

Letter to Jim Turner re Changing Definitions of Education

Dear Jim,

7/6/88

I think I can see what bugged you about the draft of chapter one.

You seem to be trying to make a meal out of ingredients that only add up to a snack. To share with your readers what you both know about education and training does not require the blessing of 'notable educational philosophers' like Peters. To seek such blessing is to suggest that you are going to be discussing esoteric matters that the child-like reader must be lead through, hand-in- hand.

I suggest that your readers, even those who left at school at the first opportunity, have a good sense of the difference between being given an understanding, being enlightened, and between being filled up with facts or drilled in practices.

The confusion, my dear James, rests with over- educated dills like ourselves. We are confused because, since the beginning of this century, we have gone along with the socially useful expedient of expanding the use of universities for professional training (e.g. Flexner, 1908?, on the movement of medicine into US universities; and the latest abomination of the MBA's). We have informed without instructing and we have tolerated the growth of massive TAFE like structures (and university courses in anatomy, strength and structures of materials, torts and psychological statistics) that are dedicated to instruction, very careless about informing but critical for occupational qualifications.

We have compromised ourselves as educators and now seek cover in a smokescreen of pretended complexities in the concepts of education and training.

All we have to remember is that learning has no meaning if it is not about enlightenment and understanding. If that enlightenment and understanding is not observable in transposition of learning ,then we would have to reckon that learning had failed. Of course, we would reckon that learning had taken place if the first learner had conveyed this understanding to yet another whose behaviour showed transposibility.

I would argue that enlightment, understanding, must involve both informing and instructing i.e., some element of training.

Training does not necessarily involve informing.

If people are cheap enough to treat as replaceable parts then training may often be the best answer. If people represent a heavy investment before they can enter

the workforce, or a heavy commitment in terms of social security supports then training ,in itself, becomes a nonsense.

In arguing that education includes training but not vice versa, I am arguing for the following distinctions:

a) to educate - to explain/ to understand/to demonstrate, drill and practice/to perform/to transpose.

b) to train - to demonstrate, drill and practice/ to perform.

The first is no more than our educators tried to do in Chemistry and Physics I.