

Beyond Rereading Dewey . . . What's Next? A Response to Gibboney

If Gibboney does not understand that the Hunter model *does* encourage teachers to foster thinking skills and that it is based on a great deal of research, perhaps he should develop an alternative that works as well.

A differing point of view is always stimulating because "when all think alike, not much thinking gets done." I am somewhat bewildered, however, by the position taken by Richard Gibboney. As I understand it, he is concerned that there is no research base for the model; the model is nonintellectual; that, unlike him, I discriminate between curriculum and instruction; and the training that teachers experience may be less than ideal (which he acknowledges is not my fault).

Regarding the Model's Supporting Research

It seems odd for Gibboney to be so adamant about the research behind my model and yet fail to cite any research to support all the recommendations he derives from Dewey.

The California State Department of Education awarded a grant to the

Graduate School of Education, when Goodlad was dean, to test this model in a Los Angeles inner-city school where test scores were at the bottom sixth percentile of the nation. Evaluated by Rodney Skager from the federally funded Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA, Project Linkage showed students doubled, and in some cases quadrupled, their previous learning gains. Discipline and vandalism were dramatically reduced, and students' self-concepts as learners (as measured by instruments then available) became more positive. The report of this project is on file at the California State Department of Education and at UCLA.

More recently, the NIE-funded Napa Project showed that when teachers used the model to guide their teaching *decisions*, student achievement and engaged time escalated. When teachers went back to their old

ways, both decreased. Jane Stallings and Pam Robbins have presented these data at AERA for the past three years and have published reports.

If Gibboney will examine the BTES research and much of the contemporary research in teaching, he will find ample supporting data. Many dissertations have been done on parts of the model. Barak Rosenshine's work, as well, supports the model as an effort to synthesize all of these research-based "bits and pieces" into a cognitive, decision-making model of teaching rather than having them remain as isolated and disjointed fragments.

It is possible that Gibboney is not aware of the congruence of our model to contemporary research, but why doesn't he cite research—that "solid pattern of evidence" he recommends—in support of the statements by Dewey that he quotes? "The

primary aim of teaching is to cultivate thought." I agree, but I know of no research to support it.

It is important not to overlook the strength of this model, the reason for its popularity: "It really works!" After a day in "the trenches," teachers and administrators have neither the inclination nor energy to wade through research—particularly when they find these research-based learning principles corroborated by common sense to be effective: by massing practice, student learning speeds up; by distributing practice, students' retention increases; when thinking becomes reinforcing to the student, it is practiced more frequently. Does Gibboney know of any research that would impeach such psychological propositions as these?

The Model's Contribution to Thinking Skills

Gibboney's complaint that the model is "nonintellectual" is a perplexing twist. The model is more typically criticized for expecting thinking at an impossibly high level, asking teachers to understand psychological propositions; translate them into high speed, artistic performance (procedural knowledge); and constantly monitor teaching decisions by conditional knowledge (asking "when?" is each proposition appropriate and "why then?"). Could any requirements of a professional be more intellectually demanding?

Gibboney's critique indicates he is aware of our focus on psychological propositions, but he seems unaware of the requirement for translation into artistic and insightful procedural and conditional behaviors that incorporate all higher-level thinking skills. Contrary to Gibboney's fears, the model emerged *because* of a "fundamental concern about learning."

Gibboney suggests the model stops with Pavlov and Wundt. He seems to have stopped with Dewey. All of these men were bright blue flames who ignited thinking, but we've learned a lot since then. Pasteur taught us we

should sterilize surgical instruments, but we now use disposable hypodermic needles to eliminate rather than reduce the transmission of infection.

As a young psychologist, my thinking was certainly influenced by Dewey, but I would be nonintellectual if I had not continued to learn from social psychologists, cognitive psychologists, and neuroscientists.

Most recently, we have added the insight that concepts and generalizations are mirror images of discriminations. When concepts, generalizations, and discriminations are the launching pad for all thinking, how can it be nonintellectual to teach teachers ways of helping students acquire that foundation? Evidently, Gibboney has not experienced the cognitive stimulation of having his teaching analyzed for its contributions to producing thinking students, which, I agree, should be our most important educational outcome.

Gibboney seems to believe that the seven elements teachers should *think* about when designing their lessons

constitute the Hunter model for supervision. *They do not!* I deplore the fact that many observers are looking for presence or absence of certain elements rather than the appropriateness and artistry of implementation of the decisions a teacher makes. It is an erroneous extrapolation that what a teacher should think about is what a teacher must do. I have written and stated on numerous occasions that those seven elements need not be in every lesson. It is an indictment of the preparation of administrators and supervisors that they would grasp at such a straw and exhibit "checklist mentality."

The model is based on the three categories of decisions that all teachers must make.

1. What content, skill, or process is achievable and worthwhile for these students in this group at this time?
2. What modalities and learning processes will these students use to acquire, and to demonstrate they have acquired, the content, skill, or process?
3. What research-based principles of learning will facilitate that acquisition?

These three categories of decisions, which constitute the model, are articulated in the first chapter of *Mastery Teaching*, which Gibboney cites. He stresses his fundamental concern about thinking, which is the essence of the model.

Gibboney also seems to believe the model applies only to the didactic teaching that he feels certain trainers exhibit. Mortimer Adler lists didactic teaching as an important method for acquiring the knowledge required for higher-level thinking. Evidently Gibboney is not aware, nor has he observed, that the categories of teaching decisions identified by the model must be made (by teacher or student) for *any* learning—discursive or discovery learning, inductive or deductive logic, group or individualized or cooperative learning—not just for "teacher dominated total group learning."

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Gibboney omits the thinking, decision-making essence of the quotations he cites. As an example, the quotation should read: "Only recently have teachers acquired the skill of (*deliberately and consciously*) using these relationships to accelerate learning."

"Fearful that these seven elements will be slavishly followed by teachers, Hunter advises. . . . Does this not impeach his own concern about nonintellectual mechanistic rigidity?"

"Hunter has expressed 'horror' at what some people have done to her decision-making model." I suspect Dewey feels the same way. People *are* looking for simplistic solutions!

Gibboney's Exposure to Training in the Model's Use

Gibboney does not state that he has participated in training sessions but that he has talked to teachers about it. His experience seems to have been unfortunate in either case. I would heartily agree that anyone who checks understanding by recalled lists not only does not understand the model but violates its very essence.

In defense of whoever committed that "mortal sin," recent research in cognitive psychology (Anderson, Gagne) shows that the most creative problem solvers have a tremendous amount of discipline-specific knowledge. Knowing that red and yellow

produce orange may be "mechanistic," but it is essential to the artist. Knowing the laws of thermal dynamics was essential to the moon landing. Knowing where to place your finger on the string to produce B flat may be "mechanistic," but Itzhak Perlman probably considers it essential. Knowledge does not guarantee creativity, artistry, or thinking, but those desirable outcomes cannot be achieved without it.

Curriculum and Instruction

I would heartily agree with Gibboney that the purpose of education is to develop creative problem solvers and responsible, productive decision makers. However, I cannot cite any research to support that statement. He does not suggest, however, what teachers must *know and be able to do* to achieve that goal with learners. Curriculum (the "what") and instruction (the "how") are certainly related, but they are not identical. It is irresponsible to condemn a reasonable research-based model that works without suggesting something to take



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its place. Gibboney is admonishing teachers to teach thinking. If that would work, we would be the "thinkingest" nation in the world, for Dewey made that suggestion early in this century.

I have also often stated and written that the ultimate goal of teaching is the transfer of learning, which is essential for creativity, problem solving, and satisfying but responsible decision making. It is only recently, however, that we have synthesized the work from Thorndike to contemporary cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists (Anderson, Gagne, Wittrock) into a reasonably practical model, to be used daily by teachers, which will increase the probability of transfer. Gibboney must be unaware of this work, for he suggests that transfer is missing from our model.

Gibboney's Recommendations

I would respectfully suggest that Gibboney experience the kind of "training" we endorse, observe and interrogate teachers successfully translating psychological propositions into effective and artistic procedures, examine student achievement in terms of the goals on which he and I agree, and then substantiate or impeach his present assessment; in short, find out if there is a great bear to shoot at before trying to locate the front half.

I choose to believe that Gibboney's concerns are sincere and result from unfortunate experience. One of our most important functions as educators is, when questioning anything, to provide a more tenable alternative. What is Gibboney's? It appears he is admonishing teachers and teacher educators to think. I agree! That is what our model was designed to do. What would he suggest besides rereading Dewey? □

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