The world of mind and ideas is permanent, regular, and orderly; it represents a perfect order. Eternal ideas are unalterable and timeless. To know is to rethink the latent ideas that are already present in the mind. The teacher's task is to bring this latent knowledge to consciousness. As a primarily intellectual process, learning involves recalling and working with ideas; education is properly concerned with conceptual matters.[11]

The idealist educator prefers the order and pattern of a subject matter curriculum that relates ideas and concepts to each other. The most important subjects and highest form of knowledge recognize relationships and integrate concepts to each other. In this vein, the curriculum is hierarchical, and it constitutes the cultural heritage of humankind; it is based on learned disciplines, illustrated by the liberal arts curriculum.

At the top of this hierarchy are the most general or abstract subjects: Philosophy and theology; they cut across time, place, and circumstances, and they apply to a wide range of situations and experiences. Mathematics is important because it cultivates the power to deal with abstract thinking. History and literature also rank high because they are sources of moral and cultural models. Lower in the curricular ladder are the natural and physical sciences, which deal with particular cause and effect relationships. Language is also an important subject, because it is necessary for communication and facilitates conception of thought.

Realism.

Aristotle is often linked to the development of realism, another traditional school of thought. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, which combined realism with Christian doctrine, developed an offshoot of realism, called thomism, on which much of Catholic education and religious studies today are rooted. Pestalozzian instructional principles, which began with concrete objects and ended with abstract concepts, were based on realism. Such modern educators as Harry Broudy and John Wild are leading realists.[12]

The realist views the world in terms of objects and matter. People can come to know the world through their senses and their reason. Everything is derived from na-

ture and is subject to its laws. Human behavior is rational when it conforms to the laws of nature, and when it is governed by physical and social laws.

Like the idealist, the realist stresses a curriculum consisting of organized, separate subject matter, content, and knowledge that classifies objects. For example, the experiences of humankind comprise history. Animals can be studied as zoology. Like the idealist, the realist locates the most general and abstract subjects at the top of the curricular hierarchy, and gives particular and transitory subjects a lower order of priority. Logic and lessons that exercise the mind, and that cultivate rational thought, are stressed. Concepts and systems that can be organized into subjects—such as ethical, political, and economic thought—are also included in the curriculum. The three "Rs" (reading, writing, and arithmetic) are also necessary in a person's basic education.[13]

Whereas the idealist considers the classics to be the ideal subject matter, because the curriculum can be fixed and will not vary with time, the realist views subject matter experts as the source of authority. For the idealist, knowledge comes from studying the external ideas and universal truths found in the arts, but for the realist reality and truth emanate from both science and art.

Pragmatism.

In contrast to the traditional philosophies, pragmatism, also referred to as experimentalism, is based on change, process, and relativity. Whereas idealism and realism emphasize subject matter, disciplines, and content or ideas, pragmatism construes knowledge as a process in which reality is constantly changing. Learning occurs as the person engages in problem solving; problem solving is, moreover, transferable to a wide variety of subjects and situations. Knowing is considered a transaction between learner and environment. Basic to this interaction is the notion of change. Both the learner and environment are constantly changing, as are the transactions or experiences. To disregard social change, and to consider only what is changeless, as the idealists do, or only our heritage, as the realists do, is unrealistic and unwise. Concepts of unchanging or universal truths, such as the traditional philosophies advocate, are senseless. The only guides that people have in their interaction with the social world or environment are established generalizations or tentative assertions that are subject to further research and verification.

To a pragmatist, nothing can be viewed intelligently except in relation to a pattern. The whole affects the parts, and the parts and the whole are all relative. The ideal teaching method is concerned not so much with teaching the learner what to think as with teaching him or her to critically think. Teaching is more exploratory than explanatory. The method is more important than the subject matter. What is needed is a method for dealing with change and scientific investigation in an intelligent manner.

Scientific developments at the turn of the twentieth century accelerated the pragmatic philosophy. Society's accepting scientific explanations for phenomena, and its recognizing the forces of change, challenged the long-standing traditional views of idealism and realism. In 1859 Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* shook the foundations of the classic view of human's notion of the universe. Charles Pierce, a mathematician, and William James, a psychologist, developed the principles of pragmatism, which (1) rejected the dogmas of preconceived truths and eternal values, and (2) promoted the method of testing and verifying ideas. The truth was no longer absolute or universal, but rather it had to be proven in relation to facts, experience, and/or behaviors.[14]

The great educational pragmatist was John Dewey, who viewed education as a process for improving (not accepting) the human condition. The school was seen as a specialized environment that coincided with the social environment. No demarcation exists between school and society. The curriculum, ideally, is based on the child's experi-

ences and interests, and prepares him or her for life's affairs and for the future.[15] The subject matter is interdisciplinary, rather than located within a single or group of disciplines. The stress is on problem solving, not mastering organized subject matter, and using the scientific method, not a bunch of facts or a point of view.

The pragmatists consider teaching and learning to be a process of reconstructing experience according to the scientific method. Learning takes place in an active way as learners, either individually or in groups, solve problems. These problems, as well as the subject matter, will vary in response to the changing world. For the learner, it is most important to acquire the method or process of solving problems in an intelligent manner.

Existentialism.

Whereas pragmatism is mainly an American philosophy that evolved just prior to the turn of the twentieth century, existentialism is mainly a European philosophy that originated before the turn of the century but became popular after World War II. In American education, such people as Maxine Greene, George Kneller, and Van Cleve Morris are well-known existentialists who stress individualism and personal self-fulfillment.[16]

According to existentialist philosophy, people are thrust into a number of choice-making situations. Some choices are minor and others are significant, but the choice is the individual's, and the decisions lead to personal self-definition. A person creates his or her own definition and in doing so makes his or her own essence. We are what we choose to be. The essence we create is a product of our choices; this varies, of course, among individuals.

Existentialists prefer to free learners to choose what to study and also to determine what is true and by what criteria to determine these truths. The curriculum would avoid systematic knowledge or structured disciplines, and the students would be free

to select from many available learning situations. The learners would choose the knowledge they wish to possess. On both of these curricular points, some educators would criticize the philosophy as too unsystematic or laissez-faire to be included at the elementary school level.

Existentialists believe that the most important kind of knowledge is about the human condition and the choices that each person has to make, and that education is a process of developing consciousness about the freedom to choose and the meaning of and responsibility for one's choices.[17] Hence, the notion of group norms, authority, and established order—social, political, philosophical, religious, and so on—are rejected. The existentialists recognize few standards, customs or traditions, or eternal truths; in this respect, existentialism is at odds with the ideas of idealism and realism.

Some critics (mainly traditionalists or conservatives) claim that existentialism as a philosophy for the schools has limited application because education in our society, and in most other modern societies, involves institutionalized learning and socialization, which require group instruction, restrictions on individuals' behavior, and bureaucratic organization. Schooling is a process that limits students' freedom and that is based on adult authority and on the norms and beliefs of the mass or common culture. The individual existentialist, exerting his or her will and choice, will encounter difficulty in school—and in other large, formal organizations.

An existentialist curriculum would consist of experiences and subjects that lend themselves to philosophical dialogue and acts of choice making. Because the choice is personal and subjective, subjects that are emotional, aesthetic, and philosophical are appropriate. Literature, drama, film making, art, and so on, are important, because they portray the human condition and choice-making conditions. The curriculum would stress self-expressive activities, experimentation, and methods and media that illustrate emotions, feelings, and insights.

TABLE 2-1 Overview of Major Philosophies

Philosophy	Reality	Knowledge	Values	Teacher's Role	Emphasis on Learning	Emphasis on Curriculum
Idealism	Spiritual, moral, or mental; unchanging	Rethinking latent ideas	Absolute and eternal	To bring latent knowledge and ideas to consciousness; to be a moral and spiritual leader	Recalling knowledge and ideas; abstract thinking as the highest form	Knowledge based; subject based; classics or liberal arts; hierarchy of subjects: philosophy, theology, and mathematics are most important
Realism	Based on natural laws; objective and composed of matter	Consisting of sensation and abstraction	Absolute and eternal; based on nature's laws	To cultivate rational thought; to be a moral and spiritual leader; to be a source of authority	Exercising the mind; logical and abstract thinking are highest form	Knowledge based; subject based; arts and sciences; hierarchy of subjects: humanistic and scientific subjects
Pragmatism	Interaction of individual with environment; always changing	Based on experience; use of scientific method	Situational and relative; subject to change and verification	To cultivate critical thinking and scientific processes	Methods for dealing with changing environment and scientific explanations	No permanent knowledge or subjects; appropriate experiences that transmit culture and prepare individual for change; problem-solving topics
Existentialism	Subjective	Knowledge for personal choice	Freely chosen; based on individual's perception	To cultivate personal choice and individual self-definition	Knowledge and principles of the human condition; acts of choice making	Choices in subject matter, electives; emotional, aesthetic, and philosophical subjects

The classroom would be rich in materials that lend themselves to self-expression, and the school would be a place in which the teacher and students could pursue dialogue and discussion about their lives and choices.[18]

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

Although aspects of educational philosophy can be derived from the roots of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism, a common approach is to provide a pattern of educational philosophies. Four agreed-upon philosophies of education have emerged: Perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Each of these four philosophies of education has roots in one or more of the four major philosophical traditions. For example, perennialism draws heavily on the principles of realism; essentialism is rooted in idealism and realism; and progressivism and recontructionism stem from pragmatism. Some reconstructionism has linkages to existentialist knowing and teaching.

1. Perennialism.

Perennialism, the oldest and most conservative educational philosophy, is rooted in realism. Much of colonial and post-colonial American education, up to the late nineteenth century, was dominated by perennialist thinking. At the elementary school level, the curriculum stressed the three Rs, as well as moral and religious training; at the secondary level, it emphasized such subjects as Latin, Greek, grammar, rhetoric, logic, and geometry.

As a philosophy of education, perennialism relies on the past, especially the past asserted by agreed-upon, universal knowledge and cherished values of society. It is a plea for the permanency of knowledge that has stood the test of time and for values that have moral, spiritual, and/or physical constancies of existence. It is a view of the unchanging nature of the universe, human

nature, truth, knowledge, virtue, beauty, and so on. As Robert Hutchins, a long-time advocate of perennialism, noted: "The function of man as man is the same in every society. . . . The aim of the educational system is the same in every age and in every society where such a system can exist; it is to improve man as man."[19] With this interpretation, education becomes constant, absolute, and universal.

For perennialists, the answers to all educational questions derive from the answer to one question: What is human nature? The perennialists contend that human nature is constant. Humans have the ability to reason and to understand the universal truths of nature. The goal of education is to develop the rational person and to uncover universal truths by carefully training the intellect. Character training is also important as a means of developing one's moral and spiritual being.

The curriculum of the perennialist is subject-centered; it draws heavily on defined disciplines or logically organized bodies of content—what proponents call "liberal" education—with emphasis on language, literature, and mathematics, on the arts and sciences. The teacher is viewed as an authority in the field whose knowledge and expertise are unquestionable. The teacher, accordingly, must be a master of the subject or discipline and must be able to guide discussion. Teaching is, in fact, the art of stimulating discussion and the inherent rational powers of the students. Teaching is primarily based on the Socratic method: Oral exposition, lecture, and explication.

Students' interests are irrelevant for curriculum development because students are immature and lack the judgment to determine what are the best knowledge and values to learn. Whether the students dislike the subject matter is secondary.[20] There is only one common curriculum for all students, with little room for elective subjects, vocational, or technical subject matter.

Permanent Studies. The best way of obtaining enduring knowledge and truths to-

day, according to perennialists, is through the permanent studies that comprise our intellectual heritage. This content is embodied in what is commonly called the liberal arts, or, according to Robert Hutchins the "Great Books" of the Western world that cover the foundations of Western thought and "every department of knowledge." The approach is to read and discuss the great works of great thinkers, which, in turn, should discipline the mind and cultivate the intellect. Among the great books are the works of Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and Shakespeare.

The idea is to read these writers in their original languages, which is why students must learn Latin and Greek. In addition to the classics, and the study of language, Hutchins urges the study of the three Rs, as well as grammar, rhetoric, logic, advanced mathematics, and philosophy.[21] This is basically the curriculum of the past; it treats human nature as rational and knowledge as absolute and unchanging. For Hutchins, this type of education "develops intellectual power . . . it is not a specialized education or a pre-professional education; it is not a utilitarian education. It is an education calculated to develop the mind."[22] It is a universal, broad education that prepares the individual to think, to prepare for many possible jobs, and to deal with life and the real world. By studying the great ideas of the past, one can better cope with the future.

Paideia Proposal. A recent revival of perennialism appeared with the publication *Paideia Proposal* by Mortimer Adler. Adler developed three types of curriculum and instruction to improve the intellect: acquisition of *organized knowledge* to be taught by didactic instruction, development of basic *skills* by coaching and understanding of *ideas*, and *values* to be taught by the Socratic method.[23]

A broad liberal education is considered the best and only type of education for all students; in short, the same curriculum and quality of teaching and learning should be provided to all students. Among the subjects identified as indispensable for all students are language, literature, fine arts, mathematics, natural sciences, history, and geography. Although it emphasized fundamental subjects, the Paideia group did not consider subject matter as an end in itself but rather as the context for developing intellectual skills. Among the sought-after intellectual skills were the three Rs, speaking, listening, observing, measuring, estimating, and problem solving. Together, the fundamental subjects and intellectual skills lead to a still higher level of learning, reflection, and awareness. For Adler, like Hutchins, the purpose of education is to cultivate significant knowledge and thinking skills; the "best books"—great books, as they were called by Hutchins, are recommended by the Paideia program.

The education advocated by perennialists appeals to a small group of educators who tend to stress intellectual meritocracy. Such educators emphasize testing students, enforcing tougher academic standards and programs, and identifying gifted and talented students. Their education fosters a common curriculum, usually liberal arts, and offers little or no opportunity for students to choose electives related to their interests or goals. For the perennialists, genuine equality of education is maintained by providing quality education for all—of high intellectual fiber. To track some students into an academic curriculum and others into a vocational curriculum is to deny the latter genuine equality of educational opportunity. True equity can be satisfied only by access to quality education: A *common*, perennial curriculum.

Essentialism.

Another traditional and conservative philosophy is essentialism. This philosophy, rooted in both idealism and realism, surfaced in the 1930s as a reaction to progressivism and developed into a major position during the Cold War and the Sputnik era of the 1950s and early 1960s. The ideas of essentialism were formulated by William

Bagley of Teachers College, Columbia University, and were later developed by Arthur Bestor of the University of Illinois and Admiral Hyman Rickover.[24]

According to essentialists, the school curriculum should be geared to the fundamentals or essentials: The three Rs at the elementary school level and five academic or essential subjects—that is, English, mathematics, science, history, and foreign language—at the secondary school level. Although subject-centered like perennialism, essentialism is not rooted in the past but is more concerned with the contemporary scene. Both perennialism and essentialism reject such subjects as art, music, physical education, homemaking, and vocational education as fads and frills, and thus appeal to those who favor limiting educational expenses (because these subjects are more expensive in terms of facilities, materials, and student-teacher ratios than academic subjects). Perennialists, however, totally reject these subjects as wasteful and senseless, whereas essentialists grudgingly award half credit for these so-called minor subjects, although they do limit the number and hours that students can take them. This latter requirement tends to parallel the present secondary school curriculum.

Perennialists tend to regard the student's mind as a sponge for absorbing knowledge; essentialists, too, are concerned with facts and knowledge, but they are also interested in conceptual thought and principles and theories of subject matter. Both groups feel that all students, regardless of abilities and interests, are to be offered the same common curriculum—intellectual in content—but with the quantity and rate adjusted to the capacity of the individual learner.[25] Just how far each student should go is related to his or her specific abilities. This, in fact, was the majority view before the turn of the twentieth century, when the perennialist era introduced many viable employment opportunities—farming, manual, and, later, industrial—that did not require formal educations.

Many essentialists, like the perennialists, embrace the past mental discipline approach that the educational process should emphasize the mastery of essential skills and facts that form the basis of the subject matter. Wrote Admiral Rickover, "For all children, the educational process must be one of collecting factual knowledge to the limit of their absorptive capacity."[26] A curriculum that takes into account student interests or social issues is wasteful, as are teaching methods that rely on psychological theories. As Bestor declared, "Concern with the personal problems of adolescents has grown so excessive as to push into the background what should be the schools' central concern, the intellectual development of its students."[27] The school is viewed as being sidetracked, when, at the expense of cognitive needs, it attends to the social and psychological problems of students. (Current task force reports on academic excellence, incidentally, agree with this assessment.) Tough discipline and training, and a good deal of homework and serious studies, permeate the curriculum. As Rickover asserted: "The student must be made to work hard" at his or her studies, and "nothing can really make it fun."[28]

The role of the essentialist teacher follows the perennialist philosophy. The teacher is considered a master of a particular subject and a model worthy of emulation. A teacher is to be respected as an authority because of the knowledge and high standards he or she holds. The teacher is very much in control of the classroom, and decides on the classroom curriculum with minimal student input (because the students do not really know what they want).

Essentialism today is reflected in the public demand to raise academic standards and to improve the students' work and minds. It is evidenced in such reports as *A Nation at Risk* (and other reports on excellence discussed in Chapter 5) and in the current proposals outlined in Ernest Boyer's *High School* and Theodore Sizer's *Hornace's Compromise* (also about high school). Although current essentialist philosophy is more moderate than it was during the Sputnik era—it provides, for example, for less able students—it

still emphasizes academics (not play) and cognitive thinking (not the whole child). It is reflected in two current movements that emerged in response to the general relaxation of academic standards during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Back-to-Basics Curriculum. Automatic promotion of marginal students, the dizzy array of elective courses, and textbooks designed more to entertain than to educate are frequently cited as sources of the decline in students' basic skills. Today's concerns parallel, to some extent, those voiced immediately after the Sputnik era. The call is less for academic excellence and rigor, however, than for a return to basics. Annual Gallup polls have asked the public to suggest ways to improve education; since 1976 "devoting more attention to teaching the basics" and "improving curriculum standards" have ranked no lower than fifth in the list of responses; in the 1980s these suggestions surfaced as the number one, two, or three concern each year.[29]

By 1983, all of the states had implemented statewide testing programs for various grade levels; the tests were, in fact, mandated in twenty-seven states. In twelve states, mostly in the South, the test was required for high school graduation.[30] As an offshoot of this movement, as many as forty-four states in 1986 required beginning teachers to evidence minimum competencies in basic skills (spelling, grammar, mathematics), academic knowledge (English, social studies, science, mathematics, arts, etc.) and/or pedagogical practices.[31]

Although the back-to-basics movement means different things to different people, it usually connotes an essentialist curriculum with heavy emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics. So-called solid subjects—English, history, science, and mathematics—are taught in all grades. English means traditional grammar, not linguistics or nonstandard English; it means Shakespeare and not Lolita. History means U.S. and European history, and perhaps Asian and African history, but not Afro-American history or ethnic studies. Science means biology, chemistry, and physics, not ecology. Math means old math, not new math. Furthermore, these subjects are required for everyone. Elective courses, minicourses, even the integrated social science and general science courses, are considered too "soft."

Proponents of the movement are concerned that too many illiterate students are passed from grade to grade and eventually graduate, that high school and college diplomas are meaningless as measures of academic performance, that minimum standards must be established, and that the basic skills and subjects are essential for employment and self-survival in modern society. Some of these advocates are college educators who would do away with open admissions, credit for life experiences or for remedial courses, and grade inflation. They would simply insist on reasonable high school and college standards, and they would use tests (a "dirty" word for some educators) to monitor educational standards over time and to pressure students, teachers, and parents to perform their responsibilities.[32]

Although the movement is spreading, and state legislators and the public seem convinced of the need for minimum standards, some unanswered questions remain: What standards should be considered minimum? What do we do with students who fail to meet these standards? Are we punishing the victims for the schools' inability to educate them? How will the courts and then the school districts deal with the fact that proportionately more minority than white students fail the competency tests in nearly every case? Is the issue minimum competency or equal educational opportunity? And, when all is said and done, are we not, educationally speaking, reinventing the academic wheel?

Excellence in Education. A spin-off to the back-to-basics movement is the demand, in the 1980s, for educational excellence and tougher academics. This trend is also in

tune with the past Cold War-Sputnik era, when essentialists exerted a considerable influence on the school curriculum; today, it coincides with a broader theme of not only military defense but also technology and economic competition. The dimensions of the problem of academic quality are amply documented in several policy reports on academic excellence—the best known is *A Nation at Risk*, released in the mid-1980s—all calling for reform to improve the quality of education in the United States and emphasizing international "competition" and "survival"—themes reminiscent of the post-Sputnik era as well.[33]

Overall, the trend is for higher achievement (not just minimum competency) for all children (not just college-bound students) in the academic areas, which means that we need to stress cognitive achievement (not the whole child) and rigorous grading, testing, and discipline (not relaxed standards). The emphasis is on higher standards for passing courses and meeting graduation requirements.

For some this approach means more than emphasizing the basic ability to think, reason, and problem solve: It means promoting such serious subjects as calculus, physics, and advanced foreign languages at the high school level; it means upgrading our definition of basic skills to include advanced skills and knowledge, including computer skills as the fourth R—which are required for tomorrow's technological world. Stress is on increasing the time and improving the quality of instruction, upgrading our teachers and schools, and analyzing education in terms of *inputs* (improving the resources that go into the educational enterprise), *throughputs* (improving the allocation and use of resources), and *outputs* (raising expectations and standards for those who benefit from the resources). Unquestionably, the emphasis is on productivity. Moreover, the health and vitality of our country's economy and political position are linked to strengthening our educational institutions.[34]

Others allow wider latitude in defining excellence and permit various models or cri-

teria of excellence. Some criticize the overemphasis on logical, mathematical, and scientific excellence in the schools, and the consequent underemphasis or ignoring of other conceptions of excellence—linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal areas.[35] Some are also concerned that equity and equality will be shoved under the rug, with too much stress on cognitive excellence—a return to a post-Sputnik-type emphasis on academically talented students but not high school dropouts.[36] Some fear that this emphasis on excellence will lead to disappointment; they say it is wrong to assume that increased testing and more course requirements will automatically raise the level of student performance. Students, teachers, and parents must also be motivated, and technical and financial support at the school and school district level must be evidenced.

In any event, the general theme of this movement is excellence, not adequacy, and many forms of it. The focus is on productivity, increased testing, more homework, better selection of textbooks, and more competent personnel. Both educators and the public agree that students must not only master basic or prerequisite skills, but they must also excel, think creatively, solve problems, and develop their fullest human potential. Finally, the public even seems willing to spend increased monies for real school reform and for upgraded curricula.

Progressivism.

Progressivism developed from pragmatic philosophy and as a protest against perennialist thinking in education. The progressive movement in education was also part of the larger social and political movement of reform that characterized much of American society at the turn of the twentieth century. It grew out of the political thought of such progressives as Robert La-Follette, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, as well as from the muckraker movement of the 1920s.[37] Progressivism is considered a contemporary reform move-

ment in educational, social, and political affairs.

The educational roots of progressivism can be traced to the reform writings of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard of the nineteenth century, and later to the work of John Dewey in the early twentieth century.[38] In his most comprehensive work, *Democracy and Education,* Dewey claimed that democracy and education went hand in hand; democratic society and democratic education are participatory and emergent, not preparatory and absolute. Dewey viewed the school as a miniature democratic society, in which students could learn and practice the skills and tools necessary for democratic living.[39]

According to progressivist thought, the skills and tools of learning include problem-solving methods and scientific inquiry; in addition, learning experiences should include cooperative behaviors and self-discipline, both of which are important for democratic living. Through these skills and experiences the school can transmit the culture of society while it prepares the students for a changing world. Because reality is constantly changing, Dewey saw little need to focus upon a fixed body of knowledge, as did the perennialists and essentialists. Progressivism, instead, placed heavy emphasis on *how* to think, not *what* to think. Traditional education, with its "method of imposition from the side of the teacher and reception, [and] absorption from the side of the pupil," wrote Dewey, "may be compared to inscribing records upon a passive phonographic disc to result in giving back what has been inscribed when the proper button is pressed in recitation or examination."[40]

For Dewey and other progressivist thinkers, the curriculum was interdisciplinary in nature, and books and subject matter were part of the learning process rather than sources of ultimate knowledge. The role of the teacher was unique when operating under progressive thinking. The teacher served as a guide for students in their problem-solving and scientific projects. Dewey and William Kilpatrick both referred to this role as the "leader of group activities." The teacher and students planned activities together (although Dewey later affirmed that the final authority rested with the teacher), but the teacher was to help students locate, analyze, interpret, and evaluate data—to formulate their own conclusions.[41]

The progressive movement became splintered by several different wings, including the child-centered, activity-centered, creative, and neo-Freudian groups. Dewey criticized these groups for misinterpreting and misusing his ideas. Just as he condemned the old philosophies that pursued knowledge for its own sake, he attacked those who thought knowledge had little or no value. Not only did he attack "traditional ideas as erecting silence as a virtue," he also criticized those who sought to liberate the child from adult authority and social controls. He declared "progressive extremists" and "laissez-faire" philosophies to be destructive to the ideas of progressivism, and he warned that "any movement that thinks and acts in terms of an ism becomes so involved in reaction against other isms that it is unwittingly controlled by them."[42]

Dewey was not alone in his criticism of progressive educators. As criticisms mounted, Boyd Bode, another leading proponent of progressivism, warned his associates of the impending crisis in a book entitled *Progressive Education at the Crossroads.*[43] He cautioned that "progressive education stands at the parting of the ways." The movement "nurtured the pathetic hope that it could find out how to educate by relying on such notions as interests, needs, growth and freedom." In its social and psychological approach to learning, in its "one-sided devotion to the child, it betrayed the child," and deprived him or her of appropriate subject matter. If progressivism continued its present course without changing its focus, "it would be circumvented and left behind."[44] Bode's words proved prophetic. More and more, progressivists responded to the growing criticism and self-justifying theories and educational ideas that involved trivialities and errors.

Although the progressive movement in

education encompassed many different theories and practices, it was united in its opposition to certain traditional school practices: (1) the authoritarian teacher; (2) excessive reliance on textbook methods; (3) memorization of factual data and techniques by drill; (4) static aims and materials that reject the notion of a changing world; (5) use of fear or corporal punishment as a form of discipline; and (6) attempts to isolate education from individual experiences and social reality. However, the movement's inability to outline a uniform theory of the purpose of schooling, or even to establish a set of principles, contributed to its downfall.[45]

Progressive education was both a movement within the broad framework of American education and a theory that urged the liberation of the child from the traditional emphasis on rote learning, lesson recitations, and textbook authority. In opposition to the conventional subject matter of the traditional curriculum, progressives experimented with alternative modes of curricular organization—utilizing activities, experiences, problem solving, and the project method. Progressive education focused on the child as the learner rather than on the subject; emphasized activities and experiences rather than verbal and literary skills; and encouraged cooperative group-learning activities rather than competitive individualized lesson learning. The use of democratic school procedures was considered a prelude to community and social reform. Progressivism also cultivated a cultural relativism that critically appraised and often rejected traditional value commitments.

Although the major thrust of progressive education waned in the 1940s and 1950s, with the advent of essentialism, the philosophy did leave its imprint on education and the schools of today. Contemporary progressivism is expressed in several movements, including those for a relevant curriculum, humanistic education, and radical school reform.

Relevant Curriculum. As part of the student protest movement of the 1960s, students demanded relevant educations. The subject-centered curriculum of the essentialists was considered irrelevant to social reality. The shift was part of the progressive legacy. Learners must be motivated and interested in the learning task, and the classroom should build on real-life experiences.

The call for relevance came, in fact, from both students and educators. Proponents who advocate this approach see as needs: (1) the individualization of instruction through such teaching methods as independent study and special projects; (2) the revision of existing courses and development of new ones on such topics of student concern as environmental protection, drug addiction, urban problems, and so on; (3) the provision of educational alternatives, such as electives, minicourses, and open classrooms, that allow more freedom and choice; (4) the extension of the curriculum beyond the school's walls through such innovations as work-study programs, credit for life experiences, off-campus courses, and external degree programs; and (5) the relaxation of academic standards and admission standards to schools and colleges.[46]

Efforts to relate subject matter to student interests have been largely ad hoc, and many were fragmented and temporary, a source of concern to proponents and critics of relevance. In other cases, changes made in the name of relevance have in fact watered down the curriculum, and have led to lack of direction and focus.

Humanistic Curriculum. The humanistic curriculum education also began as a reaction to what was viewed as an overemphasis on subject matter and cognitive learning in the 1960s and 1970s. In his best-selling book, *Crisis in the Classroom,* Charles Silberman advocated humanizing American schools.[47] He charged that schools are repressive, and that they teach students docility and conformity. He believed that schools must be reformed, even at the price of deemphasizing cognitive learning and student discipline. He suggested that elementary schools adopt the methods of the British in-

fant schools. At the secondary level, he suggested independent study, peer tutoring, and community and work experiences.

The humanistic model of education stems from the human potential movement in psychology. Within education it is rooted in the work of Arthur Jersild, who linked good teaching with knowledge of self and students, and in the work of Arthur Combs and Donald Snygg, who explored the impact of self-concept and motivation on achievement.[48] Combs and Snygg considered self-concept the most important determinant of behavior.

A humanistic curriculum emphasizes affective rather than cognitive outcomes. Such a curriculum draws heavily on the works of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.[49] Its goal is to produce "self-actualizing people," in Maslow's words, or "total human beings," in Rogers's. The works of both psychologists are laced with such terms as maintaining, striving, enhancing, and experiencing—as well as independence, self-determination, integration, and self-actualization.

Advocates of humanistic education contend that the present school curriculum has failed miserably by humanistic standards, that teachers and schools are determined to stress cognitive behaviors and to control students *not* for their own good but for the good of adults.[50] Humanists emphasize more than affective processes; they seek higher domains of consciousness. But they see the schools as unconcerned about higher planes of understanding, enhancement of the mind, or self-knowledge. Students must therefore turn to such out-of-school activities as drugs, yoga, transcendental meditation, group encounters, T-groups, psychotherapy, and sexual therapy.

But such activities lead many observers to put down the humanistic movement. Mario Fantini, an advocate of humanistic education, warns that too many Americans view the humanistic approach negatively. They are suspicious of what appears to be bizarre procedures and touch-feel-sexual experiences. "In certain professional circles, the movement is . . . referred to as the 'touch-feeling crowd,' connoting an almost illegitimate status among the established disciplines."[51]

Humanists would attempt to form more meaningful relationships between students and teachers; they would foster student independence and self-direction, and they would promote greater acceptance of self and others. The teacher's role would be to help learners cope with their psychological needs and problems, to facilitate self-understanding among students, and to help them develop fully.

A drawback to humanist theory is its lack of attention to cognitive learning and intellectual development. When asked to judge the effectiveness of their curriculum, humanists generally rely on testimonials and subjective assessments by students and teachers. They may also present such materials as students' paintings and poems or talk about "marked improvement" in student behavior and attitudes. They present very little empirical evidence, however, to support their stance.

Radical School Reform. During the late 1960s and 1970s intense attacks were leveled on teachers and schools by radical critics of education, sometimes called "radical romanticists" or "neoprogressives." The criticisms were widely published in the mass media, especially in magazines that politically liberal and college-educated adults read (*Atlantic*, *Harpers*, *New Republic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Saturday Review*). These radicals also published many popular books on their views; in fact, they were superverbalizers who enchanted their readers.[52]

Among the most prominent wave of radicals are John Holt, Paul Goodman, Edgar Friedenberg, A. S. Neill, and Ivan Illich. They expressed considerable disdain toward established methods of schooling, compulsory schooling, adult authority, and school rules. They referred to students as prisoners, to teachers as prison guards (who disliked their students), and to schools as prisons (which keep youths locked up, re-

stricted from free expression and democratic procedures). In general, school is considered to be a highly discriminatory place that sorts and tracks students for various jobs that extend class differences in society.

In particular, Friedenberg argued that teachers "dislike and distrust" the students they teach, and that they "fear being involved with young people in any situation that is not under their complete control." Teachers have a "repressed hostility toward their students" and "resentment," a kind of ill temper, suppressed anger, and jealousy because of students' youthful energy and freedom.[53]

Holt's book, *How Children Fail*, is his most influential text.[54] There is nothing positive in it about teachers or the school processes; it deals instead with how teachers and schools turn off students. Holt describes the conventions of the classroom: Teachers' enforcing rigid rules and children's focusing on right answers, learning to be stupid, and learning not to learn. He goes into great detail about how children adopt strategies of fear and failure to please their teachers. The "successful" students become cunning strategists in a game of beating the system—figuring out how to outsmart the teacher, how to get the answer out of the teacher, or how to fake the answer.

Paul Goodman's thesis is that our society is sick and full of spurious and false values that have produced sick schools. He contends that schools have little to do with education; they provide jobs for millions of people and a market for textbook companies, building contractors, and graduates of schools of education. In the early grades, the schools provide "a baby-sitting service" for the parents and keep kids off the street. In the junior and senior years, "they are the arm of the police, providing cops and concentration camps paid for in the budget under the heading of 'Board of Education.'" From kindergarten to college, schools teach youth to adjust to a sick society and provide "a universal trap [in which] democracy begins to look like regimentation."[55] Goodman's solution is to do away with compulsory education, to which he refers as "miseducation" and to "drastically cut back formal schooling because the present extended tutelage is against nature and arrests growth."[56]

A. S. Neill, the fourth member of the earlier generation of romantic progressivists, recounts the way he operated his school, "Summerhill," in Suffolk, England. He wrote about the innate goodness of the child, and about the replacement of authority for freedom against which Dewey warned:

... we set out to make a school in which we should allow children to be themselves. In order to do this, we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training. . . . All it required was what we had—a complete belief in the child as a good, not an evil being. For almost forty years, this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; it rather has become a final faith.[37]

Neill claimed that the "child is innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestions of any kind," he will develop on his own. Those "who are to become scholars will be scholars," and those "who are only fit to sweep the streets will sweep streets."[58] Neill is not concerned with formal teaching or instruction; he does not believe in examinations or in homework. Those who want to study will study, and those who prefer not to study will not—regardless of how teachers teach or what they say. If a child wants to go to class, great; if not, so what? Neill's criteria for success have nothing to do with school or economic outcomes; rather they relate to the ability to "work joyfully" and "live positively." Following these guidelines, most of the students who attend Summerhill allegedly turn out to be successful in life.

At Summerhill, a 6-year old has the same rights and same voting privileges as a teacher: One person, one vote. A child who breaks a window will come to Neill and tell the truth, we are told, because at Summerhill there is no fear—basically joy. In other schools, "discipline is used as a weapon

of hate and obedience becomes a virtue." But at Summerhill, things are different; "classrooms are happy places."[59] What Summerhill provides is an alternative method of schooling that is highly child-centered and that places little emphasis on academic subjects or cognitive achievement. The school is, however, a private, middle- and upper-middle-class one with a small enrollment that rarely exceeds sixty students.

Ivan Illich, another radical critic, goes beyond his contemporaries in his plans for remaking schools. He argues for a new society that requires the prior deschooling of society.[60] In this sense Illich may also be a reconstructionist philosopher. Although the other radical critics are very angry and see little possibility of school reform, given the present educational process, Illich, who completely rejects school as a viable agency, is the center of controversy. His criticism of current schools is that they are coercive, discriminatory, and destructive toward their clients. If schools were eliminated, education could be open to all and could become a genuine instrument of human liberation: Learners would no longer have an obligatory curriculum imposed upon them; they would be liberated from institutional and capitalistic indoctrination. There would no longer be discrimination and a class society based on possession of a certificate.

In lieu of school, Illich recommends small learning networks characterized by the following: *Educational objects*—that is, shops, libraries, museums, art galleries, and so on—that are open to learners; *peer matching*—that is, identifying and bringing together students who wish to engage in a particular learning activity; *skill exchanges*—that is, exchanges between those who are competent in a particular skill, and who wish to teach it, and those who wish to learn it; and *educators-at-large*—that is, counselors who serve as advisors to students and parents and intellectual initiators and administrators who operate the networks.

Even though Illich is considered a neo-Marxist educator, he has stimulated large numbers of disciples to further the idea of deschooling, and a good deal of radical reform literature related to the political and economic concept of educational "revisionism."[61]

Reconstructionism.

Although the reconstructionist philosophy itself is based on early utopian ideas, the Great Depression of the 1930s stimulated a demand for social reconstructionism. The progressive educational movement was at its height in popularity then, but a small yet significant group of progressive educators still became disillusioned with American society and impatient for reform. This group argued that progressivism put too much emphasis on child-centered education that mainly served the individual child and the middle class, with its play theories and private schools. What was needed was more emphasis on society-centered education that took into consideration the needs of society (not the individual) and all classes (not only the middle class).

At the 1932 annual meeting of the Progressive Education Association, George Counts called for progressive educators to address the great social and economic issues of the day, to forge a new social reform platform, and to create a new vision of society and of the future. In his speech, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order?" (which was later published as a book), Counts suggested that the school lead society to realize democratic values, that it become the agent of change and institution for social reform. In a rhetorical and highly charged statement, Counts stunned his progressive colleagues with the following statement:

The weakness of Progressive Education thus lies in the fact that it has elaborated no theory of social welfare, unless it be that of anarchy or extreme individualism. . . . If Progressive Education is to be genuinely progressive, it must . . . face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny, and become less fright-

ened than it is today at the bogeys of *imposition* and *indoctrination*.[62]

The social issues of the 1930s, according to Counts, involved racial and class discrimination, poverty, and unemployment—and progressive education had ignored these issues. The social issues today are similar, although the list is larger: racial, ethnic, and sexual inequality; poverty, unemployment, and welfare; computers and technology; political oppression and war; the threat of nuclear disaster; environmental pollution; disease; hunger; and depletion of the earth's resources.

Theodore Brameld, who is often considered the originator of the term reconstructionism in 1950 (actually Dewey coined the term),[63] has asserted that reconstructionism is a crisis philosophy, appropriate for a society in crisis, which is the essence of our society and international society today.[64] According to Brameld, students and teachers must not only take positions; they must also become change agents to improve society. Neutrality in the classrooms or schools, that in which we often engage under the guise of objective and scientific inquiry, is not appropriate for the democratic process. Writes Brameld, "Teachers and students have a right to take sides, to stand up for the best reasoned and informed partialities they can reach as a result of free, meticulous examination and communication of all relevant evidence."[65] In particular, teachers must measure up to their social responsibilities. Brameld goes on:

In this vast, rumbling, clumsy infinitely powerful mass of hundreds of millions of human beings lies the great reservoir of strength for tomorrow's education. Here, indeed, is the fountainhead of all other utopian potentials presently emerging. The immediate task before the [teaching] profession is to draw upon this strength and thus to strengthen control of the schools by and for the goal-seeking interests of the overwhelming majority of mankind.[66]

As for the curriculum, it had to be transformed to coincide with a new social-economic-political education; it had, in other words, to incorporate realistic reform strategies. For reconstructionists, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of problems are insufficient; commitment and action by students and teachers are needed. Society is always changing, and the curriculum has to change; students and teachers must be change agents. A curriculum based on social issues and social services is ideal.

The reconstructionists, including such recent proponents as Mario Fantini, Harold Shane, and Alvin Toffler, seek a curriculum that emphasizes cultural pluralism, internationalism, and futurism.[67] Students are taught to appreciate life in a world of many nations—a global village—with many alternatives for the future. A reconstructionist program of education: (1) critically examines the cultural heritage of a society as well as the entire civilization; (2) is not afraid to examine controversial issues; (3) is deliberately committed to bring about social and constructive change; (4) cultivates a future planning attitude that considers the realities of the world; and (5) enlists students and teachers in a definite program to enhance cultural renewal and interculturalism. In such a program, teachers are considered the prime agents of social change, cultural renewal, and internationalism. Teachers are organized not to strengthen their own professional security, but rather to encourage widespread experimentation in the schools and to challenge the outdated structures of society. They are considered to be the vanguard for a new social order—somewhat utopian in nature.

Reconceptualists. The reconceptualists have criticized the majority of curricularists as exemplifying a lock-step, means-ends approach, based on technocratic and bureaucratic school models that are not sensitive to the inner feelings and experiences of people. The majority of curricularists, in turn, have claimed that the reconceptualists are unable to quantify or verify the components of their curriculum and are unclear about their philosophical and methodological tools. Most peo-

ple in the field, representing a conservative outlook, believe that the empirical-analytical and scientific approaches contribute the most to the field of curriculum; nonetheless, the reconceptualists's approach is enriching and introduces aesthetic, existentialist, and social science procedures previously not deemed appropriate.

Reconceptualists have expanded the field to include other dimensions of curriculum, including intuitive, personal, mystical, linguistic, political, and social systems of theorizing. They stress broad problems and issues—and they attempt to reflect, refine, rethink, reinterpret, and reconceptualize the field of curriculum. It is doubtful, however, that reconceptualists really reinterpret or reconceptualize anything. They are basically socially sensitive and politically concerned intellectuals who reflect and refine important issues that have philosophical, psychological, social, political, and economic implications. Unfortunately for the field of curriculum, they have been labeled reconceptualists.[68]

Reconceptualists accept many aspects of progressive philosophy, including learner-centered, relevant, humanistic, and radical school-reform models. However, they reiterate and detail a bit more of the dynamic, holistic, transcendental, linguistic, and artistic meaning of teaching and learning. They are more concerned with personal self-knowledge, inner self, personal reflection, psychologies of consciousness, and spiritual and moral introspection. They contend there is more to knowledge and knowing than empirical or even logical, verifiable data. Expanded ideas of inner consciousness, "third force" or humanistic psychology, and existentialist ideas serve as the foundations for their views.

Content and experiences that emphasize language and communication skills, personal biographies, art, poetry, dance, drama, literature, psychology, ethics, religion, and other aesthetic, humanistic, and spiritual subject matter comprise a good part of the reconstructionist curriculum—subjects not part of the normal curriculum or certainly not the major foci. Maxine Greene advocates this curriculum, which she calls "personal expression," "intellectual consciousness," and "reflective self-consciousness."[69] Paulo Freire refers to this as a curriculum of "human phenomenon," "problematic situations," and "background awareness" that has the potential "to transform the world."[70] According to William Pinar, this subject matter deals with "personal becoming," "autonomy," the "soul" and "heart," "affiliative needs," "mature personality," "trust" and "love," "self-direction," "sensitivity," and "enjoyment"[71]—that is, psychological, philosophical, spiritual, and existentialist attitudes and behaviors.

Reconceputualists are also concerned with social, political, and economic ideas and ideology, and in this context reflect reconstructionist philosophy. Many of their ideas, rooted in the school of Dewey, Counts, and Rugg, deal with inequities and/or conflict concerned with socioeconomic relationships, sexual and racial roles and attitudes, the relationship between labor and capital, and the consequences of political power. Reconceptualists are also concerned with current technocratic and bureaucratic systems that dominate the individual, and that reduce the person to a powerless and manipulated cog. They envision schools as an oppressive instrument of society that controls and coerces, even oppresses, students through various customs and mores and teaching-learning practices.

Some reconceptualists have been labeled neo-Marxists. Michael Apple, for one, has tried to highlight the relationship between what he perceives to be political, economic, and cultural domination of the individual in relation to schools and society. Such domination "is vested in the constitutive principles, codes, and especially the common sense consciousness and practices underlying our lives, as well as by overt division and manipulation."[72] In other words, the everyday structures and institutions of our society, including schools, convey meaning and conditions that shape our lives and that take control over us; the dominant social, politi-

cal, and economic system pervades in all critical aspects of the curriculum.

Elsewhere, Apple points out that just as there is "unequal distribution of economic capital in society, so, too is there a similar system of distribution surrounding cultural capital." In technological societies, schools become "distributors of this cultural capital."[73] They play a major role in distributing various forms of knowledge, which in turn leads to power and control over others.

Both Illich and Freire contend that the larger system is oppressive and in need of major overhaul. Illich, who is also considered to be a radical critic, outlines a curriculum that is less institutionalized, formal, and discriminatory for purposes of "emancipation." He relies on a "grass-roots" curriculum that seeks to engage students, teachers, and community members.[74] Freire develops a "pedagogy for the oppressed" for students and the poor, and describes how people can move through different stages to ultimately be able to take action and overcome oppression. To effect major change, at what Freire calls the "critical transforming stage," people must become active participants in changing their own status through social action that aims at changing the larger social order. Freire calls for a dialogue or match between students and adults who are sensitive to change. The curriculum is to focus on community, national, and world problems—and is to be based on a core or interdisciplinary approach.[75]

In general, the curriculum advocated by this wing of reconceptualists emphasizes the social sciences—history, political science, economics, sociology, and some psychology and philosophy—and not the hard sciences. The thrust is to develop individual self-realization and freedom through cognitive and intellectual activities, and then to liberate people from the restrictions, limitations, and controls of society. The idea is to move from knowledge to activity, from reflections to action. The curriculum attempts to create new conditions and environments that improve the human condition and the institutions of society. It is, according to James

Macdonald, "a form of 'utopianism,' a form of political and social philosophizing."[76] All the oppressed—youth, poor, minorities, women, and so on—are considered agents for change. The model, in essence, is an updated version of old reconstructionism, which viewed students and teachers as agents of change. In the new version, reconceptualism, the teacher is often construed as an agent of oppression, representative of the larger and coercive society.

Equality of Educational Opportunity.

No country has taken the idea of equality more seriously than ours. Politically, the idea is rooted in our Constitution—written more than 150 years prior to the emergence of reconstructionism as a philosophy. The origins of American public schools are also dominated by the concept of equal opportunity, and the notion of universal, free education. The rise of the "common school" was spearheaded by Horace Mann who asserted, "Education beyond all other devices of human origin is the greatest equalizer of the condition of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery."[77]

Equality of opportunity in this context would not lead to equality of outcomes; this concept did not attempt a classless society. As David Tyack wrote, "For the most part, working men did not seek to pull down the rich; rather they sought equality of opportunity for their children, an equal chance at the main chance."[78] Equality of opportunity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant an equal start for all children, but the assumption was that some would go farther than others. Differences in backgrounds and abilities, as well as motivation and luck, would create differences in outcomes among individuals, but the school would assure that children born into any class would have the opportunity to achieve status as persons born into other classes. Implicit in this view was that the "schools represented the means of achieving the goal . . . of equal chances of success" relative to all children in all stratum.[79]

In retrospect, the schools did not fully

achieve this goal, according to some observers, because school achievement and economic outcomes are highly related to social class and family background.[80] Had the schools not existed, however, social mobility would have been further reduced. The failure of the common school to achieve social mobility raises the question of the role of school in achieving equality—and the question of just what the school can and cannot do to affect cognitive and economic outcomes.

The modern view of educational equality, which emerged in the 1950s through the 1970s, goes much further than the old view. In light of this, James Coleman has outlined five views of inequality of educational opportunity, the latter four of which parallel reconstructionist philosophy: (1) inequality defined by the same curriculum for all children, with the intent that school facilities be equal; (2) inequality defined in terms of the racial composition of the schools; (3) inequality defined in terms of such intangible characteristic as teacher morale and teacher expectations of students; (4) inequality based on school consequences or outcomes for students with equal backgrounds and abilities; and (5) inequality based on school consequences for students with unequal backgrounds and abilities.[81]

The first two definitions deal with race and social class; the next definition deals with concepts that are hard to define in terms of relevancy and starting and stopping points; the fourth definition deals with school expenditures and school finances. The fifth definition is an extreme interpretation: Equality is reached only when the outcomes of schooling are similar for all students—those in minority as well as dominant student groups.

When inequality is defined, in terms of equal outcomes (both cognitive and economic), we start comparing racial, ethnic, and religious groups. In a heterogeneous society like ours, this results in some hot issues—including how much to invest in human capital, how to determine the cost-effectiveness of social and educational programs, who should be taxed and how much, to what extent are we to handicap our brightest and most talented minds (the swift racers) to enable those who are slow to finish at the same time, and whether affirmative action policies lead to reverse discrimination.[82] Indeed we cannot treat these issues lightly, because they affect most of us in one way or another and lead to questions over which wars have been fought.

All these issues involve balancing acts, and what effect these balancing acts have on individuals, groups, and society. Many reconstructionists—not to mention perennialists and essentialists, who have their own ideas about excellence in education—have problems with these issues. Many of us are unable to agree on what is equitable and just, and how much we can stretch the embodiment of reform ideas or the fiber of society. Too much egalitarianism can lead to mediocrity, indifference, and economic decline within society. On the other hand, excellence carried too far can create wide social and economic gaps, hostilities among groups, and a stratified society. The idea is to search for the golden mean.

In his classic text on excellence and equality John Gardner describes the dilemma vividly:

We might as well admit that it is not easy for us as believers in democracy to dwell on the differences in capacity between men. Democratic philosophy has tended to ignore such differences where possible, and to belittle them where it could not ignore them. . . .

Extreme equalitarianism—or what I would prefer to say *equalitarianism wrongly conceived*—which ignores differences in native capacity and achievement, has not served democracy well. Carried far enough, it means . . . the end of that striving for excellence which has produced mankind's greatest achievements.

. . . no democracy can give itself over to extreme emphasis on individual performance and still remain a democracy—or to extreme equalitarianism and retain its vitality. A society such as ours has no choice but to seek the development of human potentialities at all levels. It takes more than educated elite to run a complex, tech-

TABLE 2-2 Overview of Educational Philosophies

Educational Philosophy	Philosophical Base	Aim of Education	Knowledge	Role of Education	Curriculum Focus	Related Curriculum Trends
Perennialism	Realism	To educate the rational person; to cultivate the intellect	Focus on past and permanent studies; mastery of facts and timeless knowledge	Teacher helps students think rationally; based on Socratic method, oral exposition; explicit teaching of traditional values	Classical subjects; literary analysis; constant curriculum	Great books; Paideia Proposal
Essentialism	Idealism, Realism	To promote the intellectual growth of the individual; to educate the competent person	Essential skills and academic subjects; mastery of concepts and principles of subject matter	Teacher is authority in his or her subject field; explicit teaching of traditional values	Essential skills (three Rs) and essential subjects (English, science, history, math, and foreign language)	Back to basics; excellence in education
Progressivism	Pragmatism	To promote democratic, social living	Knowledge leads to growth and development; a living-learning process; focus on active and relevant learning	Teacher is a guide for problem solving and scientific inquiry	Based on students' interests; involves the application of human problems and affairs; interdisciplinary subject matter; activities and projects	Relevant curriculum; humanistic education; radical school reform
Reconstructionism	Pragmatism	To improve and reconstruct society; education for change and social reform	Skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate problems of society; learning is active and concerned with contemporary and future society	Teacher serves as an agent of change and reform; acts as a project director and research leader; helps students become aware of problems confronting humankind	Emphasis on social sciences and social research methods; examination of social, economic, and political problems; focus on present and future trends as well as on national and international issues	Reconceptualism; equality of educational opportunity

47

nological society. Every modern industrialized society is learning that hard lesson.[83]

The issues that Gardner raised directly affected the social fabric of the country, and have echoed loudly in the past twenty-five years. They have given rise to educational equality and equal opportunity legislation that has permeated many aspects of school and society. The reconstructionists, among other educators, have raised many of the same issues, including school desegregation, compensatory education, multicultural education, handicapped education, more effective schooling, and affirmative action (who goes to college, who gets what jobs, and who manages society). These issues have no easy answers, and they will continue to plague us in the 1990s.

CONCLUSION

Philosophy gives meaning to our decisions and actions. In the absence of a philosophy, the educator is vulnerable to externally imposed prescriptions, to fads and frills, to authoritarian schemes, and to other "isms." Dewey was so convinced of the importance of philosophy that he viewed it as the all-encompassing aspect of the educational process—as necessary for "forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow man."[84] If one accepts this conclusion, it becomes evident that many aspects of curriculum, if not most of the educational process in school, is developed around philosophy. Even if we believe that Dewey's point is an overstatement, we should still recognize the pervasiveness of philosophy in determining our views of reality, what values and knowledge are worthwhile, and decisions in education in general and curriculum making in particular.

Major philosophical viewpoints that have emerged within the curriculum field may be viewed along a continuum—traditional and conservative versus contemporary and liberal—idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. These general or world philosophies have influenced educational philosophies, sometimes called educational theories or views,[85] along the same continuum: Perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Very few schools adopt a single philosophy; in practice, most schools combine various philosophies. Moreover, our position is that no single philosophy, old or new, should serve as the exclusive guide for making decisions about schools or about the curriculum. All philosophical groups (outlined in this chapter) want the same thing of education—that is, they wish to improve the educational process, to enhance the achievement of the learner, to produce better and more productive citizens, and to improve society. Because of their different views of reality, values, and knowledge, however, they find it difficult to agree on *how* to achieve these ends.

What we need to do, as curricularists, is to search for the middle road, a highly elusive and abstract concept, where there is no extreme emphasis on subject matter or student; cognitive development or sociopsychological development; excellence or equality. What we need is a prudent school philosophy, one that is politically and economically feasible, and that serves the needs of students and society. Implicit in this view of education is that too much emphasis on any one philosophy, sometimes at the expense of another, may do harm and cause conflict. How much we emphasize one philosophy, under the guise of reform or for whatever reason, is critical because no one society can give itself over to extreme "isms" or political views and still remain a democracy. The kind of society into which we evolve is in part reflected in our educational system, which is influenced by the philosophy that we eventually define and develop.

In the final analysis, curriculum workers must understand that they are continuously faced with curriculum decisions, and that philosophy is important in determining these decisions. Unfortunately, few school people test their notions of curriculum

against the school's statement of philosophy. It is not uncommon to find teachers and administrators developing elaborate lists of behavioral objectives with little or no consideration to the overall philosophy of the school.[86] Curriculum workers need to provide assistance in developing and designing school practices that coincide with the philosophy of the school and community. Teaching, learning, and curriculum are all interwoven in our school practices and should reflect a school philosophy. It is important, then, for school people, especially curricularists, to make decisions and take action in relation to the philosophy of their school and community.

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