



# TRENDS IN METHODS OF TEACHING

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There used to be a time when the curriculum of the normal school was composed largely of methods. A would-be teacher had to master his Reading Methods, Language Methods, Arithmetic Methods, Geography Methods, Music Methods, Drawing Methods, etc., in addition to memorizing the formal steps of the inductive-deductive method, the Unit Study method, and a host of other methods. Before a diploma was awarded the candidate had to present at least a year of teaching experience to see if she has learned and applied with satisfaction her methods from A to Z.

The philosophy behind the craze for methods was based on the belief that there were so many things in the world that must be learned by everyone irrespective of need or interest that they have to be crammed down the learner's throat with the greatest possible efficiency. This "pouring in" idea seldom took into consideration the learner's natural limitations. Devices of every sort were used to sugar-coat the subject matter, but the main purpose was the same, that is, to master the greatest possible amount of skill and knowledge on a host of unrelated things most often far from the actual needs of life.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then. New theories and new philosophies have come and gone. The emphasis of education has shifted from subject matter to the child, from the child to the school, and from the school to the community. Learning ceased to be in terms of books but has become one of child growth. And child growth does not mean only physical growth but mental, emotional, and spiritual growth as well. Progress is to be measured not by the amount of information gained but by the fullness of one's experience, that is, growing, and living as one should live—thinking, participating, and contributing something in the activities of the school, the home, and the community to the end that life becomes richer, happier, and better.

The school has ceased to be an institution apart from the community—nay, the community itself has become the school. All people young and old are welcomed within its portals. The teacher has ceased to be a mentor; he becomes a philosopher, a leader, a social worker and a practical politician.

Teacher-training has become a complex matter. No longer must the teacher be skilled merely in the intricacies of imparting know-

ledge; she must be equally skilled in the art of community leadership. She teaches both the young and immature as well as the benighted adults who must keep young and be growing once again. She must be a mother to so many children as well as a devoted daughter to so many parents. Her activities are no longer confined within the four walls of the school-room but must include the whole outside world.

With this changed emphasis should come a reorientation in our methods and concepts of imparting knowledge. The strictly mechanical ways of doling out bits of information, no matter how efficient, could not suffice. If the test of true learning is the emergence of appropriate conduct, how are we to teach our pupils such that when the individual is confronted with a situation in life his responses are appropriate? How are we to train the individual such that he becomes self reliant instead of being a parasite, self motivated, instead of being irresponsible? How are we to handle subject matter such that it becomes part of the learner's life, so that it becomes a ready tool for making his life more useful? How are we to train the learner such that his relationship with others become wholesome, so that he will become a good leader as well as an intelligent follower?

Obviously our concept of methods would cease to be in terms of subject matter alone. We shall, of course, be teaching the fundamental subjects still, but the need of today is on how to expand the idea of teaching children so that they will learn their A,B,C, and at the same time be human beings—

so that they will be equipped with the knowledge and skills useful to them in life and at the same time be well informed and be law-abiding, thinking, and intelligent citizens.

As we said, we shall still be teaching subject matter. In training children, for better citizenship, we naturally acquaint them with the experiences of the race that had been found useful in life. And subject matter is nothing more nor less than the accumulated useful human experiences. For the sake of economy we naturally must teach these experiences in the most efficient manner we are humanly capable of. Our newer concept of methods does not presume to do away with efficiency. We certainly do need to be more efficient not only in teaching subject matter "per se" but also in setting up the optimum conditions for an all around, well integrated, pupil growth.

What constitute a good method, many authors differ. For our purpose however, we venture to enumerate the following:

(1) **It must produce results.** A good method should be economical and effective, that is, it must be able to realize the aims of the activity and produce results in the most economical manner. It must make children succeed. It is useless to be able to follow the steps of a formal activity with mechanical precision if the pupils only go through that activity as a matter of course, evincing formal responses—tossing back prepared answers with the same civility and decorum. Learning presupposes active and wholehearted participation on the part of the learner.

(2) **It must utilize the laws of learning.** A good method takes into consideration the pupils' readiness to participate actively in the activity. It must be satisfying and must provide sufficient practice in order to "set in" the habits learned or knowledges gained. It must utilize pupils' experiences and must take into consideration their needs and interests.

(3) **It must provide for individual differences.** It should provide enough flexibility to make allowances for the varying abilities of children. It should take into consideration the fact of sex and maturity and the influence of home conditions.

(4) **It must be able to utilize local resources.** It must make the most of what materials are available. In the absence of needed materials, adaptations, substitutions, and compromises may be resorted to. It need not follow the courses of study to the letter but should feel free to make revisions and adaptations to allow for differences in local conditions.

(5) **It must make learning easy and natural.** Learning need not be difficult. A good method must make learning done in easy stages taking into consideration the pupil's maturity, a little at a time, if the ability of the class so de-

mands, gradually increasing the amount as the rate of learning ability increases. It must make learning natural, that is, it should utilize to the maximum situations that are true to life, meaning, true to the pupils' level of experience and maturity.

Notice that we are not describing here a specific process, nor are we suggesting one. We are only describing the conditions which should characterize it. The steps of the process are immaterial. They may be direct or they may be a little roundabout if there is a necessity for doing so. The test of a good method is whether it produces results, and by results we mean it to be not only book learning but also an all-around, integrated pupil growth.

Notice further that there is no good method in itself. The success of a method depends upon the teacher herself. In fact we might even venture to say that the teacher herself is the method. If she knows thoroughly her subject matter, if she understands fully the nature of her children, if she knows the basic principles that govern the learning process, and if she possesses a philosophy of life and strives hard to translate that philosophy into action, the search for a good method will have been ended.

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## ON INDUSTRY

*The more we do, the more we can do; the more busy we are, the more leisure we have.*—HAZLITT