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Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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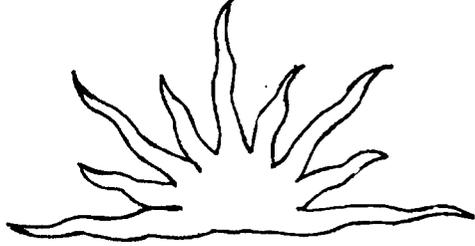
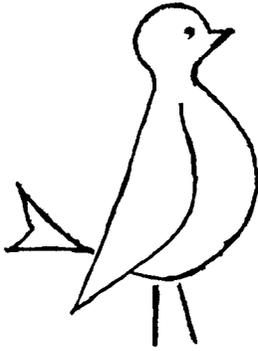


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ROUND ROBIN

Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

In the October, 1968 issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan*, there appears an article, "The Teacher Preparation Myth: A Phoenix Too Frequent," by Seymour Metzner (pp. 105-107), and comments by Millard Clements (p. 107) and Samuel Bowles (p. 108). Mr. Metzner's thesis for the article, according to the editors, is: "The author contends that raising the educational level of teachers is likely to have little effect on pupil achievement and cites supportive research. New York University and Harvard professors offer comments."

This article has elicited a great deal of discussion, and we would like to present to you a rebuttal of Mr. Metzner's thesis. We would like to hear reactions to these ideas, from both sides.

Dear Editor:

The all-purpose, all-encompassing "remedy" for the extensively documented educational "illness" reported by Mr. Metzner was, to me, the most shocking part of his article. Certainly he must have something more specific and practical to suggest to help correct a situation he has researched so thoroughly, unless his sole purpose was shock therapy. If so, he created a real bomb.

It would be difficult for those of us in the field of education to believe that education in almost any form serves no purpose. I cannot list the research here, but the weight of history itself leans on the value of formal training of the young and the learner of any age. If additional education of teachers does not result in improved pupil learning, then something is wrong with either the type of additional teacher training and/or the measurement of pupil achievement.

I agree with Mr. Clements in his "Comment" following the Metzner article, that our researchers may be more "agricultural" than sensible in their efforts to apply science to human nature. For a long time the value of our present methods courses, factual courses, teacher evaluations, and even degrees have been questioned by many in the profession. Test scores as true measures of student knowledge and achievement are always under fire.

I would like to know more about the influence of teacher verbal ability on pupil achievement, as mentioned by Samuel Bowles in his "Explanation" of the Metzner article. I believe that this is a phase of teacher training that needs a lot of exploring. We are finally aware that educators must know the many tongues of today's world and, unless they can communicate sincerely in all of them, they will fail to instruct with any meaning.

In the same issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan* was an article by Thomas A. Billings, the director of the Upward Bound Program. He listed the needs for success in that endeavor as follows:

A program which provides

1. warmth and involvement for the staff and students alike
2. involvement of family and neighborhood
3. novel approaches to study
4. structure and purpose of subject matter

These needs seemed very much like the needs for the success of any educational program. Was this article on Upward Bound coincidentally in the same issue as the "Phoenix?"

Perhaps we should think about how many and what kind of ghettos there are in our complex society. Does psychological underdevelopment share some of the disadvantages of economic underdevelopment? Are our schools a form of ghetto? Does our teacher education help keep them that way? I hope Mr. Metzner's "Phoenix" burns for a long time and the new bird really rises.

Sincerely,

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