

ARE YOU A ROBOT?

TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL CONTROL OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION*

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COLLEEN MOORE has completed a costly and unique doll house, the most beautiful in the world. It has a robot princess for its mistress and beautiful dolls for occupants. The pretty actress is the general manager, who directs the entire institution from the outside.

Our modern institution of education appears to be approaching a similar state. We have an elaborate edifice, utilizing the latest and best in scientific knowledge and workmanship, yet it is found wanting in the balance of human relationships, because the control is from the outside.

The Specialists' Role

Only educators, well removed from the child-teaching ranks, have time, means, and permission to control the educational profession. Being outside the real school situation, their vision is subjected to the refractions of distance and artificial illumination. Other attractions—details, reports, politics, conventions, teachers' meetings, publicity, and so on—divide their attention and lessen their already imperfect and blurred vision. If anyone can find an article or book on educational thought, philosophy, or methods that is written by someone actually engaged in classroom teaching on the public school level, he is a keen observer and should become an astronomer who discovers new stars. College professors, superintendents, supervisors, and critic teachers write, but they direct from outside the actual classroom situation. They are specialists in research and administration who contribute valuable information and theory, organize and unify the teaching profession, and serve as go-betweens for the school and society. Their advice affects the institution, but does it affect the education that takes place in the institution?

One may see the whole situation more clearly from the outside, some may argue. When inside there is always a part out of view and one's attention is necessarily limited to a small scope. The teacher, schoolroom, equipment, methods, and children with their visible and artificial reactions to unnatural circumstances, can be seen best as a

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unit by one looking on. That perspective is what has been termed education, while as a matter of fact, it constitutes only the setting and the tools, with these rarely checked against the judgment of teachers' feeling free to express their honest convictions.