

## Education: Difficult Environments

Tobe EH\*

*Department of Psychiatry, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, USA*

\*Corresponding author: Edward H. Tobe, Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, USA, Tel: +1 856 983 4940; E-mail: Edward.tobe@comcast.net

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### Compromised communities have a high rate of parental abdication of authority

### Introduction

Several significant factors influence the satisfaction obtained from a teaching career. Adults measure themselves by their work. Teaching as an occupation encounters visible and invisible vicissitudes that risk disaffection. Some socioeconomic obstacles lack current solutions. Teaching is not in a vacuum; rather, it is within the context of the student's life experience. Innovative approaches to enhance an alliance with the student's community benefit the teaching process. Below are challenging problems encountered in some schools of the United States.

### Collapsed communities

Comparative differences in the quality of education between school districts led to require testing. Some school districts have a rigidly structured core curriculum to meet the demands of standardized testing. These guidelines purport to represent educational success. Measuring education beyond the basic three R's is debatable. The creative substance of innovative problem solving is difficult to measure. In a rigid curriculum that requires significant documentation, the teacher has limited time to employ a creative teaching style and content. When the burden of documentation thwarts the teacher's creative intuitive skills, the students lose an invaluable connection with the teacher's talents and goals. A lifelong emotional attitude about learning is influenced by teachers. The inchoate desire to learn must be allowed to sprout. The crucible of achievement is whether the student has internalized the value of pursuing and developing new skills that enhance adaptation to a rapidly changing world environment throughout their life.

Teachers flourish in an environment that values their work. There is a bidirectional relationship between community and school that significantly influences the aspirations of teachers. In communities that lack hope, lack parental capacity, children bring the rage and despair of the community to the school. Teachers placed in educationally devaluing and/or chaotic threatening environments are inclined to change their purpose from teaching to surviving, which mirrors life in the community. The teacher cannot teach and the student cannot learn when personal safety is compromised. Too many schools lack the authority to provide teachers and students adequate support structure to enable learning. This deficiency of authority may reflect fear of political ramifications. To pretend to offer an education only mocks the educational process. The school cannot independently correct severe community dysfunction. Functional aspects of the community need to surface to support the realistic duties of school.

To create an illusion of strength, some angry, disillusioned, and emotionally hungry children or adolescents retaliate against their lot of privation through overt disregard for the values, priorities and goals of the school authorities. To undo emotional pain, the student hopes to become feared. Gangs provide 'family' protection. To join a gang, the individual unconsciously must forfeit some autonomy and merge with the idealized gang. For a gang to sustain its existence, there must be an enemy.

Psychological understanding of the inveteracy of ill behavior does not realistically resolve integrating these students into a traditional school environment. Egregious aggressive and illegal activity may require removal of the student. Sadly the collapsed community may lack the basic resource of family; however, the school, like any workplace, requires adherence to behavioral standards. The disposition of those expelled is a community problem. Where parents have abdicated their role, innovative measures are necessary. Inviting leaders of the community and adult relatives to attend classes creates a bilateral learning process to bring reflection about community goals. Alternative year-round community supported activity 'clubs' allow an informal intervention that may inspire emotional and intellectual maturity and reintegration into a formal educational program.

### Teamwork?

'Teamwork' between administration and faculty may have a public presentation but a very different private face. Unproductive interactions, between school employees at all levels of occupational title, influence the product of education. The school administration influences the emotional milieu in which the teachers live a significant percent of their life. Negative milieus may serve the interest of some but create a wider attitude of hurt. Due to issues of tenure or steps in years of teaching, a teacher may face a dilemma between working in a personally unacceptable environment or tolerate possible economic or personal aspiration losses and change jobs or careers. Prudence warrants faculty of any institution to reevaluate their career satisfaction. If possible create a network of contacts or enhance marketable skills to expand vocational options.

In communities enjoying economic success, there is no guarantee that the student possesses the drive to engage in challenging academic or athletic goals. Some students lack purpose to achieve learning skills. Perhaps the combination of a tolerant undemanding home environment and a passive child may create disincentives to struggle with athletic or scholastic challenge. Students from high achieving families, sport or academic, may suffer unconscious inhibitions to compete because of fear of failing their wish to equal or excel. It may be easier to rationalize a shortfall because he or she did not 'really' try. A wrestling coach said, "you can teach a boy how to wrestle but you

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cannot teach him how to fight". A team composed of a bilateral desire to learn between student and teacher enables both to learn.

Collapsed communities and the quality of teamwork can significantly influence the education of the student and the moral of the faculty. The educational experience enhances the future work-life

options of the student and satisfies the career of the teacher. The crucible of success in education is an independent internalization of a commitment to learn throughout life. This bold endeavor offers hope for a life that enhances the individual, the family and community.

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