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AERA-SIG Curriculum Newsletter

American Educational Research Association

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Most of this issue is devoted to Edmund Short's invaluable bibliography (Appendix A) of SIG-Related Studies. I was especially interested to see references to articles in Phenomenology and Pedagogy, the new journal being edited by Max Van Manen at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Did you fill out Peter Pereira's little questionnaire on AERA membership? If not, please do so as quickly as possible.

The newsletter relies on members' contributions. Please send your articles, notes or reviews to me at this address:

Department of Curriculum Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada  S7N 0W0

Finally, let me reiterate the disclaimer that this newsletter is not an official AERA publication.

Alan Ryan
THE NEWSLETTER MOVES NORTH!

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GREETINGS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN!

Naomi Herkom, Dean
College of Education

I am pleased that Alan Ryan and I will be playing a supporting role in the affairs of the Curriculum and Knowledge Utilization SIG as editors of the Newsletter for 1984-85. My own membership dates from the time the SIG was organized by Edmund Short and others after some rather memorable AGRA sessions, and I have watched with much interest the ways the SIG has persisted in its efforts to promote curriculum research and the dissemination of curricular knowledge over the years.

Unlike Alan, who is actively engaged in teaching and research activities in curriculum studies, I now find myself more often engaged in what might be termed curriculum activity. In this issue we have included a description of the Curriculum and Instruction Review undertaken recently in the Province of Saskatchewan. We hope that it will help to acquaint you with our part of Canada and the context within which we are working. My own membership on that Review Committee gave me many opportunities to observe the reality of a curriculum world from the inside and to assess the outworking of curriculum knowledge as it is translated into policy decisions and guidelines for practice. We hope that the brief account of a Saskatchewan approach to curriculum change in 1984 will also help to introduce us to you.

SASKATCHEWAN'S CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION REVIEW

by Alan Ryan
Department of Curriculum Studies
University of Saskatchewan

The Province of Saskatchewan is almost the size of Texas and yet is home for only a million people. During the years of high immigration it was settled mainly by farmers, hardy folk who were willing to survive the extremes of climate in order to build a new life for themselves and their families. The sparse population, the harsh weather, and the sense of being strangers in a strange land, gave rise to a social fabric that derived its maintenance from cooperation among groups.

With its emphasis on shared responsibility and the individual's duty to work towards improving the lot of the group, this spirit of cooperation (although diluted today by improvements in communication and an easier lifestyle) still influences the politics and social life in this part of the world. As a recent immigrant to Saskatchewan, I found it one of the qualities which marked the province as a different sort of place to live.

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With its emphasis on shared responsibility and the individual’s duty to work towards improving the lot of the group, this spirit of cooperation (although diluted today by improvements in communication and an easier lifestyle) still influences the politics and social life in this part of the world. As a recent immigrant to Saskatchewan, I found it one of the qualities which marked the province as a different sort of place to live.
This same spirit manifested itself in a recent curriculum and instruction review undertaken by the provincial Department of Education. The Minister of Education's task force took great pains to capitalize on the tradition of cooperation by seeking help and information from a wide cross-section of the population. They used questionnaires (and received 26,784 responses); they visited communities large and small to hear briefs and less formal concerns of parents, teachers and interested citizens. Out of this cornucopia of thinking about schooling, they formulated a report for the future appropriately entitled Directions. Since its release in February of this year, the report has itself generated more reactions. Further travels by members of the task force and the Minister herself have allowed the people of the province to express their feelings about it. Now the task of implementing the recommendations has begun.

What are the new directions proposed in the Report? Perhaps the inevitable consequence of such a document produced from such a diverse range of viewpoints is that any specific improvements would be limited in scope and the wider ranging improvements would be vague. Most of the recommendations in fact fall into the latter category. Even when the report is detailed enough to be controversial, it usually manages to leave an escape hatch. For example, some of the proposed goals of education are sufficiently specific to institute lively discussion, but the report, true to its roots in the social traditions of the province, takes the position that "the attainment of these goals is a shared responsibility. The school, the home, the church, and the community all play roles in the educating of a child." The problems inherent in the piece-by-piece matching of the goals to these agencies is not addressed.

Such carping aside, the Review does serve a vital purpose as a rallying point for those concerned with the future of education in Saskatchewan. The Review Committee is the navigator on the ship of education, pointing and saying: That's the direction we have agreed that we will follow! The major educational agencies, including the College of Education, will be able to plan their initiatives of the next decade with the context of the report and with the knowledge that they are in step with each other.

The College of Education, the larger of the faculties of education in Saskatchewan, has been given essentially two mandates. First, it will be charged with bringing its own institutional preoccupations (such as the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers) into line with the directions espoused in the Report. The second mandate is broader but harder to define: it is that as the College continues to be a provincial resource upon which the other educational agencies can draw and through which they can be sustained in their own endeavours, it should bolster the implementation of the spirit and recommendations of the Report. As faculty members serve on curriculum committees, are seconded to school boards and the Department of Education, as they conduct research and evaluations, as they disseminate their findings, and as they pursue their formal and informal contacts with their colleagues in the field, they will be able to do so within the climate set by the Report. All these professional activities will be sharpened by being viewed through the lens of the curriculum review. It is by providing a unifying vision of the educational future of Saskatchewan that the Report will find its greatest and lasting use.
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Appendix A
SIG-Related Studies--1983-84
Compiled by Edmund C. Short

Overviews of Curriculum Practice


Curriculum Research Agendas


Stenhouse, Lawrence, "The Relevance of Practice to Theory," Theory Into Practice, 22(Summer, 1983), 211-215.


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Curriculum Inquiry Methodologies


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Ideological Aspects of Curriculum


Knowledge Utilization


Dyman, Muredach E., "Dissemination of Curriculum Innovations: Where Are We Heading?" Curriculum Perspectives, 3(October, 1983), 60-65.


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Dynan, Muredach E., "Dissemination of Curriculum Innovations: Where Are We Heading?" Curriculum Perspectives, 3(October, 1983), 60-65.


Mann, Dale, "The Impact of IMPACT II," Teachers College Record, 84(Summer, 1983), 837-870.


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