

# Fact or Fetish?

*In the light of the many major problems of the world which appear to rise more from fetish than fact, the issues in our own field of education may seem of small importance. Yet how can we expect to solve the great problems when we have trouble thinking straight even about the minor ones? The foregoing articles present abstract concepts of thought; those which follow discuss specific issues in education about which our thinking has been muddled. It is much easier to talk about proof and prejudice in the abstract than to take it into our own field and point to this as proof and that as prejudice. But we believe that educators will want to seek solutions to their own problems. Therefore, we invite you to give serious consideration to the matters discussed in the following articles.*

☛ *This is not an either/or issue; there must be the child AND the subject matter*

## SUBJECT MATTER OR THE CHILD

● FANNIE R. SHAFTEL

SELDOM IS THERE a discussion of the modern school in which someone does not raise the issue of whether we are going to teach subject matter or the child. The implication is that emphasis upon child development will result in little subject matter being learned.

This is not an either/or issue. Wholesome child growth demands the use of extensive subject matter. As children inter-act with their environment they are continually trying to understand life phenomena. One of the outstanding characteristics of childhood is an insatiable curiosity.

If children are helped to find illuminating answers to their questions, their curiosity increases and their power to find further meaningful answers grows. If their eager questions are

ignored or turned aside because adults demand that they conform to arbitrarily determined studies, children soon cease to ask questions and content themselves with minimum ways of meeting adult requirements.

The issue is not subject matter *or* the child but rather *what* subject matter and how shall it be developed.

### *Subject Matter to Fit Needs*

The modern school is designed to afford children experiences in exploring their environment in ways that satisfy their growth needs. It organizes subject matter, skills, arts, and materials to serve the developing experiences of the children. In this process, subject matter has no arbitrary organization. Any subject matter is used which helps to il-

Copyright © 1944 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.