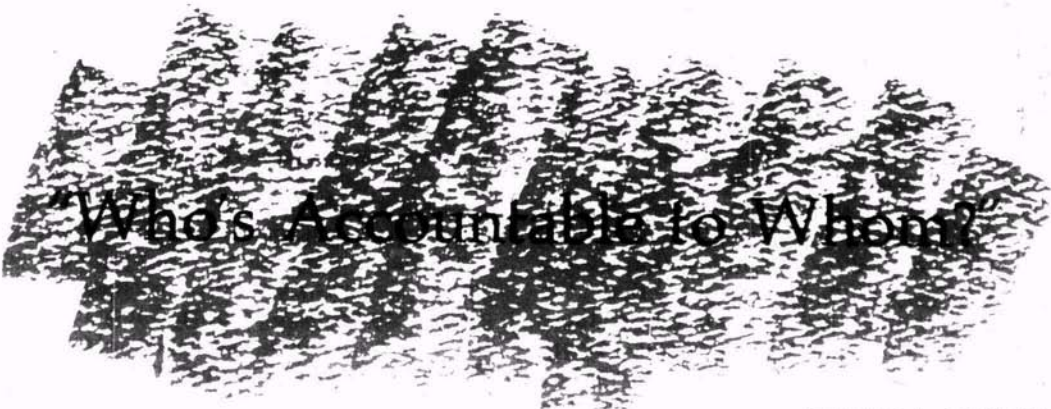




Who's Accountable to Whom?

ARTHUR L. COSTA *

WE ARE becoming increasingly aware of the thrust toward more personal power—power of the individual to direct his own education, shape his own environment, and derive his own value system. On the other hand, educators are being called on the carpet to make an accounting for the time, money, and energy being poured into the educational complex intended to develop “responsible citizens.” Some educational leaders are in a quandary as they anticipate the implications of the quest for more autonomy by students and teachers while at the same time trying to satisfy the demands for increased accountability, assessment, and justification.

Autonomy or Immunity?

There seems to be some confusion as to the meaning of autonomy in the educational lexicon. While autonomy connotes self-governance, auto-regulation, and self-modification, it may be that some students and teachers are demonstrating their interpretation of autonomy to mean immunity, exemption, or lack of restriction. Autonomy and freedom are not synonymous. Using these definitions, the autonomous person would consciously search for the implications of his behavior on others in order to modify himself; while an immune person would feel no obligation to determine the consequences of his actions.

A graffito, recently viewed emblazoned on a college wall, manifested this search for immunity: “If it feels good, do it!” In a discussion with some students about their interpretation of this declaration, they agreed that another phrase should have been added: “. . . as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone.” The addition of this dependent clause is enough to shift the intent from immunity to autonomy. The autonomous person would be responsible for and sensitive to the effects of his actions on others. He would assess the situation to determine appropriate behavior; he would evaluate the power of his decisions in relation to the effect they produced; he would behave in similar situations based on his evaluation of previous performance.

Is there ever a state of complete immunity? To identify any living person who is totally immune would be difficult indeed. Perhaps a hermit who has chosen to sever all social interaction is neither influenced by nor influencing of others. Yet as soon as two or more humans choose to interact in each other’s social setting, there are restrictions placed upon their immunity. They are then obliged to act autonomously since their interaction will have mutual effect. Therefore, there will be no person, functioning in a social situation, who is totally immune.

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Is there ever a state of complete autonomy? Many individuals have never been educated to make decisions based upon the assessment of their effect on others, and it is often difficult to obtain feedback as to the effect of one's presence and action. Furthermore, the particular situation may allow or demand more or less autonomous behavior. Intuitive, sensual, and aesthetic acts of love and play may allow for interaction at the immediate, feeling level rather than the mediated, conscious level. Therefore, there may never be a totally autonomous person. There are only those who act more or less autonomously as the situation permits. Autonomy and immunity, then, may be thought of, not as states, but as degrees along a continuum.

It has been suggested that the artist may be in a position to achieve greatest freedom. He may be free to create any expression of art which pleases him. However, as soon as he releases his products for others to interpret, to compare, and to judge, he is no longer immune. If his works continually find no significance in the eye, mind, and heart of others, he may decide to alter his performance. Although artists need courage to take the consequences of their individual expression, they are probably the most sensitive people in the world and therefore are the most highly influenced by others and by the emotional climate of the times. They may be greatly autonomous in that they are sensitive to and restricted by those influences.

Likewise, the scientist is free to create any theory he wishes. However, the availability of data to substantiate his theories places restrictions on the power and usefulness of those theories. If he is to be honored by his colleagues, he must demonstrate how his theories predict, control, or explain events in the environment. He is therefore not only accountable to his profession, but also to nature. Scientists may be relatively autonomous in that they subject their theories to the scrutiny of others and to the test of experimentation and prediction.

Autonomy, for our purposes then, might mean that a person is self-governing: Deciding for himself how to behave based upon

evidence of the effect of his behavior and ideas on other people, objects, events, and conditions in the environment in which he exists; and altering himself accordingly.

The Autonomous Teacher

We are all basically teachers. Teaching is an artistic act, based in science, and having social consequences. Yet too many educators "do their own thing" because it "feels good." Studies have shown that many teachers derive greatest satisfaction from their classroom experience because of the emotional rewards rather than from the achievement of objectives.¹ While it may be valid to evaluate some educational endeavors at the intuitive, "feel good" level, there are increasing data which indicate a teacher's interactive behaviors *do* have a direct effect on classroom learning. These behaviors can create the conditions which maximize or detract from the achievement of educational objectives.²

An autonomous teacher, therefore, is one who would be conscious of the educational goals and objectives which he, his students, and his community have selected or developed, and he would be conscious of his own behaviors which facilitate the acquisition of those objectives. He would create or employ instructional strategies intended to provide conditions in which students demonstrate desired learnings; he would observe, analyze, and interpret students' behavior; and he would experiment with his own behaviors to determine their usefulness as tools which affect learning.

Instant Autonomy

We may believe that the main purpose of education is to help students get along without the teacher. However, we find many

¹ Philip Jackson and Elizabeth Belford. "Educational Objectives and the Joy of Teaching." *School Review* 73: 267-91; 1965.

² N. A. Flanders. *Teacher Influence, Pupil Attitudes, and Achievement*. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, U.S. Office of Education Cooperative Research Project No. 397. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1960.

practices in our schools which increase dependence rather than autonomy. Teachers (or other persons) set goals. Textbooks decide what ideas are important and select the data to support those ideas. Myriad school rules dictate which behaviors are appropriate. Lock-step curricula determine levels of conceptual entry for the student. Inflexible schedules impose time limitations on student interests and rates of learning. Grades impose hidden criteria. Then, upon graduation, students are suddenly expected to demonstrate autonomous behavior.

Autonomy, like any other learned behavior, is acquired through practice. Developmental curricula with corresponding instructional strategies are being developed which increasingly trust the student with more decision making, goal setting, self-analysis, and sensitization to others. Inquiry is an instructional strategy intended to help the student direct his own thinking processes.³ Self-enhancing education is an interactive strategy intended to help the student take charge of his own emotions.⁴ Role playing is intended to sensitize students to the effects of their own behaviors and those of others in social situations.⁵

Some students will come to school with the ability to behave more autonomously than others. There are also situations in the school day which elicit more autonomy on the part of students than do other situations. Yet with any set of instructional objectives, be it reading with comprehension, forming letters accurately, or responding to beauty in the environment, the student must ultimately come to perform this behavior by and for himself—autonomously, without the initiation and direction of the teacher. If the student graduates with more dependence on the

teacher for the initiation of desirable behavior than when he entered school, then what has been gained? Behavioral objectives for any curricular goal must be sequenced along a continuum or taxonomy of increasing autonomy. In other words, descriptions should be made of how students behave differently as they are progressing toward more self-direction, self-evaluation, and self-modification.

As students develop increasing autonomy, the teacher needs to diagnose this growth and alter his own behavior accordingly. As the student becomes more and more self-directive, the teacher would correspondingly become less and less of the decision maker for him. He would gradually resign himself to become only a part of the student's rich and responsive environment.⁶

Supervision for Autonomous Teachers

A militant cry for increasing teacher autonomy is being heard today. Perhaps some educational leaders are hesitant to accept this appeal. If these outbursts seek immunity, then the leaders' reluctance may be justified. However, if teachers are truly interested in becoming autonomous, then educational leaders should enhance that endeavor.

Few teacher education institutions today prepare teachers with the skills and techniques of self-analysis and self-modification. Yet this should be a goal of all teacher preparation programs. The many forms of interaction analysis, micro-teaching, and self-other awareness training are but a few strategies being employed to develop more autonomous educators. But since some teachers enter the profession with a greater degree of autonomy than others, the leaders of teachers must be able to diagnose this ability and plan in-service strategies which will develop greater autonomy. And, parallel to the classroom, taxonomic descriptions should be made of what teachers do as they are progressing

³ Arthur L. Costa, Charles Lavaroni, Fred Newton, and Ben Strasser. "Inquiry: A Strategy for Developing Autonomous Learners." *Modern Trends in Education*. Unit III. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1967.

⁴ Norma Randolph and William Howe. *Self-Enhancing Education*. Palo Alto, California: Stanford Press, 1966.

⁵ Fannie R. Shaftel. *Role Playing for Social Values: Decision Making in Social Studies*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967.

⁶ Arthur L. Costa. "Strategies for Developing Autonomous Learners." *Audiovisual Instruction* 13 (8): 832-34; October 1968.

Levels of Accountability	Autonomy			
	Identifying Performance Objectives	Facilitating Growth in Autonomy	Diagnosing Growth in Autonomy	Altering Self-Behavior in Response to Growing Autonomy
Students	What student behaviors are desired?			
Teachers	What teacher behaviors are needed to facilitate development of those student objectives?	What strategies will teachers employ to help students become more autonomous?	By what behaviors can teachers recognize that students are becoming more autonomous?	How should teachers behave differently as students become more autonomous?
Leaders	What leadership behaviors are needed to facilitate development of those teacher competencies?	What strategies will leaders employ to help teachers become more autonomous?	By what behaviors can leaders recognize that teachers are becoming more autonomous?	How should leaders behave differently as teachers become more autonomous?

Chart 1. Levels of Autonomy

toward more autonomy. Likewise, the leader's role changes as the teacher acquires the skills of and inclination for self-supervision. Perhaps Chart 1 expresses the idea more concisely.

Accountable to Whom?

Somehow we have developed the notion that the classroom level is the locus of responsibility for the achievement of educational objectives. Some state legislatures hold school districts accountable for performances on achievement tests. The taxpayers hold the school boards accountable for running the schools. Boards of education, in turn, hold school administrators answerable for the expenditure of time and resources, and building administrators hold teachers accountable for the achievement of educational objectives. Teachers, in turn, hold students accountable for demonstrating the acquisition of desired behaviors.

An examination of some of the strategies and practices employed at each of these levels reveals neither the accountability for nor the development of autonomy in others. To illustrate this point, one state adopted reading texts for statewide use and also selected standardized reading achievement tests to evaluate and publicly compare each

district's performance. One fallacy, however, was that the tests did not measure the same performance objectives as those of the textbook program. Who is accountable?

A common practice is for district administrators to consider the building principals as the "instructional leaders" of the schools. Yet at the same time the principals are given burdensome tasks, meaningless audits, superfluous inventories, and other "administrivia."

At a recent music in-service meeting, a district music consultant told a group of teachers they were expected to be on page 25 by Thanksgiving, 67 by Christmas, 118 by Easter, and to finish the text (intended to develop joy and understanding of music) by the end of the year.

This recalls to mind the professor of education who droned on about the importance of establishing interest and motivation; and all the while his students slept. By our own actions, are we developing autonomy or immunity in others?

Accountability for Product and Process

Accountability for our educational products is with us. We are busy developing behavioral descriptions of learning for students. The next step is to develop descriptions of

desirable teacher competencies to achieve these objectives. Then someone will describe the desirable performances of leaders of teachers. Then . . . etc.⁷

Yet we can never develop autonomous products until we examine those processes and strategies we use in developing autonomy in others. Every quarter of the educational institution needs to examine the effect of its

⁷ Albert J. Harris. "The Effective Teacher of Reading." *The Reading Teacher* 23 (3): 195-204; December 1969.

actions and decisions on others. If teachers examine their own behavior to determine how it develops autonomous learners; if administrators and consultants devise and evaluate strategies to develop autonomous teachers; if school trustees and superintendents examine the constraints and limitations which they place on the autonomy of the building principals; then we might more realistically answer the question: "Who's accountable to whom?" That's autonomy, baby: Accountable for ourselves! □

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Maxine Dunfee *Professor of Education, Indiana University*

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