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## Feature Article

Teacher Leadership: Business Models or Modern Alchemy?

Modern educational "theory" (which we advise that you sip in small doses) [See our article, Plan Simply -- Build a Simple Plan: Loose the Ideology] seems to stem more from psychology or business theory than from educational knowledge. Why?

Perhaps this is because psychologists are "nasty scientists" and because business people are "greedy pragmatists." (Note: Credit for labeling psychology as a "nasty little science" is given to William James.)

See supporting links: Theistic Psychology Or: Functionalism Notes

Therefore, any educational "theories" that devolve from business or psychology are automatically suspect based upon their source.

But, why don't teachers devise theories of their own?

More than likely, master teachers are too busy teaching and guiding students to worry about philosophy and theory.

What "theories" actually assist teachers in the minute-by-minute performance of their jobs?

Here are the problems...

Psychologists are trained to be "impartial observers." They believe (incorrectly) that an "antiseptic" observational process can identify behavior and develop theories. But, the fact is that any observer affects the outcome of the observed situation by the act of observing. (Note: This is true even for light particles in a lab. And, what about the "Abdicating Our Roles? Just as politicians have no business meddling in education, psychologists and business people also should keep their distance from the educational enterprise.

Sure, teachers should adopt sound business practices and sound psychological procedures that improve the mechanics and interaction of education. But, teachers should hold to their own theories.

Can anyone identify a business or psychological "theory" that improves education? (Note: We will gladly publish any professional debate concerning this issue.) Why Business and Psychology Lead Educators Astray Let's look at some popular leadership theories that do not hold "educational water." Theory X Assumes that people are inherently lazy, that people don't like to work, and that it takes a strong (dictatorial) manager to get them to perform a bare minimum level. (Aside: Sort of like high-stakes testing and the NCLB Act Theory Y People are intrinsically motivated, like to achieve goals and master their environment, and enjoy work if it is meaningful and if they can provide their own direction This theory leads to the democratic manager and a "participative" style of management. Neither of these theories enjoys a blanket application in education. Here are the reasons:

First, education is unlike factory-floor production, and the goal of education is not to churn out products. Factory models of education flourish because these models provide a rationale for cheap and measurably mediocre education, about what our politicians and our society are willing to settle for.

Second, education that focuses upon uniformity and standardization loses most of its value.

An analogy that explains this would be if all precious gems were cut to the same size and shape of diamonds. There would be a lot waste as large diamonds were ground down to the standard size, and a lot of rejects as diamonds that were too small to begin with were discarded.

But, the effect on emeralds, sapphires, rubies and other lesser stones would be far more damaging because being cut as diamonds would not allow for their innate, natural beauty to express.

The parallel in schools is to use a minimum skills, high-stakes test to squeeze students into a standard mold. Then, to reject all the talents, energies and delightful differences in students as they are squeezed into "narrow skill sets" that are suitable for low-level management. Myths Dispelled Here are some common (useless) myths that come from outside education and plague our profession: The human mind is like a computer

The education process should run like a highly productive factory

Standardized tests tell how well a teacher is teaching

Measuring student test scores is effective in "benchmarking" teacher performance

Education must be the "same" for all students if it is to be fair

Teachers must avoid humor, and avoid "smiling before the Winter Solstice" The Truth about Education These myths shelter hold more holes than a termite-ravaged dead tree. But, what is real about education? Here are some truths &hellip;

Teachers work with the most precious resources in the world, our children. For proof of this, check with 99.999% of parents. With rare exceptions, parents will tell you that their children are precious to them.

Teachers work with the behaviors, emotions, images, cognition, beliefs and language development of students. This is the most malleable resource in the world, capable of infinite variations, unlimited capacity and boundless energy (before it solidifies into constructs, compulsions and cravings.

Teachers draw on an unlimited capacity for students' talents, skills and abilities &hellip; what we ask students to perform

is a miniscule subset of what they are capable of

Teachers stimulate creative ideas, higher-order thinking, the construction of new knowledge and solutions to issues that locked-tight minds know there is no solution for

Teachers launch students toward attainments that surpass previous generations in quantum hops&hellip;

Teachers model caring, empathy, compassion, fairness and justice; contributions far more important for the future of our country than all the political deal-making, budget allocations and legal wrangling that is supposed to offer solutionsThe New AlchemistsIt is not without reason that the legend of a special stone that could transmute materials was called the "Philosopher's Stone." But, even though teachers cannot touch lead and convert it into gold, they can perform a far more important miracle.

Teachers can touch a child's heart and soul, change the path of that child's life, and sow the seeds of benefits and improvements for families as yet unformed, for generations to come.

There is a modern name for the "Philosopher's Stone" of human health, harmony and happiness. That name is, "master teacher."

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