

Based on the works of L. Ron Hubbard

Teaching

A NEW APPROACH

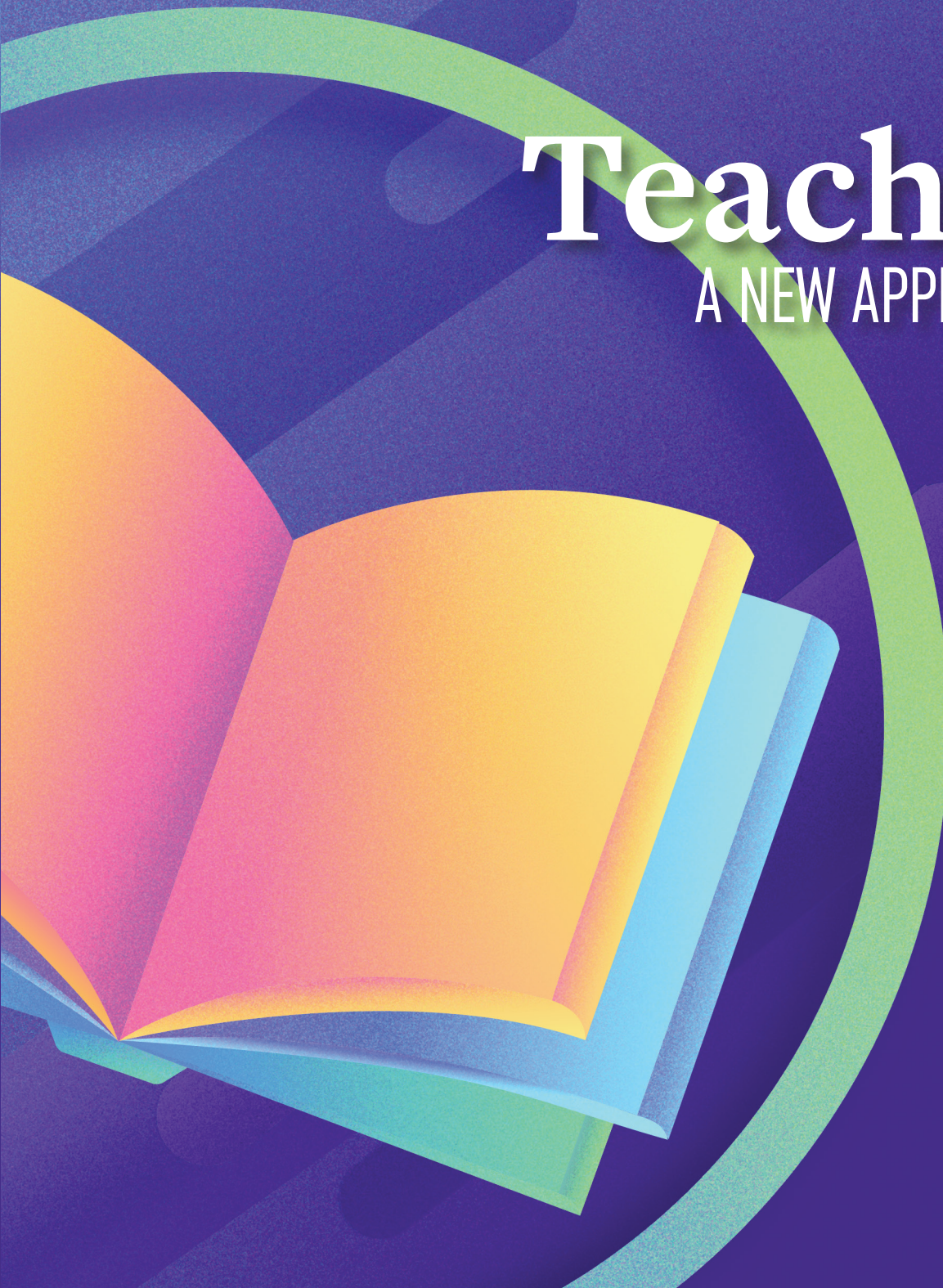


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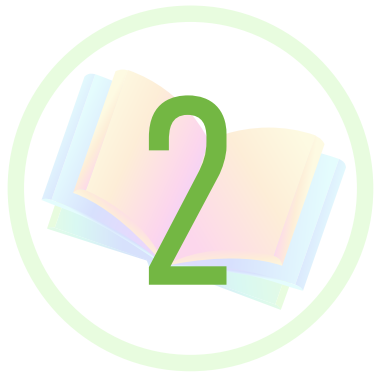
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Basic Principles of Education

Presented here are some basic principles that have application in many areas of teaching and learning. While some of these overlap and interrelate, each is presented separately for the sake of clarity.

THE ABILITY TO REASON

Education can lie along two lines:

1. Giving students data.
2. Teaching students to reason with the data they have.

Much modern education hardly recognizes the second method—developing the ability to reason in the student. When we ask why a person needs reason, we find that reason is the ability to extrapolate new data from the existing data. Knowing “all there is to know” about a subject is not enough. The individual must have the ability to know, as the necessity arises, the things that are *not* known by extrapolating them from data. There is a difference between memorizing and rationalizing.

The one thing that must be completely safeguarded in the human being in the process of education is the right to think.

This has very practical applications. For example, a teacher who looks for ways to answer a student’s question with another question that invites reasoning on the student’s part. Or lesson plans specifically designed to foster reasoning on the part of students.

*Knowledge is more than data;
it is also the ability to draw conclusions.*

SELF-DETERMINISM

Self-determinism refers to one's ability to direct oneself. A self-determined person can reason things out and make good decisions about what to do rather than just react. When one is self-determined, they are not merely a puppet dancing on the strings of the environment; they can control themselves or, when appropriate, choose to accept control from another.

We all strive to be as self-determined as possible.

*It is a prime purpose of education
to increase the self-determinism of an individual.*

Reason, the ability to extrapolate, goes hand-in-glove with self-determinism.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means giving students of all ages plenty of opportunities to reason things out, to observe situations and problems and work out proposed solutions.

It means listening to students' ideas and evaluations and granting importance to these. It means giving students useful information with which to evaluate and make decisions.

It might mean giving students jobs or projects that require them to evaluate information and reason out solutions and, rather than leading them, letting them work it out themselves. Then discussing with them how they did.

As a note, self-determinism is sometimes confused with refusal to cooperate or willfulness in non-survival directions. There is a difference between self-determinism and what we might call "selfish determination" where an individual acts only in terms of his or her own irrational desires, with no broader view. As self-determinism increases, an individual increasingly uses the data available to think about the effects of an action on self and others, reasoning and directing self rationally toward beneficial goals.

THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION

This brings us to an oft-neglected element in the ability to reason: imagination.

Imagination plays an important role in education.

A person begins to take care of the future by imagining what is going to happen so as to be ready for it. He or she tries to foresee, through imagination, possible problems that will be met and to reach conclusions about them so that split-second action can take place when the actual problem is met. To accurately assess a situation it is necessary to be capable of imagining what is going to happen.

This is imagination in its simplest form. As imagination develops, it becomes more and more creative until finally it becomes the imagination of the greatest artist and thinker.

Inhibiting the imagination directly results in inhibiting a person's ability to resolve problems relating to his or her own environment and life.

Teaching a student to reason with data means, among other things, fostering the ability to imagine, to be creative with ideas, thoughts, facts, information.

PURPOSE OF A SUBJECT

In teaching, the first thing stated in any subject should be its purpose. What is it for? For example, "This is the subject of dancing. People study it because most people enjoy dancing and seeing other people dance. It's fun to dance to music and there's lots of kinds of dances you can learn and it's good exercise." Or some such.

In other words, there should always be some orientation for a student to the purpose of learning a subject. All data must have a goal around which to align itself. Unless a student understands the purpose thoroughly and the intended use of the information, the data is relatively useless.

Whether one is teaching a child to eat with a fork or training a young adult in calculus, the principles are the same. There must be a good reason for using a fork, and the child must understand that reason. There must be an equally good reason and use for calculus—as calculus, not a grade or degree—before the student can be expected to derive much from it.

And the stated purpose should be delineated against the real world of the person who is doing the studying. What we're trying to teach can't be taught thoroughly unless that person can evaluate it against his or her own real world.

Thus, the first thing for any teacher to study would be this: What is the real world of the students we are teaching? What is their frame of reference? As the teacher you have to take this into account and actually accept this as a real world and help students understand what they will be able to use the information for if you expect the students to learn anything.

In short, if one wishes a subject to be taught with maximal effectiveness, one should (a) demonstrate its general use in life, and (b) demonstrate its specific use to the student in life.

*The education of an individual is an automatic process
so long as purpose and use precede information.*

THE REAL WORLD OF THE SUBJECT

Additionally, the education which a person is receiving should be consistently compared, step by step, to the known world. You can't step into an abstract in education and never compare what's being studied to things which can be actually sensed, measured or experienced.

Every datum which a person receives should have some comparison with the real world.

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

If someone is unwilling to follow a vital course of study, the error does not lie with his or her reasoning.

*Every person, child or adult, is thirsty for knowledge
and drinks it at great gulps.*

The person's unwillingness stems either from the failure to observe the necessity or use of the course of study, or mental blocks against studying that particular thing or course. The moment the necessity of the learning is realized, the person will pour in wattage on the subject

TEACHER ATTITUDE

We sometimes run into a type of teaching where somebody is a "great authority": the subject will always be known a little bit better by him or her than by anybody else and there are things to know in this subject which others wouldn't really be let in on. This attitude results in something that could be called "authoritarianism" or "altitude instruction," *altitude* here meaning from a position of superiority, higher status.

In addition to imparting information from a position of assumed authority, to get students to pay attention authoritarian instruction uses examinations. There is an anxiety created around examinations because a person is indoctrinated into the belief very early in life that if you fail school, if you don't pass, the sun will fall from the sky, you will be left to starve and die in the streets and everybody will hate you.

This keeps people in a state of confusion. Being "taught" from a position of assumed authority puts the students in a position of lower importance and thereby reduces their self-determinism because they are not permitted to evaluate information for themselves.

How should students be taught so they can absorb information and learn data for their own use? They should be taught on a parity basis, where *parity* refers to two or more people or things being on an equal level. In other words, "this is between friends," something like that—between acquaintances, fellows,

teammates, where the teacher is not some “great authority” to be worshiped or feared, but is essentially on an equal level with the student, where the student feels comfortable approaching the teacher, questioning the data, and so on.

Students should not feel they have to take information just because the teacher said so. They should be allowed to take it if it makes sense to them. If they can compare it to the real world, if it makes their thinking clearer, if it makes things better for them, yes, then they take it. But...

*Nothing should be forced off on the student.
Nothing.*

Furthermore, if a student has some misunderstandings or so forth, they should be helped to clear them up. A student should not be penalized for misunderstandings.

In other words, don't give students trouble, or threaten or flunk them because they have the wrong answer. Try to help them so they can get a right answer.

What is the responsibility of the teacher and the institution to the person who is being educated? The kingpin around an institution is the person who is being educated, not the person who is doing the educating.

SUMMARY

Traditionally teaching of an academic character has had a tendency to be authoritarian in nature. Through continuous examination and threat of failure, students have had information forced off on them, which they then, more often than not, spit back for exam and promptly forgot.

They were poorly oriented to the purpose and use of the subjects they were asked to study, and the information often had no goals around which it could be aligned.

The information, often disassociated from the real world of the student, was therefore useless, even when “learned” well.

Students were rarely taught to reason with the information being handed down and the province of imagination was left to art instructors.

Additionally, people taught this way have much more trouble adapting to new information, especially when that information is fundamental. In fact, they will often find themselves confused when a new fundamental appears because they have to reevaluate all this unevaluated information they were forced to accept. Often they simply can't.

Just as it is difficult to coax persons to give up some of their possessions, so it is very trying to be asked to give up some of their facts and ideas. After all, it took years of study to accumulate those ideas.

But it needn't be this way.

A new approach to education is possible.

Put most simply, instead of trying to load a person down with thousands of unevaluated facts...

*What you want in education is to teach a person
how to absorb, use and evolve knowledge.*

A student educated in this fashion will be armed for real success.