Tradition theory and expressive theory

Science

Fruitful dialogue on writing and learning was hampered not only by divisions between progressive educators and the traditional disciplines but also by a split within progressiveeducationitself.

Two stereotypes of progressive education grew up in the 1920s and 1930s and captured, in a sense, the profound tension within the movement's approach to writing, a tension that prevented Deweyan progressives from developing a coherent and persuasive substitute to the writing pedagogies of social efficiency and liberalculture.

First, there was the progressive as Bohemian, the self-absorbed individualist teaching children to inscribe avant-gardepoetryunder a tree while they neglected their spelling. subsequently, there was the progressive as parlor-pink radical, teaching children to write dissident tracts while they neglected their spelling. To those who had read their Dewey, both were gross caricatures of hisphilosophyand methods.

Yet these stereotypes of progressive writing instruction point to the deep division in progressive thought between those who emphasized writing (and education) as a vehicle for individual self-revelation and development and those who emphasized its uses for socialreconstructionand improvement.

Clearly the two are not contrary, as Dewey's educational philosophy adequately demonstrated, but in the highly charged political atmosphere of the interbellum era, details of Deweyan doctrine were often lost and, in the process, so was the prospective for a rational progressive approach to writing in the disciplines.

Maxine Hairston argued for a paradigm shift in the teaching of writing in her " The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." She argued that the new paradigm must focus on the writing process, a process that involves the involvement of readers in students' writing during that process. She also argued that students benefit " far more from small group meetings with each other than from the exhausting oneto-one conferences that the teachers hold" (17).

Clearly, the process manner of teaching writing involves reader involvement by students in the writing of their classmates. But how thriving has that intervention been in the writing that students produce? Since this part of the paradigm is as significant to teaching writing as a process, we require having some idea as to how well it has worked.

Another important influence on the promising writing process movement was the Dartmouth conference of 1966, a meeting of more or less 50 English teachers from the United States and Great Britain to consider common writing problems. What emerged from the symposium was the awareness that considerable differences existed between the two countries on how instruction in English was viewed.

In the United States, English was considered of as anacademicdiscipline with specific content to be mastered, whereas the British focused on the personal and linguistic growth of the child (Appleby, 1974, p. 229). Instead of focusing on content, " process or activity…defined the English curriculum for the Britishteacher" (Appleby, 1974, p. 230)) its purpose being to encourage the personal development of the student.

As Berlin (1990) noted, " The result of the Dartmouth Conference was to reassert for U. S. teachers the value of the expressive model of writing. Writing is to be pursued in a free and encouragingenvironmentin which the student is encouraged to employ in an act of self discovery" (p. 210). This emphasis on the personal and private nature of composing was also marked in the recommendations of Ken Macrorie, Donald Murray, Walter Gibson, and Peter Elbow.

One perspective that gained distinction during the early days of the process movement was that the writing process consisted a series of sequenced, discreet stages sometimes called " planning, drafting, and revising, " though today they are often referred to as " prewriting, writing, and rewriting. " An article by Gordon Rohman (1965))