

There Is Much We Can Learn

VINCENT R. ROGERS *

IF THERE is one insight I have gained from my considerable experience abroad, it is, I suppose, the simple but terribly profound notion that *there is much we can learn from one another*. I say this with complete awareness of the political, cultural, economic, and other differences that exist among us; I say it with full knowledge of the ways in which one's own values and beliefs color one's perceptions of the life-ways of others; and I say it with some understanding of the technological gap that exists between the nations of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Despite these differences, and despite these problems, educators from all over the world are increasingly engaged in exchanges of views—*dialogues*, if you will—concerning the education of the world's children. I should emphasize at once that these contacts are indeed *exchanges* of views, rather than the one-sided imposition of one nation's educational ideas and practices upon another.

Educators from dozens of nations are sampling each other's wares, searching out those practices that appear to have relevance and meaning for their own schools, modifying and adapting such practices as they see fit, rejecting out of hand those that (no matter how well advertised) are clearly inappropriate, and, in the process, sharing *their* ideas with others.

As one views the process of education from a worldwide, international perspective, one is struck immediately with the number of problems calling for cross-cultural, supra-national attack; problems of common interest to scholars, school people, and educationists in a host of nations, Western and non-Western, developed and developing. For example:

1. There is an almost universal need for more effective educational approaches to the problem of building closer relationships between a school's academic offerings and the eventual civic behavior of its students.

2. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence indicating that

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much of what is taught to children in a given country about life in *other* nations and cultures is biased and inaccurate.

3. There is general concern about developing better ways to help children and youth learn to cope more effectively with the rapidly changing physical *and* social world in which we find ourselves.

4. Many nations are particularly concerned about the nature of education programs for "disadvantaged" children, for example, how these children may differ from other children in terms of attitude formation, values held, learning style, etc.; what their specific educational needs may be; and how to teach them more effectively.

5. There is general interest in questions concerning the political socialization of children, for example, *what* political attitudes, knowledges, and understandings are possessed by children of varying ages; *how* they are developed; and *how* the school might play a more effective role in their development.

6. There is an almost universal need for more effective means of *evaluating* both the cognitive and affective aspects of education in all areas.

7. There seems to be an international need for more challenging, creatively designed teaching materials of all kinds—visual, printed, manipulative, etc.

8. There is considerable interest in a number of countries in ways of improving the education of those who will ultimately teach children and youth.

9. Finally, there is the problem—on an international as well as on a national scale—of closing the gap between research findings and school practices. This is related, of course, to the problem of more effective means of internationally disseminating information.

In other words, there appears to be a great deal of overlapping interest, activity, and effort among persons working in education throughout the world. It seems to me that one of the most pressing needs of our time, then, is that we continue to move beyond our own national borders as we consider the types of problems discussed in this issue of *Educational Leadership*, and to recognize that, in C. E. Black's words,

We live in a world where societies are increasingly dependent for their security on factors that extend far beyond their boundaries; where systems of production require raw materials, markets, and skills that no one country can provide; where social relationships and cultural institutions overlap national confines; and where the orientation of the individual is developing toward acquiring values that know no national frontiers.¹ □

¹ C. E. Black. *The Dynamics of Modernization*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966. p. 29.



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