

Open Letter to Iacocca

Well, Mr. Iacocca, I sat through your presentation in which you took schools to task for not having good work procedures and quality control over their "product" (ASCD Conference, San Francisco, March 1991). People in the educational workplace better listen to their customers, you warned.

Your prescription: use the organizational solutions your company uses. Yet, as *The New York Times* reports, despite a federal bailout (education hasn't had one), your simplistic solutions don't seem to be working. Might the reason be that restructuring an organization to meet the demands of an ever-changing customer in a complex world is more complicated and time-consuming than you indicate?

Speeches that suggest that a few technical steps will bring immediate results raise unrealistic expectations. They deflate human energy and demoralize those who are already overburdened with the need for change. In a time when educators must invent a new social fabric to respond to changes in our society, our speakers need to inspire, encourage, empathize, and share with us successful and best practices.

Bena Kallick
*Educational Consultant
Westport, Connecticut*

A Compelling Voice

The piece by Patrick Ryan (*Voices, The Teacher*, September 1991) was a beautiful reminder of an old friend. After my first year as a 6th grade teacher, I was ready to cash in the whole idea of teaching. Pat Ryan convinced me to stay. I listened, and I'm glad I did.

Charles E. Hughes
*Principal
Etta J. Wilson Elementary School
Newark, Delaware*

False Analogies Lower Real Standards

Your valuable issue on teacher education (November 1991) reinforces my conviction that those who would reform the teaching profession must give up false analogies comparing teaching to other professions. Teaching is its own glorious and unique profession: efforts to design policies and practices for recruitment, selection, and preparation as if it were like medicine, law, or some other profession are bound to get us into trouble.

Agreed. I would not want a newly graduated history major with no other technical training to operate on my heart, defend me in court, repair my car, maybe even cut my hair. And yet, if given my choice to have my child taught history either by such a new graduate who demonstrated the ability to turn my child on to history or by the graduate of x number of education courses who couldn't, I'd pick the history graduate.

Of course, the fact that someone has a history major does not mean he or she will be a competent history teacher. Of course, the fact that we have not demanded competence from our nation's teaching force ("We Need More Than a Redesign," Arthur Wise) hurts our profession and our children's education, but our many years of trying to "demand competence" by licensing and restricting entry into the profession should give us pause about doing more of the same.

Of course, the primary missions of teachers are to "enculturate the young into a social and political democracy," and "introduce the young to those canons of reasoning central to intelligent, satisfying participation in the human conversation" ("Why We Need a Complete Redesign of Teacher Education," John Goodlad), but until

vastly improved teacher programs recruit those who are themselves the most "enculturated" and capable of inculcating students with these values, it is suicidal to close such people out because they do not have education courses.

Let's take seriously what Goodlad says: "The teaching profession is unique in that its subject matter on the whole is the subject matter the student is studying all the time." This should cause us to value high quality study of this subject matter instead of emphasizing the technical components of teaching.

Wake up, teacher reformers! Let's keep our eye on recruiting, preparing, and licensing people with the most talent for helping children learn, not people who have been through procedures that are the most like those for doctors, lawyers, or engineers. Too fast closure on new restrictive licensing and training schemes—logical and idealistic as they may sound—will lower the real standards of the profession and close out the talent we so desperately need.

David Seeley
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Transcending Transitional OBE

By referring to transitional outcome-based education as in the twilight zone between traditional OBE and transformational OBE, we may have falsely given the impression that the districts in this stage are somehow lost, without direction and focus for the future ("Beyond Traditional Outcome-Based Education," October 1991).

That is the last thing we meant to convey: the national statures of Township School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois, and Johnson City

Central School in New York reflect quite the opposite.

And since the article was written, District 214 has joined the ranks of the few in the nation to assess students' performance outcomes in authentic life role settings, not just classrooms. This achievement sends a signal to other districts: it's possible to transcend transitional OBE and become transformational. We encourage other districts to follow District 214's lead.

William G. Spady
Kit J. Marshall
*The High Success Program
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On Cardinal Newman's Outcome-Based Education

I read with interest the nearly identical lists of role-grounded outcomes that schools in Aurora, Colorado, and Hot Springs, Wyoming, developed. The roles they envisage for students—self-directed learners, collaborative workers, problems solvers, perceptive thinkers, community contributors—are similar to—if one can overlook his sexist language—the outcomes of education Cardinal Newman proposed a century and a half ago.

Education should prepare a man "to fill any post with credit and to master any subject with facility," Newman said. An educated man "knows when to speak and when to be silent; he is able to converse, he is able to listen, he can ask a question pertinently and gain a lesson seasonable when he has nothing to impart himself." Education should give a man "a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them." It should teach him "to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect

what is sophisticated, and to discard what is irrelevant." It should make him "at home in any society" and have "common ground with every class."

It seems to me the challenge we face today lies not in doing "futures scanning" regarding desired goals for students, but in reflecting on why we've done so little toward universally achieving Newman's outcomes in higher education, teacher education, and K-12 education. What we need today are powerful, intense learning experiences that help adults as well as students attain the Newman vision. Without these experiences, it is unlikely we will get beyond the rhetoric of futures-oriented exits.

Randy Schenkat
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Anti-Gay Bias Shows

Joseph Nicolosi's anti-homosexual bias shows in his off-hand remark that "greater numbers" of gay youth suggest normalcy to teenagers (Letter to the Editor, September 1991). This "suggestion of normalcy" apparently upsets him despite the fact that the American Psychological Association currently acknowledges that homosexuality is as normal as heterosexuality.

As for his objection to the word "gay," every disenfranchised group in our society has claimed the right to name itself. No such group would accede to its labeling by an outsider.

As the mother of both gay and heterosexual children, I'd like to acknowledge my gratitude to the high school teachers and counselors of my lesbian daughters. The majority of gay youth don't have such experiences.

Miriam Minkowitz
Brooklyn, New York

Same-Sex Quagmire

Joseph Nicolosi makes infinite sense. Many psychologists never bother to learn ways to help students climb up out of the same-sex quagmire. His ideas are of great value to school leaders.

Alice Slattany
Framingham, Massachusetts

No Name-Calling!

Education about sexuality is a of great interest to me and my students. Being a practicing committed Catholic, and knowing many happy, healthy teenagers who live out their beliefs, I looked for some acknowledgment that such a position deserves attention from teachers. What did I find? Name-calling! Apparently anyone who disagrees with James Sears, as I do, is not considered a professional with a carefully thought out idea, but a "religious zealot" ("Helping Students Understand and Accept Sexual Diversity," September 1991).

All kinds of people today critique education—feminists, business leaders, native groups, maybe even the CIA. Why is it that people with religious convictions are expected to shut up or be shouted down when they enter the public forum?

James W. Ross
London, Ontario

To the Health of Children!

In "New Generations, New Challenges" (September 1991), you face the issues for children of the '90s. As a member of a local children's commission, I have seen too many people ignore these immense problems in our country. May we all move toward a 21st century of health and educational success for all our children.

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