THE CHILD AND THE CURRICULUM

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The educative process is that the due interaction of those forces. Such a conception of each in relation to the other as it facilitates the most complete and freest interaction is the essence of educational theory. But here comes the effort of thought. It is easier to ascertain the conditions in their separateness, to insist upon one at the expense of the opposite, to form antagonists of them, than to get a reality to which belongs. The easy thing is to seize upon something in the developed consciousness of the adult, and insist upon that as the key to the whole problem.

When this happens a really serious practical problem. Instead of seeing the educative process steadily and as an entire, we see conflicting terms. We get the case of the child vs. the curriculum of the individual nature vs. social culture. Below all other divisions of pedagogic opinion lies in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts.

Things hardly come within his experience unless they touch, intimately and clearly, his own well-being, or that of his family and friends. His world is a world of persons with their personal interest, rather than a realm of facts and laws. Not truth, within the sense of conformity to external fact, but affection and sympathy, is its keynote.

As against this, the course of study met in the school presents material stretching back indefinitely in time, and extending outward indefinitely in space. The child is taken out of his familiar physical environment, hardly more than a square kilometer or so in area, into the wide world—yes, and even to the bounds of the solar system. His little span of personal memory and tradition is overlaid with the long centuries of the history of all people.
He passes quickly and readily from one topic to a different, as from one spot to a different,
but isn't aware of transition or break. There is no conscious isolation, hardly any
conscious distinction. The things that occupy him are held together by the unity of the
private and social interests which his life carries along. Whatever is upper-most in his
mind constitutes to him, for the time being, the whole universe, That universe is fluid and
fluent; its contents dissolve and reform with amazing rapidity. But, after all, it's the child’s
own world.

The child is that the start line, the middle and therefore the end. His development,
his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the expansion of the kid all
studies are subservient; they're instruments valued as they serve the requirements of
growth. Personality, character, is more than subject matter. Not knowledge or
information, but self-realization.

Literally, we must take our stand with the kid and our departure from him. It is he
not the subject matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning. The only
significant method is that the method of the mind because it reaches out and assimilates.
This fundamental opposition of kid and curriculum found out by these two modes of
doctrine are often duplicated during a series of other terms.

Guidance and control are the catchwords of 1 school; freedom and initiative of the
opposite. Any power, whether of kid or adult, is indulged when it's taken on its given
and present level in consciousness. Its genuine meaning is in the propulsion it affords
towards a higher level.

The need of getting theory and practical sense into closer connection suggests a
return to our original thesis: that we've here conditions which are necessarily associated
with each other within the educative process, since this is often precisely one among
interaction and adjustment.
References:

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