The Teacher and Curriculum

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The title of this Current Issues, "The Teacher and Curriculum," is supposed to suggest the well-known Dewey "and" titles: School and Society, The Child and the Curriculum, Democracy and Education, Freedom and Culture, Human Nature and Conduct, Experience and Nature. In these and other works, Dewey attempted to resolve inappropriate dichotomies. To our authors, and to me, it seems that another unfortunate separation has been created—one between the teacher and the curriculum. As Bill Schubert puts it in his essay, "Throughout this century, teachers and students were increasingly pushed to the sidelines, more specifically to the role of receivers. Curriculum leaders in school districts were staff and line administrators whose purpose was to develop curriculum for teachers to follow." Anyone aware of the "reform" movements of the 1980s has seen an already bad situation deteriorate—if it is possible to deteriorate from the so-called "teacher-proof" curriculum materials of the previous decade.

So, in the midst of these curriculum deform movements (if I may be permitted an intentional typo), Current Issues is going to look at, and argue for, a Deweyian vision of curriculum. Bill Schubert, in the first essay, describes how the field of curriculum would look through Deweyian eyes. In addition, he offers a wonderful review of recent and important curriculum literature. George Wood, in the second essay, provides—to borrow very unacademic language—a real treat, an example of theory turned into practice, "an attempt to 'recover' the practical side of Dewey." Wood illustrates from the work of actual teachers what Schubert is describing. Although the third essay is not about curriculum specifically, it provides a way of seeing that is especially important if we are ever going to be successful in weaning the schools away from their current
focus to a Deweyian curriculum. In their essay, Rod Webb and Rob Sherman argue convincingly for qualitative research methods by showing how much of Dewey's thought is imbedded in qualitative thinking. In the context of this Current Issue, it is easy to see the necessity for qualitative thinking if we are to move the curriculum from its current positivist orientation.

Afterwords and Thanks

These essays were originally delivered at the Spring 1987 Dewey Society meeting (with A.E.R.A.) on a panel titled, "Recovering Dewey." The organizer of the session was John Novak, who chairs the Insights Commission and has written an Afterword to this issue. As you will see from reading the Afterword, we are trying to give Dewey Society members an opportunity to be part of a dialogue based on the papers printed in Current Issues.

All of our thanks go, of course, to the authors who provided these essays in good order; to John Novak for putting the panel together; to my department chair, Mary Ann Lynn, Department of Educational Administration and Foundations at Illinois State University, for providing most of the funding for Current Issues; and to Karen Craig who graciously (well, except for Schubert's 125 references) and expeditiously typed the disparate manuscripts which I presented to her.