

The social inheritance so ably discussed by writers on educational sociology perhaps applies even more justifiably to the field of conduct in this character realm than to the field of conduct in the classroom. There are individual differences as in that of intellectual endeavor. Some unpublished studies lead to the conclusion that these character qualities are, as is the case of most intellectual and physical qualities, normally distributed and vary all the way from practically none at all to stages of highest development.

It seems quite evident that learnings in character would be subject to the same laws and principles as learnings in the ordinary intellectual fields and the commonly taught, and in this day generally understood, laws and principles of the learning process should be applicable here and in almost any other phase of learning. This being true it would seem to me that we might carry over by analogy what we know in the intellectual field into the field of the learning basis of conduct. What remains then is to produce a philosophy of character education which corresponds to an hypothesis in this field. Upon the basis of that hypothesis we can experiment and revise our theory upon the basis of our experience. We must, however, see to it that our educational procedure is purposeful and that we seek directly and specifically to accomplish predetermined objectives. Direct learning, however, will probably be the smallest part of the processes. Associate and concomitant learnings must be as carefully planned for as the direct learnings. Concomitant learnings have in the past been assumed to be what happened that was not planned for. That was, unfortunately, quite frequently true. The capable educator, however, can plan for concomitant learnings as wisely as he plans for his direct learnings.⁽⁴⁾

An understanding of that which follows depends upon a reasonably comprehensive grasp of two things. First, an understanding of the laws and principles of the learning process. In a short treatise such as this, it would be impracticable to present these and to discuss them thoroughly. Ample discussions of these laws of learning will be found in any modern text book on educational psychology.⁽⁵⁾

The second need is an understanding of the general educational principles involved in such processes as the project method of instruction. The differences between the direct, associate, and concomitant learnings, and the use of coercion, as opposed to other forms of motivation. One of the best books for such study is the Foundations of Method by Kilpatrick. Other references will be found in the suggested bibliography appended.⁽⁶⁾

Learning is a laboratory process. We have tended to consider the laboratory as the exercising ground of the physicist, the chemist, and the biologist. This is, however, a narrow view. When we learned handwriting, one of our earliest experiences in school, we learned it not by listening to a lecture but by laboriously doing it. We practised the making of letters; this practise was laboratory work. We learned to read by laboratory work in reading, and we learned arithmetic by the solving of countless problems. For some reason, however, exponents of character education, particularly those representing the church and the Sunday school, have seemed to feel that a peppy exhortation delivered perhaps once a week could take the place of learning by doing. This I believe to be fallacious, and I believe also that we as physical educators must plan our educational curriculum to give a graded laboratory course in character. Each thing should be done for a purpose. This of course raises many problems; for instance, should one emphasize only activities that are of use in later life. I believe that many activities that in themselves are of no use whatever in later life may have extremely great value at one point in the educational process. The average boy who plays football will