Education: Difficult Environments

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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.

Compromised communities have a high rate of parental abdication of authority

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 inevitability 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
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.