

# Ends and Means in Social Studies Instruction

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Evaluation's two purposes are discussed by Professor Lawrence E. Metcalf, College of Education, University of Illinois.

EVALUATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES, as in any other school subject, may have at least two aspects. One has to do with whether purposes are being achieved, while the other seeks to determine whether some purposes are better than others. The major issue in evaluation today is the extent to which we can evaluate scientifically.<sup>1</sup>

Few would deny that we can determine somewhat scientifically the extent to which ends are in process of achievement. A considerable number of teachers, however, doubt that ends can be grounded in their choice. It is believed that science is limited to testing propositions of fact and that the value problem involved in the choice of ends forces us to fall back upon intuition, reason or speculation. For supporting evidence these teachers may point to the physical sciences and the absence of teleology in those disciplines.

## CHANGING HUMAN RELATIONS

The nature of this issue becomes clearer as we look at one of the hypotheses tested by social studies teachers when they work upon the problem of changing human relations. I refer to

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<sup>1</sup> For an interesting discussion of this problem, see "A Theory of Valuation" by John Dewey, Vol. II, No. 4, *The International Encyclopedia for Unified Science*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939, 67 p.

the frustration-aggression hypothesis as it has been elaborated by John Dollard. Briefly stated, this hypothesis is that frustration is always followed by aggression and that behind all aggression lies some kind of frustration. Frustration is defined as a state of tension which accompanies the thwarting of needs, and aggression is defined as any injury done to an organism or organism surrogate.

Louis Rath and his co-workers have revised this hypothesis by saying that frustration may be followed by one or more of four possible consequences. These are: aggression, withdrawal, submissiveness, and psychosomatic disturbances.<sup>2</sup> The original Dollard hypothesis still holds if one interprets withdrawal, submissiveness and psychosomatic illnesses as forms of aggression directed toward the self. This interpretation places the gastric ulcer, shyness, suicide, loneliness and wife-beating within one category.

## Two Questions Involved

As we look at this hypothesis we see two questions involved. Is aggression, broadly interpreted, reduced as teachers recognize and begin to meet such basic emotional needs as belongingness, achievement, love and sharing? Is it de-

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<sup>2</sup> See "Application to Education of the Needs Theory," by Louis Rath, which is available from him at Box 26, Bronxville, N. Y.

sirable that we seek to reduce the frequency and acuteness of such behaviors as have been defined as aggressive? The first question is concerned with progress or lack of progress toward achievement of purposes, and most of us would agree that the answer can best be ascertained through a scientific approach. It is over the method of answering the second question that an issue is likely to arise.

Yet the answer to the second question is ascertained in much the same way as that to the first question if we start from the assumption that ends are not intrinsic, or, put another way, that any end is part of a means-ends continuum. Robert S. Fleming,<sup>3</sup> for example, put to a test the frustration-aggression hypothesis when he found that psychosomatic illnesses among elementary school children became less acute and less frequent when teachers and parents were made sensitive to thwarted needs and took steps to meet those needs. In other words, he gave the hypothesis the test of predicted and verifiable consequences.

Fleming would not have tested the hypothesis had he not valued the reduction of that aggression which takes the form of psychosomatic illness. Was this valuing scientific? Again this valuing rested upon the test of predicted and verifiable consequences. Fleming could, and did, ground the proposition that children who become freer from psychosomatic disturbances attend school more regularly, participate in more school activities, gain in social acceptance, and make better use of learning opportunities. His valuing rested

upon propositions of belief—as did his evaluation of achievement—and it is agreed by almost all professional evaluators that such propositions are best grounded through the methods of the scientist.

### Conflicting Consequences

Most teachers would not agree with Samuel Johnson's crusty doctor who said to the patient who wanted to live, "Sir, I do not see the necessity." All of us probably believe that the less aggression in the world today the better. *At least we believe in less aggression as a consequence until its achievement conflicts with the achievement of equally valuable consequences.* The problem of evaluating ends becomes more complicated when a given means leads to achievement of mixed and perhaps conflicting consequences.

Clearly, we can evaluate scientifically when we are trying to find out whether valued consequences are coming into being. Equally clearly, we can defend achievement of certain consequences by determining what further consequences are implied. But there is some basis for saying there is no value problem until one is faced with the task of choosing among conflicting consequences.

In Fleming's study, for example, there is implied but never stated evidence that some of the teachers may have been doing too much for some of the children. Much of the emphasis upon meeting needs may cut off rather than promote learning of a certain kind. If insufficient attention is given to clarification and reconstruction of needs, children may find that the operations of the teacher reduce the "problematicness" of the environment.

<sup>3</sup> See his dissertation written at New York Univ. in 1949, available from the U. S. Office of Education.

The child who lacks a feeling of belonging has the problem of making friends. The over-protective and over-solicitous teacher may deny to such a child an opportunity to learn processes and concepts of problem-solving. Yet the teacher who entirely ignores emotional needs may find it difficult, if not impossible, to teach children simple motor responses—let alone complicated processes of problem-solving.

### **Clarification Needed**

Until terms are re-defined in the light of a developing and well-developed theory of education, one finds some concepts conflict between John Dollard's *Frustration-Aggression* and John Dewey's *How We Think*. Dollard says frustration occurs when a goal response is interrupted. In contrast, Dewey says the thwarting of goal responses creates in children an opportunity to think reflectively. We cannot possibly treat reflective thought as a form of aggression without revising considerably our negative valuing of all aggression.

Most teachers would say that they want their students to think reflectively but that they prefer students who do not punch one another in the nose at the drop of a hat. Evidently there is a difference between aggression as Dollard defines it and reflection as Dewey defines it. If the meeting of emotional needs reduces both aggression and reflective thought then we have a value problem which arises from creation of mixed and conflicting consequences.

### **Tests of Concepts in Social Studies**

Some of the studies suggest that the learning of motor responses is improved as teachers begin to meet emotional

needs. There are no comparable studies which throw light on what happens to the learning of concepts when the needs therapy is applied. This deficiency in research exists largely because our achievement tests in the social studies and other school subjects emphasize mastery of verbal skills rather than meanings and understandings. The so-called tests of concepts in the social studies, for example, are little more than tests of vocabulary. The student who has learned to say that "a bicameral legislature consists of two houses" may or may not possess a concept of bicameralism. To him bicameralism may mean some kind of duplex dwelling.

Evidence is rather conclusive that the learning of verbal skills is closely associated with: (a) the social class background of the student, and (b) his feelings of emotional security. These factors seem to be more important than any particular technique of teaching. Children of middle-class background acquire these verbal skills more readily than those of lower-class background. Children who feel that they are loved and wanted learn these skills more readily than those children whose basic needs are thwarted. We have, on the other hand, little conclusive evidence which will serve to indicate the relationship that exists between needs and conceptual learning.

### **Tests of Conceptual Learning**

The theory of education elaborated by Dewey in *How We Think* is nothing less than a theory of conceptual learning. He is saying that we learn concepts, or meanings, as beliefs are re-examined within a problematic environment. Ac-

According to this theory, any approach to needs which reduces the freedom to think would limit the learning of concepts. We need to test more rigorously the conceptual learning of students as the needs theory is acted upon by teachers. It is possible that the deeply frustrated personality cannot think reflectively. It is possible also that some frustration is essential to the learning of concepts. It has been assumed by many teachers that a problem-centered curriculum would meet the needs of everyone and this, too, is an idea which has not received sufficient and searching examination.

When needs are expressed by children, the teacher may react in any of several ways. He may ignore, thwart, meet, re-construct, or clarify the particular need which is expressed. Advocates of the needs therapy have tended to emphasize meeting rather than thwarting or ignoring. If research in the area of conceptual learning suggests that the direct meeting of needs reduces both aggression and the learning of concepts, then teachers will be faced with a value conflict which may force them to re-examine the whole needs concept.

This re-examination of purposes can be as scientific as was Fleming's testing of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Such re-examination would probably include the testing of ideas having to do with relationships between means and ends. What are the further consequences of reducing aggression and how do these compare with the further consequences of limiting the learning of concepts? What approach to emotional needs, if any, may reduce aggression and also promote learning of both

concepts and verbal skills? Questions such as these can be answered scientifically even though they involve the problem of what ends to pursue.

### **Possible Limitations of Science**

Some limitation upon the role of science in the social studies and in the whole area of evaluation may always exist because of the many variables involved, and because of the difficulty of tracing through the means-ends relationship. But we add unnecessarily to our difficulties when we make false assumptions.

It is false to assume that means are sharply different from ends except for purposes of analytical reasoning. It is more reasonable and true to assume that every means is an end, and that every end is a means to a further end. It is reasonable also to assume, and even to believe, that value choices are related to the testing of propositions of belief even though facts alone may fail to resolve a particular value conflict. Thus far, we have not identified in operational terms any method of resolving value conflicts which works any better than the reflective, or scientific, testing of means-ends relationships.

### **How Evaluate Purposes?**

Much of the conflict between facts and values is more apparent than real. We do not expect the civil engineer to build bridges. Rather we expect him to build *good* bridges. A bridge is always good for something and never good for nothing. Likewise, it is not too much to expect the social studies to do a good job of pursuing good purposes.

If we cannot determine intelligently the relative goodness of alternative pur-

poses, then, there is little in evaluation that warrants the use of a word which means, if anything, the appraising of ends rather than the mere determination of the direction in which we are moving. What good does it do us to

know where we are going without knowing whether we want to go there? And is it possible for us to conceive of any approach to knowing which is alternative to the approach of scientific method?

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## *Toward the Open Mind*

ELEANOR W. THOMPSON

A systematic approach to the creation of open-mindedness is described by Eleanor W. Thompson, Curriculum Assistant in the Open-mindedness Study, School District of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

IN *Toward the Open Mind*<sup>1</sup> a group of participants in the Open-mindedness Study of the Philadelphia Public Schools have endeavored to recount and analyze experiences of the entire group in helping pupils become more open-minded. It has been written by school people for school people, in the hope that others will join what the writers have come to regard as "an adventure in education."

A distinguished citizen of Philadelphia, the late Samuel S. Fels, provided inspiration and financial assistance for this adventure in education. Mr. Fels was convinced that "people everywhere are indoctrinated with a lasting bias in various directions . . . leading to stagnation." He believed that "this condi-

tion was the fault of man himself,"<sup>2</sup> and that it had never been directly attacked. "If people learn to be closed-minded," he asked, "why can't they be taught to be open-minded?"

To try to answer this question, groups of Philadelphia teachers and principals—in all more than two hundred—analyzed their own teaching techniques, consulted experts, read extensively and discussed procedures by which they could help pupils become more open-minded. The focus throughout the study has been on the pupils.

### HALLMARKS OF OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Participants in the study realized that first they must know what kind of person they were seeking to develop. After examining hundreds of cases of closed-mindedness and of open-mindedness, they decided that an open-minded person tends: to be alert, curious, interested and even a little excited about

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<sup>1</sup> *Toward the Open Mind* (125 p.) is a publication of the Curriculum Office of the Philadelphia Public Schools, 21st Street and the Parkway, Philadelphia 3. A discussion of the methods of teaching critical thinking by Joseph J. Goldstein, Constance Masi, Warren Vann and Sadie Zion, participants in the Study, appeared in *Educational Leadership*, Vol. VI, No. 4, January 1949, Pp. 235-241, under the title, "Thinking Can Be Learned."

<sup>2</sup> Samuel S. Fels, *An Adventure in Education*, p. 2 (mimeographed by Samuel S. Fels Fund, 1315 Walnut Street, Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania).

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