

BOOK REVIEWS

REGAINING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: CRITICAL ESSAYS ON PBTE/CBTE, BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES, AND ACCOUNTABILITY, ed. Ralph A. Smith. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1975, 251 pp., \$9.95.

A title stepping off with "*Regaining Educational Leadership . . .*" necessarily has something of the ring of "When did you stop beating your wife?" And the indictment is no accident, since compiler Ralph Smith does indeed want to charge educators with having surrendered the direction and control of schooling. Such an abdication, he feels, has been part and parcel of their acceptance of the assorted programs of Smith's subtitle: Performance-Based Teacher Education, Competency-Based Teacher Education, Behavioral Objectives, and Accountability. For individually and collectively, these proposals do more than urge particular techniques, or ways to do things; their cumulative effect is to hand over the very defining of education and its goals to the "technocrats."

The book is alarmingly successful in its exposure — not just of the educational leadership situation, but of the dire prospective effects of the four programs of the subtitle. It is a volume that ought to be required reading for anyone associated with or interested in schooling. This would afford quite a broad audience, to be sure; but one of this book's virtues is its multidimensional message and appeal. It aims more at general orientation than at detail or esoterica, so that non-initiates need not feel they are being pushed beyond their depth. Yet at the same time, the book is fundamentally concerned with conceptualizing the phenomena with which it deals, so it also has much to offer a sophisticated audience.

Regaining Educational Leadership contains nineteen articles, ten of them published here for the first time. The authors include a number who have been prominent in their opposition to the technocratic thrust in education, but there are also several excellent statements by people who have not previously been associated with this topic. Harry Broudy, Maxine Greene, Philip Smith, Walter Clark, Donald Arnstine, Michael Apple, and Hugh Petrie offer especially notable contributions. An introduction by Professor Smith provides not only an overview of his book, but a fine orientation to the several programs which concern him, along with the views and affinities linking these programs and their advocates to one another.

For the benefit of those not familiar with PBTE or CBTE, behavioral ob-

jectives or accountability, the four measures are designed to improve the conduct of education, and the training therefore, via "PPBS," as Professor Smith puts it: Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Systems. PBTE or CBTE attempt to do for teacher preparation what behavioral objectives and accountability seek to apply immediately to teachers and classrooms. More specifically, PBTE and CBTE recommend a careful identification of the competencies teachers need and an incremental building of these "how to's," one by one, persistently eliminating the vague and theoretic understanding in favor of the concrete and specific practice. The "behavioral objectives" program urges, in brief, that teachers go and do likewise, i.e., that they take care to break down their classroom goals into precise divisible components and translate these into behaviorally expressible objectives. Accountability — the fourth of Professor Smith's quartet — calls for assessing how many learners acquire how many behavioral objectives, and for evaluating their teachers accordingly. All four manifest what Professor Smith calls "the efficiency syndrome," which is abundantly evident today, of course, in all sorts of human enterprises.

A number of efforts during the last decade have exposed the extent to which we have all progressively technologized the various dimensions of our living — and the tremendous costs in so doing. As Jacques Ellul summarized it in *The Technological Society*, essentially what has happened is that we have made a primary commitment to the pursuit of technique — to rationally arrived-at methods for the conduct of virtually all of our activities, with efficiency as the ultimate desideratum of what is rational. Now when one brings this sort of mentality to bear on the activities and processes of educating, emphases like teacher accountability, and precise and measurable behavioral objectives for all instruction, are almost foreseeable as outcomes. What is also entailed is the triumph of the engineering model of the educational undertaking — with learnings, kids, teachers, classrooms, etc., all lumped together and reduced to the common denominator of system inputs and outputs, with a prevailing product orientation demanding the sorts of results that are tangible and visible for all to see.

Now there can be no objection per se, of course, to plans for rendering education more effective, teachers more responsible, or teacher preparation more adequate. The difficulty with this particular set of such plans, however, is their incidental effects. These, as Professor Smith's authors so well show, include such dubious benefits as extensively re-shaping and re-casting the goals they were designed to serve; effectively eliminating from consideration any goals which do not lend themselves to the atomization process; and misconceiving both learner and learning to the detriment of both.

Perhaps nowhere in the school's program is the prospective impact of these four proposals more dramatically evident than in aesthetic education. For fine arts, instruction is an area where behavioral objectives are quite conceivable and even relatively simple to devise, e.g., "To identify Chopin's 'Étude in E Major' after a maximal exposure of four bars" and "To play 'The Happy Farmer' without error in thirty-seven seconds or less." But somehow such objectives collectively as well as individually must simply miss the point of fine arts instruction! And when one pursues the aesthetic

as a matter or quality or dimension potentially part of all experience, it must fare even worse under the impact of educational technophilia. For the efficient pursuit of clean and simple objectives precludes any sort of multi-layered response to living, since such response would have to stand as patently counter-productive and directly inimical to efficiency. Hence, under PBTE, etc., the interests of aesthetic education would have to suffer dramatically. As primary content, the aesthetic (like other content) would be subject to considerable distortion; as "collateral" content or dimension, the aesthetic concern would simply disappear altogether in the interests of reducing instructional activity to its simplest, most manageable units.

As a solution for education's ills, such atomism-with-a-vengeance simply will not do. Rather, as the authors in this volume on "Regaining Educational Leadership" have successfully shown, it represents an approach to educational reform that is bankrupt from the start. Even before the evidence starts to come in (and, as they point out, precious little of it has), the very shape of the proposals makes it clear that they are far more likely to bring harm than good. This volume contributes a great deal to the understanding of exactly how and why that is the case.

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