

PART ONE

OPENING ADDRESS

by PHILIP J. IDENBURG, President, (The Hague)

It fills me with great satisfaction that we are meeting here in Prague for the Fourth Session of the Comparative Education Society in Europe.

It would be false for me to conceal the fact that during the last year we have occasionally feared that the circumstances in this country and this city would prevent our coming. I even thought for a moment that we would have to consider the possibility of a postponement of this session. Fortunately this has not been necessary.

However, we are aware that we are visiting a country that is undergoing an intensive process of reorientation. We further realize that this process is going on within a framework of a socialist theory of state and society that determines the structure of the country.

Let me say here and now that we have followed this search for new forms of human inter-relationships in a rapidly changing society with lively interest and sympathy. For, however much each country may have its own problems, *all* countries are confronted with tasks and responsibilities of a related nature. And without exception we are alive to the stresses and uncertainties that accompany the birth of new times. We know that we are linked by the solidarity of people heading for forms of society whose shape they do not yet know, but for whom one thing is certain : that they will have to be forms in which our peoples, each one individually and in close co-operation, will be able to achieve full spiritual and material development.

It is an admirable thing that the organizers of this session, in the midst of their many other preoccupations, have been willing and able to make room for this scientific meeting. In particular I should like to thank the Comenius Institute of Education, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the University of 17th November and the Czechoslovak Pedagogical Society for their support. They have been so kind as to take our conference under their wing. Further and more particularly, I want to express the gratitude of all of us to the distinguished organizing committee that has prepared the conference for us, under the direction of Dr. Singule. We can only hope that, as their guests, we shall not be the only ones on the receiving end, but that our coming together here will also be useful to our hosts to the extent that it will be of service to the development of the science of education and education itself in this country. Our subject is in any case of considerable relevance to hosts and guests alike.

Before saying something more about this, I must commemorate the two honorary members whom we have lost this year. First Franz Hilker, who passed away on 4th January, aged nearly 88. Hilker was a man who, starting as a teacher, served the school system in his country, first in the field and then

from the centre. For some time the *Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht* in Berlin was under his direction ; after the second world war he headed the *Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle* in Wiesbaden and Bonn, and was closely connected with the *Sekretariat der Kultus-Ministerkonferenz*.

Within the framework of education in Western Germany he occupied a central position from which he was able to provide a most comprehensive documentation service for the education ministries of the *Länder*. For foreigners, too, he was one of the central points of contact. We met him at numerous international conferences. His knowledge of what was going on in his own country was impressive, but in the field of foreign education, too, he was an expert. When we examine the bibliography of his writings, we are struck by the international outlook to which they testify. He rendered comparative education great services, not least through his well-considered book *Vergleichende Pädagogik* (1962), which was also translated into French. To the end, his life was characterized by work and service.

It is with sorrow that I have also to tell you that our founder and honorary member, Nicholas Hans, died recently in his 81st year. Our discipline of Comparative Education has lost one of its great pioneers who helped to give it its scientific character. He was born in 1888 in Odessa and studied there as well as in Vienna and London. In 1926 he was awarded his Ph.D. by the University of London and in the same year he became associated with King's College London where he worked until his retirement in 1953. Subsequently he spent three years at the London Institute of Education as a Research Fellow. His writings are numerous. Many of them are known to you. They are characterised by a broad cultural and historical outlook. His works were very widely read. His main work *Comparative Education* was translated into many languages and became, deservedly, a classic in his life time. He was a man of the world. In Europe he was at home as few men are. Everywhere he was honoured and appreciated because of his scholarship and personality. He lectured in many countries and was a frequent visitor to the U.S.A. His work probed the social factors which determine educational policy. Throughout his life and work he was inspired by an idealism which owed much to his European heritage. He once said that he agreed with the statement made by Lesgaft :

"In a time of ruthless arbitrary action . . . when sensual and material advantage seems to be the main purpose of life, everything that reminds us of the service to an idea is highly necessary and desirable" (*International Review of Education*, 10, p. 94).

This epitomises Hans as a man and a scholar.

He was a very sensitive man — tied to his colleagues by bonds of friendship which he was not prepared to break. As a teacher he was superb and generations of students were inspired by the clarity and forcefulness of his analysis. When he was not able to join us in Ghent we sent him a message of friendship which we all signed. We were sure that this would be, for him, a sure sign of

our sense of community with him and that it would please him more than anything to know he was remembered by friends.

Today we remember him as a teacher and a friend. There are many among us who are grateful to have known him.

We miss here our other honorary members, Madame Hatinguais, Pedro Rossello and Friedrich Schneider. Our thoughts are with them. We shall send the greetings of this conference to them.

When we decided to hold this session in Prague, if possible, one of the reasons for our choice was the desire that our society should have better contact with our colleagues in the socialist countries of Europe. The programme of the session has been geared to this. In this respect we have not been able fully to achieve what we had in mind. However, the policy we have adopted continues.

As regards the subject of this session, it is a matter of lasting care and unremitting effort in all our countries. There are various reasons for this. I have already spoken about our changing society. Now the school, always an institution slow to change, should not lag behind. Science and technology are going through a process of rapid development, and new knowledge and modern procedures will have to make themselves felt in the school. The school system is everywhere under pressure from rapidly increasing numbers of pupils and teachers. In connection with this we are busy revising the pedagogical structure of the educational system. But reforms would be pointless if they did not relate at the same time to the content of education. As we study the curriculum process we see that this content is insufficiently characterized by "knowledge" in the traditional sense. What matters is to impart to the pupils the fundamental concepts and structures of the various sciences and to help them to acquire experience with the techniques and methods known and used by scientists. Besides the transfer of knowledge the performance of tasks and the gaining of experience have become essential elements of the content of the educational process, so that ultimately the concept of the curriculum comprises "the sum of experiences that are sponsored by the school".

Considering all this, we may say that we have come together here to discuss an extremely topical issue.

At the same time it is a very complicated subject. It is more than a technical aspect of education. First and foremost at issue here are our aims and goals. To follow D. K. Wheeler I mean by "aims" the broad generalities which describe what the school is trying to do, and by "goals" the specific levels in the curriculum process and the expected end-products of educational endeavour.¹ The aims of education are the fruits of reflecting on the needs of society and of the individual. They are inevitably surrounded by a certain vagueness. Even if we accept this, they give us difficulties enough, for they

1. *Curriculum Process*, University of London Press, 1967, p.22 ff.

are not derived from our personal preferences. They presuppose a diagnosis of the cultural situation in the country and a painstaking observation of the educational system lock, stock and barrel. Aims can never be derived from facts. But they are desires that must be based on a knowledge of reality.

Once they have been established, the next problem arises, that is to say, the formulation of the goals that are a product of the aims, as patterns of expected behaviour, concrete and measurable, and the selection of learning experiences calculated to help in attainment of these goals and the content through which these experiences may be offered.

Added to this is the fact that we no longer regard the school as the sum of a diversity of learning experiences and elements of content but that we require that these display organization and integration, so that they make sense, provide continuity and will be experienced as a whole. Indeed, our requirements go further. Not only must the individual school manifest itself as an entity as regards its learning activities, but the system of education with its different types of schools has to be regarded as a unit, so that a sound vertical and horizontal union is obtained. Subjects like these will call for our full attention in the coming days.

I sincerely hope that we shall include in our considerations a number of further points of view. For instance, it is clear that curriculum-making is a process of serious interdisciplinary study and research, in which not only educators but also sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists must collaborate, as well as the subject experts who will decide on the content of the curricula.

It is equally evident that this is not a matter that can be set up and carried out ad hoc. It is a permanent task, in which the construction of the curriculum *and its permanent reform* go together. Even studies of individual subjects, however fruitful in themselves, will ultimately not be satisfactory because they make the part prevail at the expense of the whole. And so inevitably the question arises of how curriculum study can be institutionalized. Some of our countries are further advanced in this than others. We shall be able to learn from one another's experiences.

When we accordingly have established the need for the institutionalization of curriculum production, we cannot escape the question of what the *form of organization* of this activity will look like. Notably the question of authority arises here. What is the role to be played in this by the State, local or regional authorities, the school governing bodies, the teachers, the parents, the pupils and perhaps the representatives of culture and business? It is, I think, realistic to accept the fact that a demarcation of tasks and responsibilities in this connection is unavoidable. The number of those entitled to have a say is large. The practitioners of comparative education will want to know how these issues are being tackled in various countries.

There is yet another aspect of this matter. Let us assume that we have built up a curriculum by most carefully conceived methods and with all who

are concerned having had their say. How do we get a new curriculum of this kind into the school? How do we reach the teachers, how do we inform them? In other words, how do we assume that innovation of the curriculum continues in innovation of education in the reality of the daily life of the school?

It seems to me that our subject, which proves to have such a variety of aspects, is excellently suited for study within the framework of comparative education, for all the reasons that we tend to adduce in favour of our discipline. In addition, we should do well to incorporate a practical side of this matter in our deliberations. This work calls for time, eminent figures to perform it, and lots of money. Professor Zacharias, who, as director of the American Physical Science Study Committee, collected a wealth of experience in this subject, estimated in 1964 the average costs of a somewhat larger project per discipline at one million dollars a year, covering a period of 5 years.² This includes the costs of introducing the project into education.

Nowadays, five years later, the American costs will be considerably higher. Even if we assume that the work can be done more cheaply in Europe, it remains a fact that responsible curriculum research is an extremely exacting matter. It seems to me that collaboration by our countries on this point will be particularly useful. I assume that the unity of Western culture is great enough to guarantee that exchange of information can aid us all.

It is worthy of mention that we are going to discuss these problems in the country of Comenius. As you know, Comenius studied the problems of the curriculum from a very definite philosophical background. His underlying convictions may not perhaps immediately appeal to us today. But the recommendations he based on this philosophy are still entirely relevant today in many respects. Piaget has characterized Comenius as one of the precursors of the genetic idea in developmental psychology and as the founder of a system of progressive instruction adjusted to the stage of development the pupil has reached.³ Starting from this point, Comenius arrived at a blueprint for four types of schools for what we should now call the four major periods or stages in education: infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth. And, with really remarkable intuition, he grasped the fact that the *same forms of knowledge* are necessary at each of the different levels, because they correspond to permanent needs; and that the difference between these levels lies mainly in the way in which the forms of knowledge are re-outlined or restated.⁴ In these different schools Comenius did not wish the pupils to learn different

2. *Innovation and Experiment in Education*: a Progress Report of the Panel on Educational Research and Development, Washington D.C. 1964, preface, quoted by Klaus Huhse, *Theories und Praxis der Curriculum-entwicklung*, Institut für Bildungsforschung in der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Berlin 1968, S. 65.

3. (*John Amos Comenius 1592-1670. Selections*, Introduction by Jean Piaget, Unesco 1957, p. 16.).

4. (loc. cit., p. 17).

things, but rather the same things in a different manner. He derives from the idea of spontaneous development the following three rules :

"Send children to school for as few hours as possible, I mean, four hours, and leave the same amount of time for individual study. Avoid overloading the memory ; I mean, have only essential matters learnt by heart, leaving the rest to independent exercises. Base all teaching on the pupil's capacities as they are developed in the course of time and progress in school".⁵

These seem to be golden rules for every curriculum-maker. This also applies to the rules that he drew up in 1650 for the teaching at his last school : "The pupils shall themselves seek, discover, discuss, do and repeat, without slacking, by their own efforts, the teachers being left merely with the task of seeing whether what is to be done is done, and done as it should be".⁶

The idea of splitting-up subjects, which still often characterizes our education, finds in him a counterpart in his view of the unity of science which must also be reflected in the school.

Comenius comes very close to us when we read his plea for the universal right to education on a basis of equality. "If this universal instruction of youth be brought about by the proper means", says Comenius, "none will lack the material for thinking and doing good things. All will know how their efforts and actions must be governed, to what limits they must keep, and how each must find his right place The children of the rich and the nobles, or those holding public offices, are not alone born to such positions, and should not alone have access to schools, others being excluded as if there were nothing to be hoped for them. The spirit bloweth where and when it will."⁷

However, there is one thing that particularly moves me about this great son of our host country. You know how he was driven by war and conflict across the countries of Europe until, robbed of everything, he settled in Amsterdam and ended his days in that city. But, in spite of all these tribulations, there is no hate of mankind in him. And, despite all the tragedy, he never abandoned hope. For he never tired of drawing up plans for international collaboration : general schemes for universal peace, proposals for collaboration among the Churches, more specialized plans for international societies for erudite research, but above all, plans for the international organization of public education and the final project for a *Collegium Lucis*, which was to be a kind of international Ministry of Education. If he were to appear in Prague today to tell us about these things, we should probably find his theological

5. (*The Great Didactic*, Chapter XVII).

6. (quoted by Piaget from P. Bovet, *J. Amos Comenius*, Geneva 1943, p. 34f.).

7. (Quoted by Piaget from J. Piobetta, *la Grande Didactique*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1952, p. 26.)