

THE UNMEASURED VALUES IN EDUCATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the acknowledged benefits of the use of standardized objective tests, a teacher may be permitted to doubt their present adequacy to measure the ultimate outcomes of education, and to raise the question of whether as commonly used they may not be producing an unwarranted over-emphasis of such outcomes as can be objectively measured, and conversely a wholly unwarranted under-emphasis, if not neglect, of certain tremendously significant values that cannot as yet be objectively and quantitatively measured. If teachers are judged wholly by objective results, naturally they will teach to secure outcomes that can be objectively tested; and just as naturally will they tend to lose sight of the imponderable and at present unmeasurable outcomes, however significant they may be.

Three great educational values are in constant need of emphasis: the *intellectual*, involving not only organized conceptual knowledge but also the cultivation of thought power in its use; the *ethical*, involving goodness and the cultivation of a sensitive concern for the welfare of all; and the *aesthetic*, involving beauty with its soul-stirring sublimation and glorification of the experiences that make up life. These three values I conceive to constitute the very essence of a civilized personality, the very outcomes essential to the operation of a successful democracy.

As previously affirmed, no one of these values has gone a great way toward adequate realization. Much less is there any objective or quantitative test now in existence that can enable a teacher to do more than conjecture how much capacity a given pupil may have in the future in any one of them. As to *thought power*, there is no way of telling how much ability a given pupil may have in future years to assemble his resources of knowledge and through sustained thinking arrive at a solution of some great and intriguing life problem. As to *ethical behavior*, there is no way of telling how much capacity a given pupil may have in the complex cross-currents of his future life to inhibit the selfish and shortsighted desire when promised the kingdoms of the world. As to *aesthetic appreciation*, there is no way of telling how much responsiveness a given pupil may prove to have to the massed glory of light and shade and color of a great picture, or which of two pupils will slump in his seat and which ascend to the seventh heaven in response to the tremendous tone pattern of stimulation of a symphony orchestra.

I may in closing be allowed to express again my misgivings that the success with which the outcomes of some of the techniques and the verbal formulations may be objectively measured may be contributing a sad by-product of neglect of these finer and far greater values that cannot be so measured. As some evidence that I am not wholly eccentric and unsupported in the position I have taken, I close by quoting a typical opinion of a thoughtful educator, Dr. Ambrose L. Suhrie, of New York University:

"The very gratifying progress we have made during the past decade or two in measuring native capacity and the more or less tangible aspects of achievement has unfortunately been accompanied by a deplorable neglect of many of those intangible aspects of spiritual growth which are as yet unmeasurable. We are sometimes almost forced to the conclusion that to do a little good we have quite unintentionally done a great deal of harm."