



Educational Considerations

Volume 10 | Number 1

Article 14

1-1-1983

Democracy in education

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Phillip L. (1983) "Democracy in education," *Educational Considerations*: Vol. 10: No. 1.
<https://doi.org/10.4148/0146-9282.1777>

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bargaining and affirmative action (why affirmative action was included here instead of under personnel administration is beyond me), and fiscal aspects of educational management. The final section, Part III, focuses on the leadership context. Here the authors finally discuss the concept of contextualism. They describe context as "the inter-related conditions in which events occur and thus a useful term for attempting to characterize the connections and coherences that define the ethics, esthetics, and epistemology of administration as a special kind of human activity." Therefore, contextualism would have us view educational administration in terms of its context in the total human and natural environment. Unfortunately, this chapter would have made much more sense early on in the book instead of at Chapter 10. The remainder of the chapters in the final section focuses primarily on administrative leadership in terms of interpersonal behavior, admin-

istrator-board relations and the principalship. The authors conclude with a brief discussion of administration as a continuous beginning with some behavioral requisites necessary for survival: action orientation, decision making, objectivity, authenticity, (in an existentialist sense) and tolerance. Unfortunately, the contemporary context the authors write in seems to be the 1970's with little reference to the future of public education.

All three books provide a diverse approach to the study of educational administration. A much closer reading will be necessary to make an informed judgment about the impact on the field of educational administration.

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Review

Democracy in education

Democracy In Education — Boyd H. Bode by Robert V. Bullough, Jr. (Bayside, New York: General Hall, Inc., 1981). 258 pp.

Robert Bullough's book has been around since 1981. But it has scarcely received the attention it deserves. It is a book about a man who was immeasurably successful as a champion of progressive education, but who nowadays seems to have been almost forgotten along with the ideals and good sense he professed.

Boyd H. Bode was a friend and follower of John Dewey. But he was no mere servant of the master. He began as a Dewey critic; and while both men could be described as products of their age, each displayed a rather rugged independence when it came to their intellectual outlook. Bode was a Dewey-follower primarily in the sense that he came to terms with changes in tradition somewhat more slowly and reluctantly than Dewey.

Like Dewey, his passion was democracy, and he saw education as the means for promoting and improving democratic life. To us this passion might seem a little quaint, even naive. Perhaps we have become jaded, but we are inclined to think of education as more narrowly focused, as serving the special interests and needs of individuals or groups within the larger society. Curiously enough, Bode was part of the modern tradition in western culture that considers it impossible to transcend self-interest. However, he did not interpret this, as many have, to mean that genuine communication and real community are unattainable. On the contrary, he saw it to imply that we have a tangible and practical starting point for developing the kind of society that supporters of the classical tradition can only dream of.

For Bode our modern conception of democracy has come about through science and the struggle of the ordi-

nary person to participate more fully in life. The democratic movement found its underlying unity in the demand that standards be established through reference to human experience and that judgments be made in terms of circumstances and function. It was a revolt against limitations. But however much this has changed our way of life materially and institutionally, our understanding of these changes, what Bode called our "outlook" or "philosophy" has lagged far behind. What has resulted are "cultural cleavages" which force people to believe and act in contradictory ways and, therefore, to lead a kind of schizophrenic existence.

If at one time schools presented students with a more or less coherent way of life, now there is only mass confusion. To the young everything looks absurd. They can discern no central purpose with which to ally themselves, or more accurately, they have no clear perception of the fact that there are conflicting tendencies in our civilization that compete for their allegiance. In their aimlessness most young people have defected somewhat from the views of their parents and in the process they have become skeptical or cynical, which means a disregard or disbelief in moral values.

Bode's advice was to give education, and, therefore, students, a sense of direction or purpose. What could this be except democracy? Bode put the challenge this way: "... are we willing to accept the principle of a free intelligence as a basis for our social outlook or philosophy of life? It is in reference to the creation and recreation of a democratic social outlook that education finds its meaning and, as far as I can tell, American education has no such program. This is its greatest defect." (p. 61) We must begin by making our situation clear, and to do this by bringing out the conflicts in our culture. Then we must show students how to think straight, how to study, investigate, verify and discriminate. The aim is to "prove all things" and ultimately to prove democracy, to help bring about and validate a truly moral existence.

Here Bode had a problem, for he also suggested that in democracy we have no choice, it is our karma. If history is not ours to deny, and if it is already the case that democracy, i.e., science and the struggle of the ordinary person to participate more fully in life, has already changed the way we live materially and institutionally, one wonders what there is to worry about. It would seem to be just a matter of time before our outlook or philosophy would fall in line with the facts. "On our part," Bode tells us, "we

need to help them (youth) recognize the place intelligence has played in human progress, to help them see how progress is the result of human and not divine intervention." (p. 97) Whether Bode falls into the trap of the hard-line Marxist or the 19th century pantheist, both of whom admonish us to dedicate our lives to achieving the inevitable, will depend on how we interpret this remark. One expects that Bode was trying to be inspirational, that he wanted us to believe that a good and just world was, if not guaranteed, at least possible. But even so, Bode was never able to be very specific about how democracy could be realized in a world that was decidedly undemocratic. Needless to say, recent events have not been encouraging. Worse yet, we seem to be losing our conviction that we even know what democracy is.

Maybe it is unfair to blame Bode for our present ills. After all, he never claimed to be a tactician; and perhaps the reason we find ourselves wanting for a deeper understanding of democracy is precisely because we have ceased reading people like Bode. Herein lies the importance of Bullough's book. It reintroduces us not only to a rigorous concern for the meaning of democracy, but to the profoundly human context that motivates democratic ideals. The book is presented in 15 chapters plus an epilogue. General themes that are covered include the nature of philosophy, progressivism in education, curriculum making and the relation of schooling to social reform. By and large, the material is organized biographically, that is, we begin with Bode's youth and his early intellectual struggles. We proceed to the initial stage of his career when he was preoccupied with shaping his conception of philosophy. Next we find out how he made the connection with education and are introduced to his theories of learning and curriculum. Lastly we are shown how Bode applied these ideas to the problems of democratic living.

The book might be seen as an intellectual biography, or as history in the guise of literature. Information is pro-

vided in the form of contrived conversations. As Bullough describes it, "The manuscript is divided into five parts. Each part contains a series of imaginary dialogues between Bode and his colleagues or between colleagues that address critical topics and issues in the field. Bode's life and work provide the lens through which these issues and topics are viewed. To give the reader a better understanding of Bode and of his times some dialogues focus upon particular aspects of Bode 'the man.' Dialogues are used because it is believed that this format is most capable of conveying both the spirit of the times and of the man. As nearly as possible the language utilized within the dialogues is authentic. The language is deliberately 'folksy' because Bode was folksy." (p. 4)

As might be expected, this device is quite controversial as historical method. But in this case it is magnificently employed. For Bullough's objective is not so much concerned with strict historical reconstruction as with philosophical and pedagogical illumination. In our time we have been deceived by false idols, by bandwagoning approaches to change, by the desire for control rather than for understanding, by technological substitutes for thought, and by the preference of conformity and comfort to criticism and growth. Bullough needed a method as well as a model to counter these trends. His choices fit together well. With his method we can view ideas in their real-life context. In his model we have a genuine educational statesman who, like all statesmen, exemplified clear thinking and moral courage even under the most difficult circumstances. I agree with Bullough: "In a time when education is dominated by entrepreneurs Bode presents a refreshing reminder that there is more to education than technique and salesmanship." (p. 9)

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