
Will Direct Instruction Produce Better Thinkers?

Jere Brophy [EL October 1979, pp. 33-38] says that with direct teaching, ". . . students do better than those taught with individualized or discovery learning approaches." In considering Brophy's statement, it is essential to determine what is meant by "do better." Careful examination of the studies he cites reveals that learning is equated with scores on standardized achievement tests.

Brophy's findings are balanced by those of Penelope Peterson [EL October 1979, pp. 46-48] who reviewed nearly 200 studies comparing outcomes of open classroom teaching with traditional teaching. She concluded that with direct or traditional teaching, students tend to do better on achievement tests and slightly worse on tests of abstract thinking than students in open instruction. Students involved in open classrooms excelled in attitudes toward school and toward the teacher as well as in independence and curiosity. It is easy to conclude that students learn what is emphasized.

Various groups have attempted over the years to define what the outcomes of schooling should be. Few statements emphasize the accumulation of factual information, but all of them stress the need for students to develop thinking skills.

Because we prize thinking ability, we should provide experiences in school that develop it even though the outcome may not be fully measurable by achievement tests. We should not chase after

instructional procedures touted to help students "do better" when what they do better is not our purpose in the first place.

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Auto Mechanic on the Supreme Court

I had not realized until I read the February *News Exchange* that ASCD had opposed the appointment of Secretary Hufstедler. Congratulations to you and the Association for this brave and appropriate stand. At a personal level, the premise that no professional educator is qualified to lead the newly created department is insulting; at a level of policy, it works great mischief, depriving the country of leadership steeped in relevant experience.

Clearly such a view was lost on the President and the Senate. Perhaps what we need to do, therefore, is to urge them to apply the same logic to other prospective appointments. For openers, we note that public confidence in the Supreme Court has declined: let's have no more lawyers on the Bench, just auto mechanics. And what with the economy in such a mess, let's have no more bankers at the Fed: what about a second grade teacher from Dubuque—some one who really knows how to add and subtract?

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Editor's note: Readers' comments on this and other articles are welcome. Address letters to Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 225 No. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Letters accepted for publication may be edited for brevity and clarity.

Offended Readership

Some readers were offended by Henry Giroux's comments in the December 1979 issue that referred to certain criticisms of the reconceptualist movement as "crude," "vulgar," and "muddled." We intend to provide a forum for free expression of opinion that contributes to clarification of important issues. However, we acknowledge that the above language failed to illuminate the issues and enlighten the readership. We will discourage such language in the future.

The Editors

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