

Letters

Dear Editor:

Regarding your article, "Educational Leadership: No Longer a Potpourri," by Sexton and Switzer in the October issue,¹ the authors appear to have done the following:

1. They have developed a questionnaire and an evaluation scheme without offering any empirical or other justification for the items or the conclusions. They do say the approach is modeled after the work done by Professor McGregor in industrial management theory.

2. They reject another industrial management model that was subsequent to and developed from the very model they have themselves adopted. They do so out of hand and without consideration of any kind except that the Blake-Mouton model is industrial. But they refer liberally to other industrial references in support of this "educational" model.

3. They call their construct a grid without offering a grid. What they have instead is a polar concept that either dichotomizes choice or forces a murky middle ground: the unexplained "contingency situation." The whole point of the Blake-Mouton model and the author's title is lost in this process. The grid concept is based on the thesis that a leader of human endeavor can be very much committed to both organizational effectiveness and personal needs. This is a far cry from the present authors who recommend an end to eclecticism along with bouncing from one polar position to the other.

We certainly need to continue the development of our concepts in educational leadership. And there are apparent anomalies with which we need to work. The authors have attempted to deal with one of them, but there are others. For example:

1. It is the virtually unanimous testimony of

authors, artists, mathematicians, and scientists that frustration and boredom are an integral part of the completion of any work of a creative nature. What part does this observation have in our development of creative processes?

2. The experiments in democratizing the assembly operations in Sweden depend on a tight management of product and performance criteria. What role can a careful definition of criterion measures have on humanizing the educational process?

I applaud the authors of this article in attempting to address one of these apparent anomalies. But I suggest their solution has about as much currency as their footnotes.

David L. Newsome
Teacher, New York City

Dear Editor:

After a survey of social studies teachers which found them feeling a need for sessions on "reading in the content areas" and "writing in the content areas,"² "News Notes" devotes 13 column centimeters to reading and not to writing! Writing is much harder to teach, is even more neglected than reading is, is probably done even more badly, and there is little research on it.

In the last *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, the index included 26 citations on "reading" (each of which encompasses many studies). How many, do you suppose, there were on writing? None! Not a single index reference to writing.

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¹ Michael J. Sexton and Karen Dawn Dill Switzer. "Educational Leadership: No Longer a Potpourri." *Educational Leadership* 35(1):19-24; October 1977.

² "News Notes." *Educational Leadership* 34(6):477; March 1977.

increase in performance may be considered a significant accomplishment, while for the bright learner the increase may be seen as insignificant. A second way of deciding whether a learner's performance is an accomplishment is by comparing the performance to a set of norms of the learner's peers. Thus a learner may be seen as lacking accomplishment if he or she is not performing near the level of peers. This is the norm-referenced view of accomplishment. A third way of viewing accomplishment is according to some absolute standard of performance. Accomplishment is defined in terms of a set of behaviors that a learner is required to perform. This is the criterion-referenced view of accomplishment.

There is also often lack of agreement between the teacher and the learner over what level of performance represents accomplishment. For example, the adult learner might take a course of study in order to acquire a general understanding of a subject matter, whereas the teacher might require the learner to develop a detailed knowledge. There is disagreement between the teacher and the learner over the expected level of accomplishment. The teacher and the learner may have different objectives.

They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark,
By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
Where the Baker had met with the Snark.

Just as they could not find concrete evidence of the meeting of the Baker with the Snark, there is no concrete evidence that specific learner accomplishment ordered in a particular way is essential to success in educational tasks. There is no denying that certain learner accomplishments are useful in varying degrees, but it is an illusion to think that there are many specific accomplishments that are *essential* for the successful attainment of subsequent educational experience. Learning hierarchies detail what learner accomplishments are prerequisite to later accomplishments. There is a tendency to think this is true for *all* subsequent educational opportunities. In reality there are many routes to approaching a problem or accomplishing some purpose or objective. It is an illusion to suppose that there is a

list of essential learner accomplishments that are related to subsequent success in education.

In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.

References

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- M. Scriven. "Pros and Cons about Goal-free Evaluation." *Evaluation Comment* 3:1-4; 1972.
- R. W. Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.



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ing, composition, creative writing, or expository writing.

There is some research on writing, but it's scant. There is concern about writing, at all levels, but it's seldom heard. Maybe if social educators used writing more, as an organon—an aid to organizing thought—our students would learn more, as well as learn to write better.

Writing is too important to be left to the English teachers.

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