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We Suggest

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WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Rubin, Louis J. (Editor)

Facts and Feelings in the Classroom

New York: The Viking Press, 1973. Pp. 282.

Students today . . . are seeing life in terms different from our own and are forcing us to reexamine what schools are for and what roles we might play within them. Perhaps most significant is the growing interest in the life of feeling, with personal identity, with listening to your own drummer.

Communicative human relationships are dynamic, moving factors within society, exerting a prime influence upon quality of life. Never can they be broken into parts with labels and treated in isolation for effective human learning. Knowledge and education, in and of themselves, purely for the sake of survival of man, are worth little unless they contribute to the "grace and joy that make his survival worthwhile."

In *Facts and Feelings in the Classroom*, eight leaders in the field of educational change present their views on the role of emotions in successful learning. They believe that effective humanistic education is furthered by balancing attention to both affective and cognitive domains. In the opening chapter, Rubin sets forth the dominant theme of the volume: a curriculum that effectively influences children's behavior must concern itself with a broad range of feeling, thinking and valuing: to accommodate these concerns there need to be changes in definition of the school's role and function; these changes will demand concomitant changes in teaching methods and in-service teacher training.

Concerning changes in the curriculum, Meade states that it well may be the school's most important business to teach self-understanding and social understanding as parts of a whole. He suggests that confrontation and analysis of conflicts be faced and utilized in the classroom as parts of orderly, sanative processes which make it possible for all learners to acquire the "delicate art of self-negotiation." Both self-knowledge and knowledge of others are essential to individual health and societal health.

Scriven writes that the real subject matter of the curriculum is life itself; that rationality should be taught on an equal footing with reading; that school rooms need to be intellectually open, where children can learn to know themselves and the world. Such education would facilitate students' appropriate choices between what is im-

portant and what is trivial, leading to maturity, autonomy, and moral education—the significant elements of structure in a successful curriculum.

Bloom's essay on "Individual Differences In Achievement" does not deal with structure of the curriculum directly, but is related to it because it concerns affective entry characteristics that are primarily within-school variables. These variables are significant aspects of quality of instruction; their control and manipulation can maximize, or minimize, effectiveness of schools and levels of variation of achievement. Like Meade and Scriven, Bloom maintains that the "implicit curriculum" that teaches the student who he is in relation to others and what his place is in the world of people, ideas, and activities has a major effect upon his personality and mental health. "If the school environment provides the individual with evidence of his adequacy over a number of years, and, especially, in the first six years, there are some indications that this provides a type of immunization against mental illness for an indefinite period of time." A school environment that places a high premium upon each person's right to realize his potential by providing the *time*, the *help*, and the *encouragement* he needs to learn will cost considerable additional time and effort. However, it would reduce the "normal" distribution of achievement between aptitude and achievement to a vanishing point.

If curriculum changes are actually to take place, there will be a need for systematic planning and development of continuing educational programs for teachers. Tyler feels that efficient programs will need to focus on growth of teachers toward autonomy. As he describes it, autonomy means that "an individual has a good deal of control over his life; he has a wide range of choices; he knows enough about the probable consequences of each major possible course of action that he can make an informed choice." Children, too, need to learn this autonomy; they can learn best with continuing guidance and support of teachers who serve as live models. Successful educational change depends upon committed practitioners who are human beings in control of their own destinies.

It takes a teacher with a considerable measure of autonomy to grow into the kind of person Maslow calls a "Taoistic" teacher, one who has trust in others that helps him view each person as an individual, and, therefore, restrains interference in the other's growth and self-actualization. This kind of teacher holds a humanistic philosophy that is, possibly, the optimum in behavioral objectives: the goal of helping another to become the best he is able to become. "Helping," Maslow concludes, is an exceedingly difficult and delicate thing. "The

master stroke of craftsmanship lies in knowledge of when to intervene and when to ‘keep hands off.’” Much attention in the preparation of teachers must be given to “that facet of teaching finesse that involves knowing when—and how—to superimpose teacher control on the child’s own self-control.” Teachers who do, indeed, develop and use this kind of finesse will be aware of, and acutely sensitive to, the feelings and attitudes of their students.

Piaget’s statement concerning the constant parallel between affective and intellectual life during childhood and adolescence is part of the support Jones uses for his argument against polarization of affect and cognition in education. He holds that if we help children well in their development of self, we must also help them link that development to their enjoyment, creation, and remaking of culture—that if we expect children to learn areas of commonly valued public knowledge, we are responsible for making such learning relevant to their private worlds of personal concerns and interests. To do otherwise constitutes *abuse* in American education.

In discussing his concept of qualitative intelligence, Eisner carries this idea further. He contends that schools need to increase the range of educational options and to diversify the range of their guided inquiries; that the mission of the school is “not primarily one of selection but one of education,” and that the use of schools “as a continually narrowing road that near its end only has room for a few to pass through” must be discontinued. Specifically, he asks that we give children more chances to sense, to feel, and to react. From evaluating this kind of evidence, teachers can determine the kinds of school experiences learners really need.

In the last three chapters, the editor sets forth some postulations about education that purports to cultivate successful humans; some descriptions of essential changes to be made in education as it exists today; and consideration of the dangers inherent in the change-over. His plea is for schools not merely to *train* knowledgeable children through fear, coercion, and bribery and, simultaneously, to destroy their passion for learning; but, manifestly, to *educate* the young, increasing their intellectual options, liberating not only their human intelligence, but also their human sympathy, permitting them to improve their present and control their futures. In his words:

When we set our sights on this larger view of education we reduce the danger of confusing means with ends. The child’s unique gifts serve as the point of departure and their progressive development as the ultimate goal. It is the evolution of the child himself, therefore, and not the conventions of the society, nor the aspirations of his parents, nor the blandishments of the educational hucksters, nor the theories of the philosophers, that must prevail.