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NEBRASKA SCHOOLS EMPLOYING CURRICULUM
DIRECTORS OR SUPERVISORS.**

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PREVIEW

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES
PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA SCHOOLS EMPLOYING CURRICULUM
DIRECTORS OR SUPERVISORS

by

Margaret C. Saunders

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Max Poole

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TITLE

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS
IN NEBRASKA SCHOOLS EMPLOYING CURRICULUM DIRECTORS OR SUPERVISORS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The social studies occupies a key position in the elementary school. It is in this area of the curriculum that the child learns to understand his social and physical environment. The past is included but emphasis is given to the present and the foreseeable future. Responsibility for furthering social development and growth toward good citizenship is also included.¹ "Because social studies education deals fundamentally with building social and civic literacy and competence, its importance becomes especially critical in times of instability, conflict, and domestic and international unrest."²

While no single area of the curriculum can provide all of the experiences needed to help students learn what is essential for "effective participation in life in a free society" the social studies curriculum by its nature is peculiarly suited to making a great contribution in this area.³ While it cannot take "sole responsibility" for the social education of children it can provide them with "insight into the structures and processes through which people live, work, and play

¹Wilhelmina Hill, Social Studies in the Elementary School Program (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bulletin, 1960, No. 5, 1960), p. 4.

²John Jarolimek, Guidelines for Elementary Social Studies (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1967), p. 3.

³William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (third edition; New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), p. 291.

together," can help children understand our economic system, form of government, history of our nation and in addition can help students learn the differences and similarities of people around the world. Social studies can help develop an understanding of the contribution that citizens make to the welfare of the community and "the rights and duties of citizens in a democracy".⁴ The importance of the role of social studies in this area is reflected in the number of state and national studies and projects underway in the area of social studies. Fraser reported that "between 40 and 60 special projects could be cited depending on the criteria used to establish the list".⁵ Given in a directory of the Social Studies Programs in Research distributed by the U.S. Office of Education are 58 ongoing and completed projects. The projects are those included in Project Social Studies.⁶

"Individual states have the major responsibility for directing educational programs in public schools. . .In the past the states have been rather rigid in setting down curriculum requirements in the social studies," however "a common practice" today is for state departments of education to issue curriculum guides outlining the broad objectives of social studies instruction in the state, suggesting appropriate topics

⁴Ibid.

⁵Dorothy M. Fraser, "Social Studies in the Elementary School: A Case Example of New Content," The New Elementary School, Alexander Frazier, editor (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Department of Elementary School Principals, 1968), p. 114.

⁶See Appendix.

for study at various grade levels and offering suggestions relating to desirable teaching procedures.⁷

Jarolimek summarized the role of the state in the following statement:

The role of the state, then appears to be one of establishing in a general way the objectives toward which the schools of the state should move and of offering leadership in organizing, planning, and evaluating social studies programs at the local level. The state curriculum plan may properly be thought of as a basic framework on which schools may shape their programs. It indicates those understandings, attitudes, and skills that are thought to be important for every citizen of the state, but the exact nature of the classroom experiences in social studies is left to the local schools.⁸

In order to provide information helpful to local, state, and university leaders as they implement this role it became apparent that there was a need to examine the contemporary practices in selected Nebraska elementary school social studies programs in an effort to determine if the practices reflected organizational patterns, methodology, and instructional materials considered desirable by selected authorities in the field of elementary social studies.

An architect would consider it folly indeed to begin planning and constructing a major building without first surveying the site. It is equally foolish for school personnel to blueprint a new social studies program without a thorough knowledge of the existing curriculum-in-action. Obtaining a clear picture of current instructional practices contributes to the quality of the curriculum project. It also provides the school system with a solid base from which to measure future progress.⁹

⁷John Jarolimek, Social Studies in Elementary Education (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 31.

⁸Ibid., p. 32.

⁹Raymond H. Muessig (ed.), Social Studies Curriculum Improvement: A Guide for Local Committees (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1965), pp. 89-90.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The study was designed to determine (1) the contemporary practices in selected Nebraska elementary school social studies programs in school districts which employ a full time curriculum director or supervisor, and (2) the extent to which these practices parallel those recommended by recognized authorities in the field of elementary social studies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It was anticipated that the study would provide information which would:

1. Reveal the contemporary practices in selected Nebraska elementary school social studies programs in school districts that employ a full time curriculum director or supervisor and to determine if the practices parallel those considered desirable by selected authorities in the field of elementary social studies.
2. Provide assistance in curriculum planning at the elementary school level.
3. Indicate the direction which local, county, state, and university educational leaders could take in providing services and materials for the improvement of the social studies program.
4. Assist teacher preparation institutions in providing more meaningful experiences in social studies methods courses, workshops, and institutes.
5. Encourage administrators, teachers, and researchers to evaluate other elements of contemporary practices in elementary school social programs which were not investigated in the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Social Studies. The term social studies refers to that area of the curriculum based on content from the social sciences: geography, history, economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, and related disciplines. It is that area of the curriculum which emphasizes "the interaction of people with their human and physical environment".¹⁰

Social Studies Program. Social studies program refers to all structured social studies experiences within a curriculum.

Elementary School. The elementary school refers to the administrative unit consisting of grades one through six in the organizational structure of the school.

Practices. The term practices refers to how and what the teacher does in the teaching of social studies.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS

This study was limited to contemporary practices in Nebraska elementary school social studies programs, grades one through six, in school districts employing a full time, designated curriculum director or supervisor. No attempt was made to compare or evaluate individual schools and teachers, nor was there an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the role of the curriculum director or supervisor.

The professional literature surveyed for the study was selected from references published since 1960 with an emphasis on those written

¹⁰ John U. Michaelis, Social Studies for Children in a Democracy: Recent Trends and Development (fourth edition; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 2.

by authorities who have written social studies methods textbooks and/or elementary social studies textbooks.

The study had further limitations imposed by the sample and the instrument. These limitations were:

1. That the sample did not attempt to explore the contemporary practices in selected Nebraska elementary school social studies programs except within the categories specified.
2. That the findings were based to a large degree upon the assumed validity of data obtained from the questionnaire method which assumes the honesty and competency of those responding.

As the study was the descriptive survey type no statistical treatment of the data was attempted. Only tabled summaries of the information gathered expressed in numbers and percentages were used.

PROCEDURES

Review of Related Literature. Since the study dealt with contemporary practices in elementary school social studies programs, emphasis was placed on references published since 1960, and on those authorities who had written social studies methods textbooks and/or elementary social studies textbooks.

Identification of Teachers to be Included in the Study. Twelve school districts in Nebraska were selected for the study. The 12 school districts were identified by the State Department of Education as school districts in the state of Nebraska employing full time curriculum directors or supervisors for the 1967-68 school year. After the school districts had been identified, permission was obtained from each superintendent to allow elementary teachers in the schools

within each district to participate in the study.

As differences in the number of elementary teachers varied among school districts a ratio to obtain a more balanced sample of teachers was devised in consultation with professional members of the Department of Educational Psychology, Teachers College, University of Nebraska. One unit was considered to be composed of two teachers for each grade, one through six, or a total of 12 teachers. Schools with fewer numbers of teachers were assigned one unit. The next to the largest school system was assigned three units or 36 teachers; the largest school system was assigned five units or 60 teachers. All teachers in the elementary schools within the 12 districts were listed by grade level and teachers for the study were selected using a table of random numbers.¹¹ A total of 216 teachers were selected for inclusion in the study.

Questionnaires were distributed to each of the elementary school teachers selected for the study. The questionnaire, used with minor modifications, was developed and validated by Godwin in his study conducted in 1966-67.¹² As the present study was a parallel study it was deemed advisable to use the same questionnaire. Through the questionnaire an attempt was made to obtain specific information concerning the contemporary practices in elementary school social studies programs. Teachers were requested to answer for a specific grade level and to report only what they actually did in teaching social studies.

¹¹James E. Wert, Charles O. Neidt, and J. Stanley Ahmann, Statistical Methods in Educational and Psychological Research (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), pp. 109-110.

¹²Charles M. Godwin, "Contemporary Practices in Selected Nebraska Elementary School Social Studies Programs" (Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1967).

The printed questionnaire and letter of explanation were sent to the selected respondents in February and two weeks later a follow-up letter was sent. Three weeks later a second questionnaire with a letter of explanation was sent, followed in another two weeks by a follow-up letter. Of the original 216 questionnaires distributed, 166 or 76.85 per cent were returned.

Validation of the Responses. In an attempt to reinforce the responses on the questionnaires, letters were sent to 10 of the 12 curriculum directors in the school districts in the study asking permission to conduct an interview with the curriculum director. Each of the curriculum directors granted such a request. The interviews were structured to validate information concerning organizational patterns, methodology, and instructional materials in the elementary social studies programs in the respective school district.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

The following chapters of the dissertation report the findings of the study. Chapter II presents a review of selected literature in the following areas: (1) definitions, purposes, and objectives of social studies; (2) organizational patterns; (3) methodology; and (4) instructional materials. Chapter III presents data pertaining to contemporary practices in social studies programs as reported by the respondents in the study. Chapter IV includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The material presented in this chapter will pertain to literature and research relating to organizational patterns, methodology, and instructional materials in elementary school social studies programs. Before discussing these areas it was deemed necessary to consider the purposes or objectives of the social studies.

DEFINITION, PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

Social studies as a term relating to school subjects "concentrating on the complexities of human relationships" is of twentieth century origin.¹³ The National Education Association gave it official sanction in 1916.¹⁴ In 1921 a "more assured status" was given when the name National Council for the Social Studies was adopted by the organization of teachers of the social studies subjects.¹⁵ Though Douglass referred to social studies as a "confusing term"¹⁶, it has become the accepted one used to designate the school subjects that deal with human relationships¹⁷ and at the present time is the term used most widely by

¹³Edgar B. Wesley and William H. Cartwright, Teaching Social Studies in Elementary Schools (third edition; Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1968), p. 1.

¹⁴William B. Ragan and John D. McAulay, Social Studies for Today's Children (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), p. 5.

¹⁵Wesley and Cartwright, loc. cit.

¹⁶Malcolm P. Douglass, Social Studies from Theory to Practice in Elementary Education (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 5.

¹⁷Wesley and Cartwright, loc. cit.

school personnel and scholars at work on curriculum projects.¹⁸

A comprehensive definition of social studies was given by Michaelis in his statement:

. . . Primary attention is given to the study of man's social, economic, and political activities of the past, present and emerging future in places near at hand and far away. Instruction is focused on the variety and change in human behavior in groups, and the interaction of people with their human and physical environment. Human relationships are emphasized in the study of interaction among people, between people and institutions, between people and the earth, and between people and value systems. The purposes of individuals and groups are studied along with the processes used to achieve them, problems that have emerged, material and nonmaterial products of human efforts, and prospects for the future. Man's cultural heritage and its dynamic ongoing characteristics are of central concern.¹⁹

Ragan and McAulay wrote that the name social studies is generally applied to "that phase of the curriculum of the elementary schools which has primary responsibility for helping pupils develop understandings, skills, and attitudes needed for intelligent living in a democratic society."²⁰

Chase defined social studies as "that area of the curriculum concerned with man's relationship to his physical and social environments and his interaction with other men and their ideas in the past, the present, and the constantly opening future."²¹ Jarolimek's definition of social studies as "the study of man and his relationship

¹⁸ John U. Michaelis, Social Studies for Children in a Democracy: Recent Trends and Developments (fourth edition; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ragan and McAulay, loc. cit.

²¹ W. Linwood Chase, A Guide for the Elementary Social Studies Teacher (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1966), p. 1.

with his social and physical environments"²² resembles the one given by Chase but Jarolimek presented the following expansion of his definition:

The basic and fundamental concern of social studies education is people as people--people as they work together in societies, form governments, provide for their material and psychological needs; people as they love and hate one another individually and collectively; and people as they make use of the resources of this planet they call their home.²³

Several authorities dealt with the distinction made between social studies and social sciences.²⁴ Dunfee and Sagl explained social studies and social sciences as areas that are "related generically and share a common body of content in that the center of focus is man's relationship to man and his environment,"²⁵ but at the same time are markedly dissimilar as the former treats subject matter that is useful for its own sake and the latter does not have knowledge about subject matter as an ultimate goal.²⁶ Ragan and McAulay stated that the social studies dealt with human relationships at the level of childhood and adolescence whereas the social sciences dealt with this area at the level of the adult whose primary concern is to expand the

²² John Jarolimek, Social Studies in Elementary Education (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 4.

²³ Jarolimek, op. cit., p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid.; Wesley and Cartwright, op. cit., p. 2-4; H. Millard Clements, William R. Fiedler and B. Robert Tabachnick, Social Study: Inquiry in Elementary Classrooms (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 6.

²⁵ Maxine Dunfee and Helen Sagl, Social Studies through Problem Solving: A Challenge to Elementary School Teachers (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. 15.

²⁶ Dunfee, ibid.

boundaries of knowledge in such fields as history, geography, political science, economics, and anthropology.²⁷

"Objectives," "goals," and "purposes" are terms of singular meaning and interchangeable use²⁸ and many authorities writing in the area of social studies use the terms synonymously. The terms refer to the "values sought through any education endeavor" and as such result directly from choice or judgment rather than from research.²⁹ A general agreement appears to exist among authorities concerning the importance of objectives in providing a sense of direction for social studies. Jarolimek made a representative statement in his comment that "the most essential component of any social studies program is the statement of a well-thought through rationale for social studies education" with the terms understood by all responsible for implementing the program.³⁰

Gross and Ovard reviewed selected statements of social studies objectives and found them remaining fairly constant in spite of changing curricular offerings. Their research showed aims listed most frequently were those designed to help youth:

1. To become more effective citizens in American democracy. An effective citizen should: be patriotic, be responsible, have a knowledge of our past history and an understanding of our present society, and participate in the processes of government.

²⁷Ragan and McAulay, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁸Wesley and Cartwright, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁹Jonathon C. McLendon, Teaching the Social Studies (What Research Says to the Teacher Series; Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1960), p. 6.

³⁰John Jarolimek, Guidelines for Elementary Social Studies, (Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1967), p. 3.

2. To develop a respect and appreciation for the worth and dignity of every individual--his rights, property, and desires to live an abundant and happy life.
3. To gain an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, societies, nations, and peoples. A knowledge of the past political, social, and cultural history as well as an understanding of present conditions are essential aids in advancing civilization.
4. To become an asset to his society through full development of his own potentialities and abilities. Skills in critical thinking, problem solving, self-discipline, creativity, and group participation are necessary.
5. To become effective in the use of knowledges and skills involving the economic factors affecting his life, such as earning a living, prudent consumption, the functioning of the free enterprise system, and the conservation of natural resources.
6. To develop moral and ethical character for guiding his behavior in all human relationships.³¹

McLendon reviewed the work done by investigators who had examined textbooks and courses of study along with other methods to ascertain the objectives of social studies. The investigators found the "most widely accepted" objectives to be:

1. Understanding of the main features of the social environment; of ways in which people cope with their environment and provide for their basic needs; of social control through government and other groups; of fundamental relationships among individuals, groups and society; and of basic characteristics and factors in the growth of civilization.
2. Skills in gathering, organizing, critically analyzing, communicating, and otherwise utilizing the information regarding human relationships available in oral, printed, or visual form.
3. Attitudes such as respect for individuals, belief that democratic processes provide rational solutions for social

³¹Richard E. Gross and Glen F. Ovard, "Review of Aims and Objectives in Social Education," The Social Studies, 51:172-3, October 1960.

problems, willingness to assume civic responsibilities and work for the general welfare, and belief in self-government and upholding the law.³²

Gibson answered the question, "What can students derive from social studies in American schools?" with the following:

. . .students can gain a body of knowledge about man and society, past and present, that can contribute to intellectual enrichment and pleasure. Students can acquire skills, furthermore, for transmitting this knowledge into patterns of covert and overt behavior fundamental to individual fulfillment and to the exercise of civic responsibility in a free society. . .Goals for social studies are threefold: knowledge, skills, and behavior.³³

In his social studies methods textbook, Jarolimek stated the major objectives of social studies programs were "the development of those understandings, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective and responsible democratic citizenship."³⁴ Chase emphasized the importance of democratic citizenship in his statement, "the most important goal of social studies for students is to put the content, principles, skills, and values which can be derived from the social disciplines to work in contributing toward the ideals of democratic citizenship."³⁵ Wesley and Cartwright supported this thesis in the comment "that the primary purpose of the social studies is to produce people who participate effectively in the maintenance and improvement of society. . .the ultimate objectives of the social studies are the kinds of behavior

³²McLendon, op. cit., p. 2-4.

³³John S. Gibson, New Frontiers in the Social Studies: Goals for Students Means for Teachers (New York: Citation Press, 1967), p. 20.

³⁴Jarolimek, Social Studies in Elementary Education, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁵Chase, op. cit., p. 7.

embodied in good citizenship."³⁶

Differences of opinion exist as to what constitutes a "good citizen". To help clarify the confusion existing in this area a committee of the National Council for the Social Studies compiled a list of behaviors characteristic of good citizens. The list published in 1965 gave the following behavioral patterns:

1. Keeping well informed on issues which affect society, and of relating principles and knowledge derived from the social sciences to the study of contemporary problems.
2. Using democratic means in seeking agreement, reaching solutions, and taking group action on social problems.
3. Assuming individual responsibility for carrying out group decisions and accepting the consequences of group action.
4. Defending constitutional rights and freedom for oneself and others.
5. Respecting and complying with the law, regardless of personal feelings, and using legal means to change laws deemed inimical or invalid.
6. Supporting persons and organizations working to improve society by desirable action.
7. Scrutinizing the actions of public officials.
8. Participating in elections at local, state, and national levels and preparing oneself for intelligent voting in these elections.
9. Opposing special privilege whenever it is incompatible with general welfare.
10. Being prepared and willing to render public service and to give full time service in emergencies.

³⁶Ibid., p. 33.