

Guest Editorial

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APRIL 1982

VOLUME 39

NUMBER 7

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ISSN 0013-1784



It is fitting, indeed, that this issue should focus on the affective dimensions of education. For one thing, the curriculum has in recent time become badly skewed toward high test scores at any cost—an imbalance, to be sure, that is not without its cause—and for another, there is much to suggest that the psychological well-being of the nation has diminished perceptibly. For example, Daniel Yankelovich finds in his surveys that our traditional ethos of moderation and control has given way to an endless quest for self-gratification; that, in the last three decades, the percentage of people who leave the work force in their best years has doubled and that more and more parents are putting their own search for fulfillment ahead of helping their children.

A dozen or so years ago, when some of our most perceptive theorists urged us to seek a better symmetry between cognitive and affective aims, they did not intend the mindless spate of "blind walks" and "magic circles" which followed. Aware of the integrative relationship between reason and feeling, they wanted, rather, an instructional program that brought the two into better alignment. And when they alerted us to the profound human need for self-esteem, they were advocating classrooms that developed authentic competence—a competence which could, in turn, engender a healthy concept of self. They did not have in mind a gratuitous effort to instill children with a counterfeit sense of adequacy.

Cognition and affect create their own interchange. Cognition (perception, knowledge, and belief) is a powerful force in shaping attitudes—and attitudes, because they determine what we see as good or bad in a given situation, are instrumental in determining our emotional responses. Hence in most emotional traumas we respond to stimuli that are cognitively perceived, cognitively interpreted, and cognitively resolved. It is what we think that causes us to feel euphoric or depressed. We would do well to reflect on Carkhuff's prediction that affective education will

become increasingly important, on the observations of Aspy and Roebuck regarding its practical utility, on Arthur Combs' admonition that all education must have an affective component, and other arguments in this issue.

Affective education ought not be aimed at inducing a false sense of emotional contentment, either by distorting reality or by covering over anxieties with contrived and spurious feelings of satisfaction. It should, instead, equip students to meet life's problems directly, to fend for themselves, and to acquire the cognitive coping skills with which to counteract the emotional entanglements that are inevitable as humans go about their affairs. Affective states such as joy, anger, fear, and despondency arise inescapably. Thus the goal of affective education is to bring cognitive judgment to bear upon the antecedent conditions which evoke such emotions, upon the consequent behavior they generate, and upon sensible ways of dealing with them.

At the risk of appearing self-serving, I cannot help but allude to a finding emanating from my own work. I have, for the past four years, been involved in a lengthy study of artistry in teaching. One of the characteristics, it seems, that separates the artist teacher from the mediocre one is the ability to engage in collateral teaching—the process wherein a primary teaching objective and one or more secondary objectives are attacked simultaneously. Most instructional aims can be accomplished in a variety of ways. As a general rule, however, one approach is more conducive to collateral teaching than another.

The best of teachers excel at instructional procedures in which they achieve both cognitive and affective growth. They neither subvert facts for feelings nor permit a preoccupation with serenity and gratification to interfere with solid academic gains. Such teachers are as concerned about students as they are about subject. They set high standards, demand respectable effort, and keep a constant eye on test norms. They also worry about the sentient susceptibilities of their charges, and are as alert to an opportunity for easing stress as to correcting a misplaced modifier. ■

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