

INSIGHT AND OUTSIGHT

Lawrence Stenhouse

Journal  
TIMES ED  
SUPP

---

Fantasy and Feeling in Education by Richard  
M. Jones, New York: New York University Press,  
London: University of London Press.

---

In the United States and in Britain the most significant educational development of the last decade, judged by impact on the classrooms, has been the movement of curricular reform based on development projects. Jones offers a critique of the new curricular, particularly of Bruner's work in the social service, and a line of creative response to some of the problems he diagnoses.

We in Britain seem fated to repeat American mistakes in curriculum reforms. Careful attention to this book could save us from learning from our own errors. It is the most important contribution to practical curriculum improvement since Bruner's Process of Education, and it stands on Bruner's shoulders.

An understandable emphasis on the production of curriculum materials has tended to obscure the need for a co-ordinated experimentation with new methods, which the materials demand but do not suggest.

AS/..

As another American curriculum worker, Rubin, has said, there can be no curriculum development without teacher development and teacher development needs to be based on a systematic consideration of the problems of method involved. The hunches of individual teachers are not sufficient.

This may seem obvious, but the lesson has not yet been learnt. Both in the United States and in Britain we are still embarking on curriculum projects which hope to reform the classroom by producing materials and suggesting objectives.

Classroom process is neglected. We deal too much in terms of terminal behaviours, too little in educational experiences.

This is Jones thesis at its most general level. It is important. It is neglected because of a widespread failure to recognise that successful curricular reform needs to be founded on the difficult and demanding study of the reality of schools and classrooms.

Jones concentrates on one aspect of the methods problem, the impact on classrooms of thinking in too exclusively cognitive terms. This leads to shallow thinking about the significance and nature of the affective and the imaginative.

ON/.....

On the one hand, emotions and fantasies can be seen merely as obstructions to learning. In the quest for objectivity relevant emotion can be seen as an endurance. Jones tartly sums up the attitude behind an example of teaching about the Netsuick eskimos moving camp and building a new igloo, while an aged woman is left to fend for herself. "Here's a story about a useless old lady who's expected to commit suicide, Get it? Now lets see how they build an igloo".

On the other hand, emotions can be seen as catholic or in therapeautic terms. Jones writes "a typical first error made by many teachers who become persuaded that psychoanalytic principles can improve their teaching skills. Not content to lead their students to confront emotionally charged issues, they rush to interpret them in ways that are all too readily available in Psychoanalytic case histories, overlooking that these are insight-oriented, not outsiight-oriented, and are therefore contrary to the manifact purposes of reading. (

This distinction between insight and outsiight is central to Jones's argument. The therapist has aimed at "the cultivation of an insight", usually by some kind of interpretation, what has brought forth this or that image in the past, what situations bring it forth now; how has it been over generalized, mis applied, rashly acted upon; how can it be more aptly viewed in future, eh. But "Insight is only one way that images which no longer estrange a person

Can/.../

can be put to use. The other way is by way of outsight: grasping, enlivening, enchancing, discoverfng, making one's own this-or-that datum in the real world - by virtue of gracing it with this-or-that private image".

The case sited is splendid.

Teacher: "And now can anyone tell me what infinity means? (silence) "What is infinity?"

Billy: (pause) "Uh, I think it's like a box of Cream of Wheat".

Teacher: "Billy, don't be silly!"

But later Jones asked,

Billy, how is infinity like a bos of Cream of Wheat?" "Well", said Billy, "think of a box of Cream of Wheat, Right? And that box shows the same man holding the same box, Right? And that box... You can't see them all, like you can't see infinity. You just know they're all there, going on forever and ever".

Outsight! "Making one's own this-or-that datum in the real world - by virtue of gracing it with this-or-that private image".

Jones is taking one fundamental problem of method raised by the reading of the social sciences from new and authentic materials; what is the role of feeling and fantasy in the classroom?

He pursues this problem by reflecting on experience in classrooms and teachers' planning conferences, and quotes literally from transcripts. Throughout he is reflecting on the differences between his experience as a psychotherapist and the experience which is appropriate in education.

His conclusion will command widespread assent.

"Let us enter it as a fundamental rule, then, that cultivation of emotional issues in classrooms, whether by design or in response to the unpredictable, should be means to the ends of mistrusting the children in the subject matter. This not only for the reason that resolution of emotional issues, when integral to learning, tends to deepen the learning but also for the reason that in the setting of a schoolroom emotional issues cannot be optionally resolved until they become relevant to educational objectives".

But the strength of the book does not lie in this general statement. Rather in the way he has explored the implications of such a position in the practice of the classroom.

He not only argues for emotional as well as intellectual honesty in the classroom. He shows in well chosen examples what this means in practice and what position beset the teacher in attempting its achievement.

In so far as one can provide general insights (or  
outsights) which can sharpen the teacher's educational  
opportunism, Jones does so.

Above all he shows convincingly that any  
worthwhile curriculum rests upon the quality of  
teachers. He is surely right in suggesting that  
Relevance..... is the key to availing the instructional  
process of emotional and unaginal issues. And he  
sees that relevance is not easy to see and depends  
upon mastery of subject matter.

Inspection and examiners of teaching practice  
will share his experience "that the more adept a  
teacher becomes at providing children with opportunities  
to express their inner lives, the more glaring may be  
her failures to establish relevant points of  
correspondence on the subject matter of her own  
knowledge of the subject matter is shallow. With the  
result that the children are given insufficient  
opportunities to employ what they have successfully  
been encouraged to express".

This is not an easy book, but its difficulty  
is not gratuitous. It reflects real difficulty in  
classroom practice, and any teacher or curriculum  
worker who is sensitive enough to be troubled by the  
problem in practice, is likely to find the book  
worth more than one reading.

IT/....

most thumbed and marked volume in this  
rector's professional bookshelf.