

EDUCATION: THE HUMANE PROCESS

ROBERT R. LEEPER

TO SELECT a theme for the year is to express a viewpoint, to indicate a direction, to set a goal. Such a goal may consist of a declarative statement, or a provocative question, or a phrase that expresses an ideal toward which we will travel in this issue and those to follow.

"Education: The Humane Process" is to be the focus of this year's issues of *Educational Leadership*. Selection of this topic seemed inevitably to follow the strong current of interest and commitment generated by last year's theme, "Humanizing the School."

Concerns

Perhaps many of our readers have been feeling, as we do, growing concern at several recent developments affecting schools and school people. One of these is a sense of uneasiness at the imminence of the federal juggernaut, as it seems to impinge on state departments of education, on schools and school systems. Will the temptation to shape proposals for federal grants in ways that seem more acceptable nationally cause local school people to be less sensitive to the urgent needs of their own school community?

Will such proposed projects, worthy though they may be, divert the energy and time of the local school people from essential to more tangential needs so far as the locality and the state are concerned? This is the crucial issue of local control of schools, which is one of the keys to the unparalleled success of the American experiment in universal free public education. Will the influence of federally sponsored and suggested programs cause us to become less aware of the requirements of children, teachers and others in the local school system?

A second concern is with the motives and the ultimate effect of the growing floodtide of publicity in all media advocating computerization and mechanization of education. Can the technology live up to its promises? Will educators be included in the planning and development of the programs? Will the wave of publicity releases, stressing the "inevitability" of such changes, sweep school people into an unexamined acceptance of machine based programs that may not respond to the individual needs of the young and indeed of the teachers themselves? Or will such changes lead to more effective individualization of instruction as promised?

Current mergers of textbook publishing and computer-electronic firms may

make possible the production and marketing of packaged programs of machine-oriented education, many of which are labeled as "teacher-proof." Are these programs based on sound educational and psychological principles of learning? Are they cast in an outmoded stimulus-response psychology, which lends itself so well to programmed instruction? Or are they conscious of a more modern approach through field theory psychology, which may be more difficult to program but which has more respect for the learner and for the contribution which he brings to the teaching-learning situation? Do these packaged programs represent the most effective means of teaching the values, skills and attitudes needed by young Americans growing up in today's troubled world?

A third concern may simply be that of the growing *bigness* in the size of the school and of the classes therein. What is the optimum size for a school? When the population for a building reaches a thousand? two thousand? three thousand or more? What is the optimum size for a class or a "learning group"? When the number of pupils reaches thirty? fifty? two hundred or more? Is "number" the significant criterion or is it rather the opportunity for learning through interaction and participation that counts? Whether it is called "team teaching" or "ETV instruction"—what does this mean to the individual pupil? Who really knows him as a person who is experiencing and undergoing, who is learning? Who actually cares about his progress or growth? How does he perceive himself and others? Tied in with this are his learning and acceptance of values, of a feeling of allegiance to a democratic way of life that will carry over into his personal as well as his public behavior and commitment.

A fourth concern may be the constant feeling of unbearable pressures that are in the consciousness of the young people and of the teachers and even of the school administrators. These are the constant promptings that we must *achieve*, that we must in all endeavors rank far above our fellow pupils, above the other schools in the system, above other systems in the region or the state.

On a more personal level, there are the urgent needs for acceptance that are felt by all of us. Are we fostering the kind of school climate in which extreme competitiveness leads to alienation on the part of pupils and staff, to a feeling that each man's hand is turned against his fellows? Or are we consciously creating a humane and accepting climate that is all-pervasive and that is supportive for all persons within the school setting and even reaching beyond?

Humaneness

We in school work are, both by conviction and professional preparation, inclined toward that which is *humane*. We believe that we are devoted to human welfare; that we have an interest in and a concern for our fellow man. This, of course, we must not only believe, we must actually put such beliefs into practice in the day-by-day and moment-by-moment confrontations in classrooms, in halls, on playgrounds, in laboratories. We must practice these beliefs in *all* our contacts, with pupils, with teachers, with supervisors, administrators, parents and others.

To be humane is to be committed to a set of attitudes that demand much of a

person, especially if that person is an educator. One of the tenets of humaneness is that of the importance of man as a natural being. Another tenet is faith in the perfectibility of man. This, of course, is one of the foundation stones and the reason-for-being of universal public education. A third tenet is faith in the dignity and worth of man and of man's capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and the methods of intelligence.

We do *not* propose to devote this year's issues in toto to a delineation and elaboration of the *process* of education. We aim, rather, to emphasize, whenever and wherever appropriate, the importance of humaneness in all aspects of the teaching-learning act, in all supervisory or administrative encounters, in all contacts between school people and parents or other citizens.

Our schools are not, nor should they be, "islands unto themselves." Our task must be in concert with that of all citizens who work together for the common welfare. We are, of course, more concerned than other agencies with certain aspects of the broad spectrum of human need. We focus our efforts on the development of certain cultural skills, knowledge, values and understandings. Even in these areas, however, the school does not stand alone. Other institutions and individuals are just as concerned, though perhaps with other areas of primary emphasis. We need continually to assess our essential task and our resources for meeting this need adequately. We may find that our strongest ally in meeting a need is one of the other social institutions in our community, one with which we have not previously cooperated.

To be humane is to participate in the mainstream of humanity. If the level of such participation brings a trace of worry to the mind of the school person, he must have readily available some of the strength that self-knowledge and a stalwart personal philosophy can give. He must believe with his whole heart that only through commitment to humaneness can mankind demonstrate, one to another, that our world need not be the jungle it seems to be when an individual act of violence or an instance of organized crime or warfare occurs.

We are concerned that the process of education, which is our principal means for improving the lot of mankind, will be characterized by humaneness in all its aspects. We must strive to keep within our consciousness and be willing to exemplify in our practices, the fact that to be honestly human is to act humanely not sometimes but in all our contacts with our fellow man.

Issues for 1966-67

Our choice of theme this year reflects our continuing concern with the processes of education and with the quality of humaneness which we believe should characterize these processes at all levels. The eight issues of the journal will relate either directly or indirectly to this theme, which we consider an all-pervasive one.

- The October issue is directed to the topic, "Federal Funds: To Assist or To Control?" Several articles in this issue examine some of the influences, pressures and challenges which seem to be associated with the introduction of federal funds into the schools at local and state levels. At issue is the question: Can federal

funds encourage rather than stifle local and state initiative in sound experimentation and innovation?

- "After Assessment, What?" will be the topic for the November issue. Whether or not a "national assessment" of education, which has been proposed, actually becomes a reality, the discussion which this proposal has aroused does cause us to look at some basic concerns in relation to assessment and evaluation in education. Perhaps these concerns are the following: How can we conceptualize and project an education that exemplifies the *actual* goals we hold as important? How can we assess results of education in the light of these goals?

- The December issue will be directed to the topic, "Generalist: Balance Factor in the School." Many persons in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development consider their unique role in education as that of the generalist. In a broader sense, perhaps the genius of ASCD has been and is to attract and to enhance the work of persons who claim allegiance to learning in all areas and to the nurturing of growth at all levels.

Today's trend toward specialization and compartmentalization, however, seems to threaten the role of the generalist. How can the contribution of the generalist today be clarified and improved in elementary and secondary education, in teacher education, in supervision and curriculum development and in school administration?

- "Guidance: Education or Therapy?" will be treated in January. Several articles in this issue will examine the status and prospects of the role of guidance and of guidance personnel in today's schools. What are the aims of guidance today? How should counselors and guidance personnel work with children and young people, with teachers, supervisors and others? Since the guidance function is an increasing one in school systems throughout the country, how can curriculum people work with teachers, administrators and others in making effective and productive use of such counseling and guidance services?

- The February issue will focus upon "Reading: Claims and Proof." Articles in this issue will attempt to answer such questions as these: What are our objectives in teaching reading in today's schools? What are the pressures, the "vested interests" at work in this field? What are our assets, our accomplishments in the teaching and learning of reading? How can innovations and claims in the area of reading be evaluated?

- In March the journal will concentrate on "Human Variability: The Insistent Element." Contributors to this issue will take a look at the value of, and the almost limitless potential in, differences and variations among individuals and groups. How can differences challenge and support the best in human aspiration and growth? Can schools at all levels provide for and build upon human variability?

- April will look critically at schools and schooling, trying to assess whether such a setting and process actually comprise a "Design for Alienation?" Examined

will be some of the realities in schools as they function today, the pressures of ill-suited instructional programs, school size and control, methods of instruction, parents' demands upon teachers, and teachers' demands upon pupils. Do such practices build toward the goals we profess or do they alienate students and staff from our goals, our values, our society? What remedies should we seek?

- The May issue will be an attempt at "Unlocking the School." Contributors to this issue will explore ways in which schools may be freed and encouraged to experiment, to innovate and to change. How can school people and citizens, working together, extend needed services to children and young people? The "need for open schools" will be the underlying theme of this issue.

This promises to be another challenging and satisfying year in the proud tradition of *Educational Leadership*. Your thoughtful reading, reaction, comment, advice and criticism can help us to live up to this tradition.

—ROBERT R. LEEPER, *Editor*, Educational Leadership.

FEDERAL FUNDS: TO ASSIST OR TO CONTROL?

J. HARLAN SHORES

IT SEEEMS strange that in his unceasing attempts to understand human behavior the psychologist has given so little attention to how people spend their money. Here is an extremely interesting display of relative values even when money is scarce and equally interesting when it is plentiful.

Numerous commentators and educators have noted how little is spent on the education of our children in comparison to that spent on cigarettes, beer, horse racing or useless gimmicks for the car or home. While these indulgences continue to claim American dollars in large numbers, education is not the penniless necessity it once was. Uncle Sam has endowed the schools.

Federal aid to education, a dream since the beginning of the professional life of even our most senior educators, is now a reality. Money is here in large amounts, and few doubt but that the support will increase. That this money is sorely needed, no thinking educator would deny. However, like other social advancements that enable a new happiness, this one also creates new problems. We may find that the long, hard fight for federal money was an easy one in comparison to the problem of spending it wisely.

Well-prepared professional educators, even when called by the snide term "educationists," are expert at stretching the local and state educational dollar over essential expenditures. No one is yet expert at spending federal monies to the best interests of public schools. Education is newly rich and the newly rich are known better for the mistakes made with their money than for using it to good advantage.

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