

## THE PERSONALITY OF THE TEACHER AS A FACTOR NOT ONLY IN THE TOTAL LEARNING SITUATION BUT ALSO IN DEVELOPING THE PERSONALITY OF THE CHILD

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I should like to state at the outset that I am not going to develop a thesis substantiated by statistical confirmatory data. Rather, my position is that of raising a question which you should answer for yourself, not I for you. The question is: is not the personality of the teacher the major factor not only in the total learning situation for the child but also in the development of the personality of the child?

The present political regime has standardized wage and hour laws and legislated on the activities of certain groups of people, but in terms of directing teacher selection it seems all too apparent that this is one policy which has a definite "hands-off" order. Historically such selection was made by the "rule-of-thumb" method, choices being made for teaching positions on the basis of *presumed* severity and ability to browbeat into submission the charges in a particular school room. Education was a matter of perseverance on the part of the teacher to indoctrinate his underlings with the solemnity and almost insurmountable difficulty of ever learning the subject being taught. On the other side the pupil was as persevering in his determination to learn the subject matter regardless of time spent or understanding. Knowledge of a special field on the part of the instructor was the sequential trend in teacher selection, for it was hypothesized that the greater the teacher's knowledge the more assured was learning on the part of the pupil. Evidence of the reliability of such an assertion has never been conclusively given. All the while the classroom has been the testing ground for teachers who were selected on bases as variable as were the individuals making such selections.

The personality of the individual who was teaching was considered of little consequence in the total learning situation. But it is now time to challenge that point of view and demand evidence to support such a contention. It was with this in view that 38 teachers were given the Bernreuter Personality Inventory\* in order to determine, by sampling, what the mean score of the group would be in comparison with the population at large.

The arithmetic mean of the percentiles for the group of teachers on the measure of "neurotic tendency" was 30.82; the standard deviation was 27.22. Within a range of scores (between the 15 and 35 percentile) arbitrarily considered as indicative of emotional stability prerequisite for teaching were only 26 percent of the group, whereas five scored above the 60 percentile, two of those scores being in the 98 and 99 percentile.

The teacher might be expected to score low on a measure of "introversion-extroversion", to be in keeping with the social contacts necessary for such a profession, but in the author's opinion the teacher should be equally at home in manipulative and communicative symbolism, for to be an extremist on either end of the scale might be a handicap. A word has been coined to describe such a measurement, that being "ambiversion." The

\* I should like to take this opportunity to thank Miss D. R. Peckham, Travis County School Superintendent, Austin, Texas, for the permission to use her unpublished raw data as a basis for this paper.

mean for this measurement was 33.86, the standard deviation 31.70. Six of the cases were above the 80 percentile.

Applying the same percentile range as was used in determining the preferable ambiversion to the measure of "confidence in oneself", it was found that only 23 percent of the group could be considered as well adjusted to their environments. This closely approximates the 26 percent arbitrarily chosen as having sufficient emotional stability to be well adjusted to the teaching profession.

A mean percentile of 64.05 on the "dominance-submission" measure clearly indicates the teachers' domination, or desire for domination, in comparison with the population at large. Fifty-six percent of the scores were above the 75 percentile.

For the measure of "self-sufficiency" the mean percentile was 49.11, and the standard deviation was 25.74. If, in this instance, those scores which were between the 30 and 50 percentile are considered as indicative of a proportionate amount of self-sufficiency one finds 23 percent of the cases below the 30 percentile and 53 percent of the cases above the 50 percentile. Three of the latter were above the 90 percentile.

The mean percentile for the group on the measure of "sociability", the concluding item on the inventory, was 37.73; the standard deviation was 23.68.

With these figures in view, arbitrarily chosen as some of them are, let us now bring the child into the picture and consider him as completing the setting for the total learning situation.

A child brings to the classroom certain actualities in terms of equipment—skeletal and muscular, neural and glandular coordinations (Harmon 1938). With this coordinating equipment he is able to adapt himself to his present social situation and may be expected, on the basis of such adaptations, to perform sufficiently in future social situations of a similar order. Such cultural concepts as mind, mental capacities, instincts, abilities and aptitudes, which some would like to think predestine the child for a certain projected goal, are non-existent. The dualistic frame of reference which such terms imply is a flagrant insult to science, even though each term has at one time or another worn such an academic gown of acceptance.

Learning thus becomes the total reactional behavior of the child to an experiential situation comprised of endogenous and exogenous stimuli functions and the resulting response functions of the organism to such stimuli.

The teacher's personality thus becomes, in this interpretation, a major factor in the concomitants which set the experiential situation for learning in the child, and during basic years, probably the principal motivating factor as well. The teacher is in a position to determine not only the value of a given subject for a child but also the social evaluation of the material in terms expressed by the educative needs of our democratic society. Is there any reason for the wholesale aversion to "math" or "dead languages" when we know that any person having secured a college degree can master those subjects with ease? Can we validly lay the blame on any factor other than the teacher's personality in such a learning situation? I do not hesitate to assert that a great portion of our specific attitudes and general values are products of conditioning in terms of the personalities of the teachers with whom we have come into contact. Is it asking too much to raise the question: Should we not be concerned as to the total personality of the individual to whom we entrust our children?

It would be well at this time to define personality in terms of the pre-adolescent" or "adolescent" under the supervision of a teacher. The conditions which are influential in the development of the pre-adolescent or adolescent are as varied as the culture surrounding the child, and for that reason no one group of conditions can be said to apply universally. Margaret Wooster Curti (1938, p. 430-442) lists six such conditions which tend to influence the developing personality: physical conditions, differences in intelligence, position in the family, racial or national differences, sex differences, and individual differences. Winifred V. Richmond (1937, p. 204) emphasizes the emancipation from the family and the resulting outgrowth of emotional dependence from it. Causal conditions have been given over and over again by many more authors, placing the determining factor majorally in the external conditions surrounding the individual. Should such advice be strictly attended to, a system could be hypothecated which would give these ideal conditions and the results to be expected would be well integrated personalities. Of such an outcome I am doubtful. In developing the personality of the individual, the individual must have the position of major concern. Such does not deny the influence of interaction of environment on the maturing individual.

Some authors have tried to typify certain personality types as belonging to pre-adolescence or adolescence. One author speaks of three such types (Richmond 1937, p. 203-207): homosexual, rebellious, and egotistic, concluding that these "personality types are characterized by a rigidity of structure that defies all attempts to change it." The evidence is yet forthcoming to substantiate such a belief that an individual must carry as a burden throughout life the responsibility of the personality which has been acquired during childhood. Egocentric behaviors evinced during pre-adolescence and adolescence which seem to be unstable, and in many instances behavioral deviations, become stabilized in adulthood and are no longer looked upon as deviations.

A fully integrated personality is only approximated in any one individual, for the ramifications of such a development are different for each individual. Evidences of unstable behavior are, in my opinion, failures to find self-expression in self-discovery. Self-discovery, whether it be in the form of work or play, is the ground work for an integrated personality. The individual, in finding his place, is discovering constructively his potentialities in terms of actualities as afforded by both the internal and external environment. The importance of such a setting can not be overemphasized in the development of personality.

The young person reared in a society which increasingly demands that he follow in an imitative manner its exemplary behaviors, expressed as tenderness, affection, and courteousness; cruelty, discontent, and hatred; emotional stability and a temper which is defensively rebellious; independence of and yet willingness to sacrifice himself for the group at large; a progressive interest in the opposite sex, regardless of the restraining taboos, maturing in marriage; and, an insistence on individual financial success; these and other similar behaviors make up the continuous barrage of traumatic experiences which assail the maturing individual. Out of this the individual resolves whatever problems afford him an accepted place in society and by so doing enters into adulthood with an integrated personality.

Having offered a brief summary of learning and personality as separate units, let us integrate the two for the purpose of developing an approach to understanding the learning experience within a classroom.

It is the personality of the teacher, considered in its total aspect, which should direct the stimulation of the child toward the total classroom learning

experience. This stimulation should also be directed toward a practical and economic usefulness of the subjects taught. Further, if efficiency in social situations is taken as a criterion of a wholesome personality, can it be expected that a teacher deviating from such an efficient state will adequately stimulate children either in a learning situation or toward hygienic personality development?

#### LITERATURE CITED

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