

DEVELOPMENT OF A RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SPECIFICATION OF GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS WITHIN HISTORY CURRICULA*

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"General education is the term used to characterize that body of experience common to all educated men and women," according to Dr. Rhodes. As a part of the general education curriculum, history must contribute to the general intellectual competence of educated persons. The classroom instructor must provide students with experiences which transmit "core values of the American experience." The main task of general education and history instruction should be to identify these societal and individual values that are considered basic within a formal education. Once formulated, educational goals should be arranged in hierarchical order, with lower level objectives providing means to achieve higher levels.

Educators must realize that not all social goals are teachable in the classroom, however. They should also remember that in order to make learning effective, students must be accepted as individuals and given an opportunity to face world situations at their own level of understanding. The instructional system is affected not only by the learners, but also by the legal requirements of a society, by community socio-cultural traits, by institutional characteristics, and by resources available. The community and the educational institution must be supportive of objectives set up in the instructional system if those objectives are to be achieved. A carefully thought out rationale can help to build community and institutional support for general education programs. Precise goals should also positively affect classroom relations and make it possible to determine whether objectives are being met. Unfortunately, goal formation is confused by the lack of a clearly defined statement of what it means to be "educated" in our social setting. But without a clear conception of the "educated person," Dr. Rhodes concluded, educators may be "cast adrift, finding it difficult, if not impossible, to justify required general education history courses."

*Eds. synopsis