Guidelines for a Speech on X Education

Robert Emans

Here are 28 tips on how to sell whatever is the latest thing.

Sitting through numerous speeches over the past several years, I have become aware of remarkable similarities in many of the presentations. Because educators are being pressured to advocate so many diverse causes, they must use their work time as efficiently as possible, so I set out to construct guidelines that would reduce the preparation time for talks advocating various specialized types of education. In this way educators might have some time for less conspicuous, although more critical, activities. I do not presume to know all the various specific types of education for which the guidelines might be used. They range from abacus education to zoo education, and they have many labels including "innovations" and "movements." Below are the results of my efforts.

1. Declare x education wasn't needed 50 years ago, but times have changed. No one can argue that times haven't changed, and besides, you will sound contemporary. Say that schools are being called on to solve more problems and they can't take on all the ills of society. Schools must cut back on the frills, but never admit that x education is a frill. Indicate that schools have limited resources; the curriculum must involve the setting of priorities. This will make you appear realistic. State that what is needed is good leadership. Then, if x education doesn't work, you will have someone to blame—the administration—and the worth of x education won't have to be challenged.

2. Refer to the three R's. Say that if Johnny and Mary can't read they are illiterate; if they can't compute, they are illiterate; and if they don't know anything about x, then they are just as illiterate as they would be if they couldn't read. Assert that x education is the fourth R of the curriculum: it is more basic than the basics.

3. Use such words as innovation, module, accountability, competencies, (Always plural; never say goals—that's passe.), cognitive (Use at least twice.), humanistic, behavioral objective, outreach (or is that backscratch?), learning disability, life space, PL 94-142, alternative curriculum, (alternative to what?), linguistically based, individualized (Use at least three times.), IEP, gifted and talented (Don't let the redundancy bother you.) and mainstreaming. Using these words will make you appear relevant without having to communicate.

4. Express the notion that there is a great deal of ignorance in society, (Don't specify which part of society—you don't need to be that exact.) regarding x education, but its application is relevant to everyone's life. Affirm that it is not a question of whether or not children will learn about x; it is only a question of how well they...
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9. Refer to medicine; medical terms make you sound erudite. Sprinkle your speech with such terms as *diagnosis* and *prescription*. Also use psychological terms like *feedback*, *conditioning*, and *gestalt*. You don't have to bother about the technical meaning of these words.

10. Metaphors are always nice, especially those dealing with sports. "The ball is in our court now." "We must not strike out this time." "It's time for an end run." There are hundreds. These will not only qualify you as one of the guys or gals, but they will convey the impression that you are aware of the importance of competition in the real world. Overlook the evidence that competition is seldom helpful in learning.

11. If male, grow a beard; if female, casually mention the number of propositions you had last month. This will fool some into thinking you are a liberal and, perhaps, even a deep thinker.

12. Make frequent references to values, that x education and values go hand-in-hand; but don't define what you mean by the term "value." Most listeners already know what a value is, even though their conception of values may be quite different from yours. Many people don't realize that it is possible to define values. They probably don't care since they assume their values are similar to yours. After all, you are a nice person.

13. Include a sentence or two about cross-cultural studies; but not much more, someone might think you're a socialist. Say children learn about themselves by studying others, especially in the first, second, and third grades.

14. Compare x education with other important movements such as civil rights. Disregard that there is no real connection. Bring in sex education. Everyone will laugh, be a bit embarrassed, and be distracted from the real issues.

15. At some point, confess to liking people. This will make you seem child/learner centered. Then you won't have to consider such mundane issues for the rest of your speech. For a similar reason, talk briefly—but don't overdo it—about the importance of democracy. Just be sure your i-c ratio is sufficiently high.

16. Profess that you are a man/woman of action, but x education is so important it will take a lifetime to accomplish because x education is so complex. Assert that if you gave too much consideration to its problems, you would never get started. In this way you don't have to identify the reasons of others for resistance to it.

17. Maintain that receiving support from the administration is

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1 The proportion of time the words innovation and creativity are used in relation to all other words.
"Try not to quote what dead people in education have to say. What do they know about present conditions?"

the most important single factor in assuring success in education. Flattery always helps. Nevertheless, at various points in your speech voice the view that teachers are the most important element; that teacher preparation is the key; that the curriculum coordinator is central; that preparation is the key; that the important element; that teacher community. If you talk fast enough no one will notice you have contended that half dozen groups of people are the most important, and you haven’t even mentioned the learner. This gets to be a bit tricky. You must saddle students—even if they are only three years old—with the burden of final responsibility for using the way you want them to and even if they cannot understand it. Everyone knows schools coddle children too much.

19. Call for teacher certification in education. If something is important enough to teach in the schools, it is important enough to pass a law about. Remind people that there is a teacher surplus and that education will provide more jobs for teachers.
20. Provide hand-outs for the audience. This will suggest that what you have to say is worth reducing to print. Indicate that they are free to photocopy the handouts. This will imply you have something worth repeating. A statement of objectives will always give the impression that education can accomplish something, even when the objectives are unattainable. Better yet, get an article published in some journal; it makes no difference how obscure the journal may be. Then you can quote yourself and sound scholarly.
21. Make the remark that if you want something good it will cost money. Never heed that there is only enough money for a two-day conference for the in-service education of teachers, and there are only sufficient funds to buy just one set of instructional materials.
22. Develop a set of curriculum materials, complete with teacher’s guide and pre-made tests, before you go on the road. Insist that teachers prepare their own curriculum materials; but give the name, address, and prices of the materials you have developed.
23. Bring someone along with you who believes the same as you do. This will show there is broad support for your cause. Likewise, quote someone who wrote a letter to the editor; he/she should really be knowledgeable. It is always helpful to show a film. This indicates you are up-to-date and aware of the importance of audiovisual instruction.
24. But television is bad.
25. Claim, even if you haven’t been in a classroom for the last ten years, you are a teacher. This will make you seem practical. But never, never, admit that you studied education in college, or you will appear to be a part of the traditional establishment. Instead, always contend that you majored in something other than education. It does not have to be in a field related to education. By merely stating you are not a specialist in education, your credibility will be increased. This will make you the authority you always wanted to be.
26. Admit that resistance will come from those who believe that education is a private affair, should not be part of the public school, and should remain a domain of the family. Counter this argument by saying that would mean that anything really important is private and we know that isn’t true. Never mind that your counter argument isn’t germane to the issue.
27. Have statistics. They don’t have to be related to education, but you will need to have lots of them. Always be prepared to show that your materials have been field tested. The easiest way to do this is to have testimonials from teachers—friends are best—who have used the materials. You don’t have to demonstrate effects on children, merely state that you just know the children are learning, and if is so good for them! Contend the field test is in progress, and you don’t have the final results yet.
28. Try not to quote what dead people in education have to say. What do they know about present conditions? Certainly there is no need to repeat what John Dewey wrote. Everyone knows that his words have no relevancy in today’s world, even when he said, “In the multitude of educations education is forgotten.”


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