

schools have in common, with substantial differences in those areas in which they do not share to any marked extent. Children in schools with modern practices have been found to excel in honesty, in ability to plan and take the initiative, and in the success with which they translate their knowledge into action and production.

Guides to Desirable Experiences

The knowledge of children and of society finds its important tests in the types of curriculum experiences provided by schools and teachers and in the methods for the harmonization of

internal needs and external requirements. Accepting the fact of individual differences, the modern teacher has the task of helping all children to grow.

The full involvement of the learner is a clue to method and one guide to necessary and desirable experiences. A second guide exists in the nature of society and the possibilities of organized knowledge and community resources. Schools that seem to differ markedly on the surface are surprisingly similar in areas of common experience but differ in the qualitative areas in which lie many of the objectives and needs of modern society.

Experiences to Meet Goals

J. CECIL PARKER

In looking at the question of the place of direct and vicarious experiences in the learning situation, J. Cecil Parker, associate professor of education at the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that the question is not one of either-or. Rather, he maintains, it is that of using both types of experiences in terms of the accomplishment of purposes. Mr. Parker's analysis points clearly toward the essential characteristics of real and effective learning.

STUDENTS LEARN BEST when the experiences they have are interesting and important to them as individuals and members of a group. Sounds simple, doesn't it?

When we dig a little deeper we discover that we really learn when we must—to achieve certain goals and values. Changes in behavior are, without doubt, made in order to accomplish something that the learner thinks important. The extent to which an individual participates in learning experiences planned for him depends primarily

upon the meaningfulness with which he discovers relationships between the learning experiences and his goals that he is sure are significant. In other words, the change in behavior is secondary in import to the realization of his purposes.

This over-simplified statement of the relationship between learning experiences and goals or purposes may well serve as the major clue in making decisions regarding the many problems of what types of experiences to provide in schools for learners. Should the experiences provided be real? Should they be

vicarious? Should they be both? If so, in what proportions and when?

It is not the purpose of this brief consideration of these issues to review the historical development of practices in schools regarding the persisting problem of direct versus indirect experience, of real experience as compared with vicarious. In contrast, two general theses are presented and developed briefly. Space limitations prevent the utilization of extensive illustrations.

Selections of Experiences for Learners Must Be Based Upon Consideration of Potential Contributions to Ends Desired.

Self-Direction Is Imperative

Public schools are seeking to attain learning products that make it possible for our democratic society to continue to exist and to improve as well as to make it possible for individuals to live effectively in that society. This means that the achievement of a high degree of self-direction on the part of the learner is crucial. The basic sources of these purposes are the commitment of the people of the United States to democracy as the way of doing things and the method of accomplishing organized group purposes. This dictates as the major function of public education the task of making it possible for each student to become increasingly effective in meeting situations in a democracy that is continuously changing, improving, and playing a significant world role.

Democratic Living Points the Way

We are more and more concerned about facility with processes of living democratically. The competencies that

are necessary for the individual and the group to arrive at appropriate democratic behavior in specific situations are the crux of our answers to the problems of what types of learning experiences to provide for students in public schools.

Goals Govern Selection

School experiences, real or vicarious, direct or indirect, must be selected that offer the greatest potentials for achieving our purposes. One key to effective selection resides in relationships of the experiences chosen to our purposes and *to the goals of the student.*

The lad who works for a grade in English class so that he can continue to participate in sports is aware of a relationship between the grade and his goal—participation in sports. This is true because the school is making it so, but it is not a particularly meaningful relationship to the learner since he is certain that he can play basketball efficiently without the English class or a passing grade.

One group of students confronted with an increasing number of cases of athlete's foot asked the physical education teacher to help them determine the causes and how to avoid them. In this way they were confident of a direct relationship between the activity or experiences and their goals. They initiated and carried through a project to make individual shower clogs (outside of "regular" school experiences) and used them successfully as a solution to the problem.

Relationships Must Be Clear

If our objectives are to become the purposes of the learner, real experiences must be provided that make it possible

for him to relate his needs, his values, and his goals to the purposes of the school and vice versa. This means an increasing proportion of direct and real experiences supported by interpretative vicarious experiences. The support that comes from helping the learner see the connections between each learning activity and past experience, what others have learned, and future action is most significant. It helps in the discovery of meaning as it assists in seeing the full significance of what was done.

The reverse is equally true as meaningful concepts are rooted in first-hand perceptual experiences. The use of appropriate subject matter, of appropriate drill, and the like embedded in vicarious experiences is essential. The crucial aspect, when considered in the light of our ends, is the necessity for a direct relationship, observable by the learner, of the vicarious activities to what is done and to goals that are accepted as important.

The student may memorize the order of the presidential administrations; learn the names of current government officials; solve geometric propositions because it is an assigned task. There may be effectiveness in securing the immediate change in behavior desired by the teacher, but the important considerations have to do with the real impacts upon the objectives of the school and the goals of the learner. Are we seeking increased docility or greater self-direction? Are we struggling for attitudes of eagerness to learn or hostility and antagonism toward the activity concerned?

The selection of our means cannot be separated from our ends. Sheer economy of learning indicates that the selec-

tion of our means and our ends must be in relationship to the valued goals of the learner and his processes of acquiring and changing his goals. The school has to make a choice between a preponderance of vicarious experiences supported by numerous pressure devices and a preponderance of real experiences supported by relationships to goals and by vicarious experiences that directly contribute to the attainment of valued goals.

Selections of Experiences for Learners Must Be Based Upon Consideration of How Individuals and Groups Learn.

Changed Behavior Results

The most important characteristic of learning is that the result is changed behavior in seeking a goal. If we want a student to behave democratically we must provide experiences in which he acts democratically and achieves goals that he values. This makes essential real experiences in which he gets things done.

Intrinsic Motivation Gives a Clue

For effective learning to take place there must be motivation. That is, the learner must have interest in achieving something and be aware of the need to act in order to achieve it. We are convinced that intrinsic motivation is superior to extrinsic.

Do real or vicarious experiences offer greater possibilities of achieving intrinsic motivation? The evidence seems ample to respond that direct and real experiences provide much greater and more effective motivation. In fact, the only really effective way to motivate

vicarious experiences is to bring about a definite relationship between the vicarious experiences and goals incorporated in real situations.

Permanence Grows from Use

Learning products are remembered when they are used in situations and under conditions that are satisfying. A great many of the learning products achieved in school tend to slip away because they are not used. The principal problem in spelling is to spell words in their normal settings—writing of all kinds.

Certainly real experiences have advantages over vicarious ones in providing for the need to use learning products. The real experiences, of necessity, are part and parcel of everyday situations. If our hopes are for permanence of learning products in the fields of science, it is necessary for them to be acquired in relation to everyday situations. Reading about democracy develops ability to read about democracy. To learn to practice democratic procedures requires that they be used in achieving valued goals.

Range of Availability of Learning Products

Learning products vary widely in their availability to learners in differing situations. It is our aim to make them available in as wide a range of situations as possible in school and out.

One profitable lead in this respect is that of achieving the learning product under circumstances like those in which it is normally used. If learning the logic of Euclid is to make logical thinking available to the learner in a wide range of situations, it has to be learned by

using it in a wide range of situations. It will be noted that this means a wide range of real situations—real to the learner and to the democratic society of which he is a part.

Readiness Needs Examination

Students are always ready to learn some things and not ready to learn others. We have discovered much about readiness for reading but very little about readiness in other areas except that it is possible to provide experiences that create readiness for particular learning activities.

In terms of the known relationships between learning and the realization of purposes it seems reasonable to assume that readiness is the result of previous and present experiences and, further, that direct experiences offer superior possibilities of contributing to readiness for learning. This is because of the possible intimate relationships to goals. What students do when they are free of adult domination is a most fruitful source of material from which to make selections of learning experiences.

Evaluation of Progress Is Essential

We learn most effectively when we are aware of progress toward the achievement of our goal. It helps if we evaluate our progress frequently. It is most meaningful if we evaluate our progress in terms of goals that are intrinsically significant. For this to be possible there must be real objectives that are incorporated in actual situations.

Learners' Purposes Are Served

It is possible to continue the analysis indefinitely, but any amount of analysis continues to add up to the selection of

a preponderance of real experiences supported by direct relationships to goals and by vicarious experiences that contribute intrinsically. A military instruction manual (1943) emphasized *doing* and *doing together*. Schools may well accept this idea and consider this procedure—"Tell him how, tell him why, show him how, have him to do it in slow motion, have him do it in as nearly normal situation as possible, evaluate strengths and weaknesses with him, and finally have him do it over."

Educational effectiveness can be reduced when vicarious experiences are not used to add meaning to real experi-

ences. Direct experience can fail almost as readily as vicarious. The learner may not know what is behind what he does in the direct experience. The crucial point is the relationship of the experience to the accomplishment of purposes.

It is not a question of direct versus vicarious experiences. The problem is one of selecting experiences for learners upon the basis of means and ends together. The selection in the present and the future must increase the proportion of real, direct experiences—for they must be related to learners' purposes to be vital.

What's the Use? *versus What's the Use!*

EDNA L. STERLING

The functional aspect of learning is extremely important, says Edna L. Sterling, director of language arts in Seattle, and emphasizes a balance of content and practical procedure in the use of content in any experience curriculum.

"IF IT ISN'T USEFUL, what's the use?" might easily be the query of a modern Alice in this land of increasing wonders. In the section on Home Decoration of a recent issue of *The New York Times*, the caption of a picture read "Decoration Today Means Planning Rooms for Use." The new president of Columbia University in his inaugural address said that the purpose of education is "to prepare the student for an effective personal and social life in a free society." And so we may say with Alice "Would it be of any use?" to

try to find out what kind of learning is useful.

What Are We After?

The word "functional" is employed today so frequently and so generally in discussion of matters educational that Alice and all her following come to wonder whether it applies to cabbages or kings and whether it really gets one out of the hole or in it.

Just for the sake of adventure, suppose we assume that learning in the modern world should serve a definite pur-

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