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THE THEORY OF DIRECT TEACHING

EDUCATION is the production of a right-thinking, creative population, which is able to fit into the scheme of things outside the schoolroom and to adjust itself to whatever situation arises. It is the growth from the dependent child, unable to care for its own wants, into the self-dependent adult, able to adapt himself to the purposes and exigencies of a progressive world. To accomplish this growth, real learning must be acquired, bit by bit, in the form of lesson units. In so doing we must not mistake mere information for educational content; only as information can be adapted, does it become of use to the individual and form a part of education. The primary thing in education is adaptation.

And now arises the question, "What is adaptation?" It is that change which takes place within an individual, when he has acquired, through real learning, the ability to do. What the ability is, depends upon the learning unit—one of the component parts of a subject—and it always corresponds to the adaptation in the pupil. For example, reading has only one unit, the reading adaptation, which is the ability to interpret the printed page. It is not enough glibly to pronounce words, in which art the lesson-learner type is often most proficient, but one must comprehend as well; otherwise, no adaptation can take place. Adaptation does not mean skill; skill is built upon adaptation and represents the dexterity with which the ability is used. If one fails, for a time, to use an ability, skill may be lost, but true adaptation is never lost. If a thing be forgotten, or not well done at all times, we may know the adaptation has not been made. What was accomplished was simply

performance. The period of pupil effort before adaptation is reached is the time of assimilation. Assimilative material must be provided in the form of lesson units.

How may we know when adaptation is made? The surest evidence is the ability of the child to make application of what he has learned. For instance, the primary social adaptation of the child is made when he realizes the fact that there are other people to be considered, as well as himself. A little Hungarian lad entered school with the idea that whatever he wanted was his by right of appropriation. Other children's apples, pencils, books, could be traced to Andy. He must return the article, or, if it had been disposed of, he must replace it. Eventually, the time came when things no longer disappeared. Andy had made the adaptation!

When the pupil has acquired the lesson product, he may be said to have attained mastery. The attainment of any unit is mastery. It is complete learning, lasting and customary in its use, and must be secured before adaptation, or change, in an individual is effected. In this process, it is not always the person who shows the highest I. Q., or who gives evidence of being the brightest in the beginning, that proves the most capable. The one who seems slowest often outstrips all others because of his painstaking and sustained effort. The teacher must have ever clearly in mind, not only the unit to be mastered, but the pupil, himself. Mastery has no half-way place; either the child knows it or he does not. Therefore, the teacher must be constantly on the alert, ever watchful for the signs that will indicate mastery. It is easy to mistake apparent adaptation for the real thing. Often the expression of the face and the tone of the voice give evidence of real learning.

Joe has a mind quick to grasp things and

is unafraid, when puzzled, to question the explanation that has been given. When the teacher steps to the board and demonstrates, step by step, it is beautiful to see illumination quicken his countenance and good to hear his emphatic, "That is right!" He is now able to make application of what he has learned.

For a number of years, not only the educational world, but the business world, has been dissatisfied with the results obtained from the stereotyped methods of teaching. Children pass from one grade to another, oftentimes with high marks, only to go out into the world to prove the ineffectiveness of the system. They have failed to make the learning through which they have passed, their own—a part of themselves—thereby losing in efficiency and adjustment. Many plans to overcome the situation, many devices for improvement have been undertaken; *i. e.*, the Montessori method, the Winnetka plan, the project method, direct teaching.

Direct teaching first expressed itself in the teaching of modern languages, where its effectiveness became apparent. The use of the language to be studied as the only vehicle of expression, during the period set aside, has resulted in a quality, which makes up for the extra time and added resourcefulness that are required of the teacher. The attack is direct, not round-about, as in the case of lesson-learning.

An instance in the writer's experience, perhaps, will bear out this testimony; only, in her case, the men were foreigners and the medium of expression, the English language. In dealing with a group of miners of several different nationalities in an Americanization class in English, she was handicapped, as she thought, in being unable to speak so many languages. She must teach by means of the one language. The interest and comprehension manifested were out of all proportion to expectations. To be sure, it meant much individual teaching, but the men responded so ably that one was fully

compensated for the additional time and effort.

Indeed, direct, or systematic teaching bids fair to solve the problem of securing the effective education of all. It is a straightforward attack upon the thing to be learned and can be applied to all learning; it builds upon a central principle, or unit, and ever keeps not only this in mind, but the change that is to be made in the pupil, as well; it throws aside lesson-learning and lesson-hearing as inadequate and wasteful, unable to produce a finished product; it is opposed to lesson-hearing in that definite learning units are defined and each in turn is learned, or mastered, before another is taken up. True it is, that all do not move at the same rate, yet mastery, or change in the individual is steadily proceeding towards accomplishment. Those who are able to attain mastery first may spend their time upon something else. Perhaps there is another subject in which mastery is not so easily attained, or they may want to use it for a broader reading program.

When visiting a primary room, where direct teaching is the procedure, it will be observed that the teacher, each day, goes over and over the same material, working with the pupils in groups, then individually, until the poorest reach the point of adaptation.

In direct teaching, individual work, as well as the co-operative work of the class is necessary. Mere text-book assignment of a lesson is insufficient. It must be approached from many angles. From a certain sixth-grade history class choose a copy of Unit 10—"A New World Discovered." Around this subject are grouped the incidents directly bearing upon it and those leading up to it, showing clearly that all the knowledge needed cannot be gleaned from one text-book, but many sources must be consulted. That appreciation may go hand in hand with understanding, the class is expected to memorize, in this connection, Joaquin Miller's "Columbus." How differ-

ent is the text-book assignment! Unless the teacher is most resourceful, the pupil gets a few facts, but "A New World Discovered" does not become a living, breathing part of him.

In truth, what progress is made with the old formal type of lesson-learning? In an investigation made by Dr. H. C. Morrison and others, it was discovered that what learning is made is by mere chance. The majority of the pupils made a very poor showing when tested without preparation upon the same kind of material that had been studied, indicating that mastery had not been accomplished; a few tested as well without preparation as with it, showing that, by chance, these individuals, designated as the transfer type, had attained mastery and were able to adapt their learning to all situations; another group, also few in number, were able to test higher without preparation than with it, giving evidence of direct learning. The last-named do not learn easily by the lesson-learning method, but secure learning from experience with the materials at hand. They do not show to advantage in regular classroom work, but, if tested without preparation, they are able to make application of what they have learned with higher marks than they secure on the prepared lesson. In the first group, what is known as the quick, bright pupil will make good marks and will pass the grades in quick succession, but he is simply substituting book-learning, or information, for the thing itself. Too many who fail to display that apparent facility in after years, prove the ineffectiveness of lesson-learning. Evidently the leaders of the past and present belong either to the transfer type, or to the direct-learner type.

A day or so ago, a mother entered a primary room during assembly period, when most of the children were out. She began testing her young daughter, who happened to be present, to see if she recognized single words in other content than that in which she had been drilled, going so far as to

spell out the words for her. She complained that the child was just memorizing, not realizing that, in these three short weeks, the teacher had been trying to secure the reading attitude instead of teaching words. Evidently the mother was of the lesson-learner type.

In teaching the unit, four major procedures are necessary—pre-test, teach, test, teach again. Sometimes reteaching must be done two or three times. The pretest is the process of ascertaining whether, or not, the child is ready for the unit; teaching a unit requires much oral work, explanation, and repetition; by testing, the teacher discovers whether she may proceed, or must reteach. Reteaching is corrective, or scientific teaching, in which the teaching of the unit is modified or supplemented. If, then, mastery be not secured, the teacher will have found the reason why. Reteaching may need to be done more than once.

The application of direct teaching, however, involves more than one type of teaching—the language-arts type, the science type, the appreciation type, the pure-practice type, and the practical-arts type. The language-arts type is used in teaching subjects containing running discourse, as reading and music; the science type in subjects requiring understanding, as arithmetic and geography; the appreciation type, in literature, appreciation of music, etc.; the pure-practice type, in spelling and such subjects as require drill, but no thought; the practical-arts type is rarely used before high school, but involves those subjects which require manipulation of materials, for example, cooking and industrial arts.

In a certain second grade, literature is being taught. Those little tots are securing an appreciation that one could hardly believe possible. Several members of the class are asked to choose from the shelf books they have read, to give the reason why they chose them, and to tell why they liked them after finishing them. By what better means would one go about building

up an appreciation? Most lesson-learners have access to only one book at a time and that usually a prescribed text. They are not permitted to browse freely among books, choosing here and there as the appeal is born within them, but must needs read the lesson assigned, whether it interests them or not.

Finally, the advantages of direct teaching over lesson-learning may be summed up in the following statements:

In direct teaching the pupil's growth is watched—he is guided; in lesson-learning, he must conform to certain standards.

Lesson-learning never identifies — one learns only by chance; direct teaching secures the real learning product.

Direct teaching takes cognizance of the pupil, as well as the learning unit; lesson-learning subordinates the pupil to the course of study.

In the one, the child's development is natural; in the other, artificial means secures artificial results.

Direct teaching secures mastery, or learns the reason why; formal teaching mistakes mere information for adaptation, in most cases.

Direct teaching is clear in concept, simple in application; the stereotyped form is complex in character, adhering to tradition and cut-and-dried formalism.

In the former, each progresses at his own rate, attaining in the end; in the latter, the rapid mark time, the slow are left behind, while the average reap the benefit.

BESSIE J. LANIER

"There is nothing like books. Of all things sold incomparably the cheapest; of all pleasures least palling; they take up little room; keep quiet when they are not wanted, and when taken up bring us face to face with the choicest men who have ever lived at their choicest moments."

—Sam'l Palmer.

A NEW BOOKSHELF FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

TWO decades ago the secondary school staff, unlike the elementary, was practically without any professional literature. Brown's *The American High School* and Johnston's *High School Education* pioneered the way, and soon a number of significant treatises appeared, studies of adolescence supplementing titles in the principles of secondary education. Most of these early studies were of a general rather than a scientific nature, but in the past few years a tendency to develop the scientific attack has arisen; and, as a result, there is now a fine working library for the secondary school teacher and principal. Almost for the first time, a choice may now be made of books on each of the major problems: the curriculum, the technique of teaching, educational tests, extra-curricular activities, and pupil guidance.

Koos's *The American Secondary School*¹ is a companion volume to two others by the same author, *The Junior High School* and *The Junior College*, and with them forms a valuable series dealing with the three stages in the training of youth as the newer secondary school organization is shaping up. The author's scholarly attack, interesting style, helpful use of graphing and illustration, together with his well selected bibliographies, make the book usable and timely. As it covers the historical development of the secondary school, and the major problems of external and internal organization, as well as the curriculum and extra-curricular (or "allied") activities, it is not surprising that this text immediately began to replace the earlier books used in survey courses in secondary education.

Somewhat similar in general plan are two

¹*The American Secondary School*, by Leonard V. Koos. New York: Ginn and Company. 1927. Pages 755.