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A STUDY OF THE FORMING PROGRAM

in

THE NORWEGIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

AN ABSTRACT OF

A THESIS

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The Forming programs of the Norwegian school system provide a unique and impressive breadth to their nine year comprehensive school. The Forming curriculum is a blend of the practical, manual subjects, esthetics, handicrafts, Home Economics, and the Fine Arts, with a strong emphasis on creativity. While the current programs are of less than a decade's standing, historically Forming is based upon the traditional carpentry, sewing and cooking classes, an integral part of the Norwegian curriculum for nearly seventy years. The curriculum time allotment devoted to forming subjects, is roughly equal to that given to mathematics and the Norwegian language, clearly indicating the weight and importance accorded this subject area. To investigate, observe, and study the Norwegian forming program, particularly in the middle grades, was the purpose of this study.

The author spent nearly a month attending various forming classes in the Sande School, Norway, during August and September of 1968. Sande School, one of three schools in the Gauler District, with a faculty of nineteen, serving 245 pupils, comprises a Barneskole, grades one through six, and a Ungdomsskole, grades seven through nine. The school plant, very modern and of handsome Scandinavian design, has nine conventional classrooms, four specialized Forming rooms and a swimming pool. Both the school faculty and administration were most helpful and eager to further international interest in

the Forming programs. They gave unstintingly of their views, and experiences both in formal interview and more casual discussion. Daily class observations in the four major areas of Forming, Textile, Woodworking, Cooking and the Fine Arts, were of sufficient continuity to observe sequential order and progression.

Research into the historic evolution of Forming, its present-day form, and the current opinions of authorities in the field, was also undertaken. The school superintendent, Mr. Leif Lundgren, a highly creative person with his paintings and illustrated maps, in print, was deeply committed to the concepts of Forming. His aid in discussions, interviews, visits to other schools, class observations, and his views in general, contributed much to the scope and depth of the study.

The possible role of Forming in the United States' school curriculum, is worthy of consideration from six major areas. These are, creativity, esthetics, mental health, family life, vocations, and the Disadvantaged Child. The last two can be of particular importance to comprehensive schooling in a society concerned with poverty and racial strain. In a homogeneous, Welfare State, such as Norway, these two problems are virtually non-existent. Their Forming program operates under a philosophy and with concepts aimed at the first five areas mentioned.

The vocational implications of Forming for a large segment of society, all those not college-bound, are

immeasurable. Basic attitudes for work-success, skills, and adaptability the last so important in a changing technocratic society, are possible results of a Forming program. In particular, the Disadvantaged Child can find success and satisfaction in the concrete, sequential, forming subjects, helping this child to achieve better attitudes, motivation and self-image. A long-range Forming program, not negated by overcrowding or lack of funding, could contribute much to the scope of United States' schools, and the ultimate shaping of the nation's culture patterns.