

1st Discussion

14 Chapter 1 • Curriculum Development in a Global Age

Dewey gained credibility as a writer and theorist as he applied his theories at the University of Chicago Laboratory School (1896–1904). Here, children learned by doing through something called project work. Dewey later advocated the need for citizens in a democracy to find the truths of participation during the school years by living in a democratic institution. His book *Democracy and Education* (1916) is a classic statement of this belief.

Dewey's influence around the beginning of the 20th century is hard to overstate. Many of his students at the University of Chicago, such as Harold Rugg (*The Child-Centered School*, 1928) and George Counts (*Dare the School Create a New Social Order*, 1932), became major advocates of progressive ideas. The formation of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) in 1919 led to many publications and applications of Dewey's theory.

If a single year could be selected for a time when the true differences in approaches to education in the United States became evident, it would probably be 1918. In that year, a new perspective of secondary education, the Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, was proposed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. The first text on curriculum was written and published (Bobbitt, *The Curriculum*, 1918). Dramatically, the American way of educating was unfolding, and the field of curriculum was emerging as a subspecialty of professional education.

Curriculum emerged as a specialized area of study from the growing need to study, order, arrange, and otherwise rationalize the changing forms of American education. Gathering the many visions, clarifying the intentions, organizing schooling structures, implementing programs, and assessing the success of curricula in meeting goals required a new subspecialty in education. Decisions about whether the school should teach a body of knowledge, help develop the individual student, or promote social programs and priorities could not be effectively made in a decentralized education system. In reality, United States education programs simply evolved during these formative years. The new pattern of schooling that emerged from a traditional model of scholarship was superimposed on a coarse and dynamic culture.

The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education was formed in 1913 and met for 5 years to resolve some of the emerging issues. The committee debated the three conceptions (academic, personal, and social) and studied the many new philosophies and learning theories. In 1918, this committee produced the Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, which stands today as the definitive statement on the purpose of American education. These purposes (listed below) for United States educational planning are still referred to regularly by educational curriculum workers:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Home membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Use of leisure time
7. Ethical character

As the 20th century began, American education was in transition from a classical system practiced for centuries throughout the world to a more expedient form of schooling

that served broader purposes. Among the accomplishments of the new system by 1900 were the following:

- Schooling was a state responsibility rather than a church role.
- Public education was seen as a social need, not a charity.
- Education was a right of citizens, not a privilege.
- Taxes could be used to support education through secondary levels.
- Education was compulsory for all children in all states.
- Control of education was established at the state level.
- Subjects were a constant in educational planning for learning.
- Human development was perceived as evolutionary.
- Schools could be used to promote social unity.
- Education could be used for social regeneration.

Among the newer realities for curriculum theorists by the time of Bobbitt's first text was an awareness of humanistic thought, an emerging awareness of human development, and the beginning of mechanistic (behavioral) processes used to engineer curriculum development. These forces and others both broadened the horizons for early planners and presented them with a large number of choices in defining education.

The growth of the modern education system in the United States, from the beginning of the 20th century until the early 21st century, reflected all of these early trends. Schools grew in number, curricula diversified, and social forces such as wars, depressions, and the racial integration of the society modified the basic form of the American school. A timeline of many of these important events is shown in Figure 1.2.

The Postmodern Era

Schools during the modern era of education in the United States, like most educational agencies worldwide, operated under some unspoken assumptions that characterized the society. It was assumed, for example, that all Americans held the same values—those of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. It was accepted that schools were the place of learning and that only schools could “certify” an education. It was acknowledged that the purpose of becoming educated was “to know” and that the process of education required a knowledgeable teacher to be successful. In sporadic fashion, all these assumptions undergirding a modern and traditional education system began to break down in the United States and throughout the world during the 40-year period from 1960 to 2000.

The signs of change in the United States appeared during the civil rights period in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The concept of *e pluribus unum* (“from many, one”) was deemed inapplicable to some populations. Blacks, Hispanics, women, lesbians, gay males, handicapped persons, and other populations were forced to use law and demonstration to establish their place in U.S. society. This discovery of many publics (i.e., various groups advocating for their interests) and multiculturalism was accelerated during the protests following the Vietnam War era. The war in Indochina raised serious questions about race and ethnicity back home in the American society.

By the end of the 1980s, in many communities, schools became the battleground for the promotion of cultural values. In the 1990s, this competition for control of schools would lead a few curriculum theorists to a postmodern stance. The idea that schools were “the learning place” soon came under attack as their biases toward certain populations were