



Sources of Weakness in the “Schooling” Approach to Theological Education¹

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1. All learners are assumed to be similar in terms of needs, interests, and abilities.
2. Conforming behavior is preferred over divergent and nonconforming behavior.
3. Learners are increasingly made more competitive at the price of cooperation.
4. Learners are expected to be receptors of learning rather than communicators.
5. The learner's part in curricular decision-making is minimal and tends to be steadily reduced.
6. The responsibility for attitudes and feelings about content and about learning itself is attributed to the student.
7. Schooling's major justification is *preparation* (mostly expressed in terms for eligibility for more schooling).
8. The content to be learned is justified in terms of *future* needs of the learner.
9. Evaluation is concerned almost exclusively with lower levels of cognitive learning (recall of information and processes). List memorization is thus a major curricular emphasis.
10. Learning experiences are designed or selected on the basis of academic categories and definitions; applications of information are minimally emphasized.
11. Abstractions of experience (in the form of language and symbols) are substituted for realities.
12. Rewards and punishments are assumed to increase learning.
13. Rewards are more symbolic than real. Even the satisfactions of seeing oneself develop are subordinated to imposed systems of rewards.
14. Punishment is assumed to increase learning. Imposing punishment is virtually a sovereign right of the teacher.
15. The teacher is ascribed authority in matters of truth; thus credibility and veracity are confused with status and rank.
16. The social distance that separates teachers from learners is increased by assigning different sets of rights and expectations to each.
17. Learning experiences are designed and limited to fit time blocks.
18. Learning experiences are designed and limited to fit standard locations and space.
19. Testing is the determination of success.
20. Formalized success is the supreme value.

¹ Adapted (2004) from a 1973 study of characteristics of schooling, Institute for Studies of Nonformal Education, Michigan State University. Included in Ted Ward. Schooling as a Defective Approach to Education. *Common Ground Journal*. Vol. 11 (1) Fall 2013: pp. 28-31. Available in the Document Archives and www.commongroundjournal.org