

Outcome-based Education
MASTERY LEARNING (ML): THE ROAD TO MIND CONTROL

1704

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I DEFINITION AND THEORETICAL SUPPORT: The premise is that "virtually all students can learn if they are given the time and help they need." ML is supported by the theories of Carroll, early opponent of phonics; Bloom, author of The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the heart of ML, who stated in All Our Children Learning, "The purpose of education and the schools is to change the thoughts, feelings and actions of students;" Bruner of M:ACOS fame; Skinner who said "I could make a pigeon a high achiever by reinforcing it on a proper schedule"; and Goodlad who complained that "most youth still hold the same values as their parents and if we don't resocialize, our system will decay."

II ML DEALS NOT ONLY WITH MASTERY OF ACADEMIC SKILLS: ML is "affective" learning and deals with behavior, attitudes, and values. Professor Spady, an expert on ML, admitted this at a conference in 1982 when he said: "Two of the four functions of ML are: EXTRA: whole agenda of acculturation, social roles, social integration, get the kids to participate in social unit, affective; and HIDDEN: a system of supervision and control which restrains behavior of kids; the outcome of the hidden agenda should be the fostering of social responsibility or compliance." (Behavior Modification)

III EXAMPLE OF WELL KNOWN ML PROGRAM IN NATIONAL DIFFUSION NETWORK (NDN): The Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, ECRI, is a federally-funded teacher training program in use in 3000 schools across the country. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and the NDN have turned a deaf ear to the complaints of hundreds of parents and teachers who point out that the program uses Skinnerian operant conditioning methods, reduces teachers to robots, and has caused sickness and stress for students. Their request for an independent reevaluation of the program has been denied.

IV ML CONNECTION WITH MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS SUCH AS PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING, EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES (MBO): ML slips into MBO like a hand slips into a glove. BOTH are management systems which relate resources to outcomes in education and recycle students, teachers, and programs until stated objectives achieved. BOTH invade privacy of teachers and students (store information in computerized data banks for planning purposes) and, due to recycling of students and standardization of methods for teachers, represent a threat to intellectual freedom.

V SECRETARY BELL INVOLVED IN PROMOTION OF ML AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: Secretary Bell recently said "Every state should establish a Master Plan, setting standards, goals and evaluation methods for each individual school board." He also says in his book A Performance Accountability System for School Administrators "The economic, socio-logical, psychological and physical aspects of students must be taken into account as we look at their educational needs and accomplishments, and fortunately there are a number of attitude and inventory scales that can be used to assess these admittedly difficult to measure outcomes," and "Most of these efforts to manage education try to center in one place an information center that receives reports and makes available to all members of the management team various types of information useful to managers."

VI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS SUPPORT PARENTS' CONCERNS OVER ML & OPERANT CONDITIONING: The Arizona Chapter of the American Federation of Teachers recently passed the following resolution dealing with ML and teacher evaluation: "BE IT RESOLVED: That as professional educators we stand firmly opposed to inferior, radical experimental programs that use operant conditioning and are now being promoted in the United States under classroom management, teacher evaluation, Title II-Basic Skills, and discipline."

VII SOLUTION: Request your Congressional delegation to demand an investigation and "independent" evaluation of ECRI, the most well known ML program. Ask your State Education Agency to provide you with ECRI teacher training materials and a list of schools and addresses that use ECRI. After careful study, take your case to the people.

VIII ESSENTIAL READING: All Our Children Learning, Benjamin Bloom, McGraw Hill, \$6.95; A Place Called School - Prospects for the Future, John Goodlad, McGraw Hill, \$18.95; and A Performance Accountability System for School Administrators, Terrel Bell, Parker Publishing Co., 1974 (out of print - get through Dept. of Ed ERIC system, from your state library, or request your congressman to get out of Library of Congress)