

The Third Dimension in Education

By Vernard T. Gant

For nearly 50 years this nation has embarked on a concerted effort to educate children with a particular concentration on poor children, children of color, and children who are educationally and socially disadvantaged. These children are summarily referred to as educationally disenfranchised. The nation has spared little expense in its endeavor to address the educational plight of this student population. America's schools and colleges of education are among the best in the world at teacher preparation and credentialing. This nation reportedly spends 19 billion dollars annually on professional development designed to hone the teacher's classroom instructions for effectiveness. Despite all this, for educationally disenfranchised children the results leave much to be desired.

Historically, education and education reform have focused on 2 dimensions—head and hands. The higher education institutions provide educators with head knowledge (the teaching content and credentials). The professional development organizations provide the hand skills (the teaching conduct and pedagogy). Effective teaching, however, involves a third critical component. Children indeed need what the teacher knows (the informational dimension of education pertaining to the head). They also need to be effectively instructed which pertains to how the teacher teaches (the instructional dimension of education pertaining to the hands). Equally so, children need to connect with who the teacher is (the interpersonal/inspirational dimension of education pertaining to the heart).

Educational impact is usually a product of and witnessed by the application of the third dimension—heart. It is not just the knowledge the educators **possess in their heads**, nor the skills they **perform with their hands**, but ultimately the love that **proceeds from their hearts** that makes the difference. Indeed, the heart provides the catalyst for the head and hands to be effective.

Or, to put it another way:

- Children need to be informed by what the teacher knows
- Children need to be instructed by what the teacher does
- Children need to be inspired by who the teacher is and how the teacher connects

Ultimately, the third dimension (the heart dimension) is not a result of higher education credentials or professional development practices. Rather, it is the work of the Holy Spirit Who pours out the love of God upon the heart of the educator (Romans 5:8)

Consider this passage of scripture:

*So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your **heart**, with all your soul, with all your **strength**, and with all your **mind**,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’” Luke 10:27 (NKJV)*

Now imagine a teacher loving God with all her:

Mind with what she knows in her Head
Strength with what she does with her Hands
Heart with what she believe in her Heart

This is the essence of a three dimensional educator. Such an educator represents the most potent force in all of education. *The people of God, moved by the love of God, equipped with the things of God, can make a difference for God.*

Practically every movie, book, and testimony about teachers who made a profound impact upon their students pertained to matters of the heart. That is, children who experienced an educational transformation/conversion was a result of an educator who exercised heart. Consider *Stand and Deliver*, *Coach Carter*, *The Ron Clark Story*, *Lean on Me*. It explains why Anne Sullivan was able to succeed with educating Helen Keller where others had failed.

God's people start with heart—His Heart.

Consider this passage of Scripture:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Now imagine a teacher:

Being *patient* with her students

Being *kind* toward the parents

Who is *not arrogant* thinking *she is better than her students*

Not being *rude* with her colleagues

Not in it for *self* or just to draw a paycheck

Not easily *angered* with the administration

Not holding *grudges*

Committed to the *truth*

Always *protecting* her class

Always *trusting* the Lord

Never giving up on the students but always *hoping* the best for them

It would represent the essence of a teacher armed with the most transformative power in all of existence—Agape Love.

Consider this passage:

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, Hebrews 10:24 (NASB)

Now imagine an organization that endeavors to stimulate these Christian educators to loving their children and conducting themselves in such a manner that the children will see their good works and have their lives and their education impacted resulting in an improved quality of life.

You would have the essence of The Cause.

Providing children who have three dimensional needs (head, hands, and heart) with a two dimensional education leaves them undereducated. On the other hand, a God-empowered three dimensional education is the most potent force in making a transformational impact upon the lives of children, especially educationally disenfranchised children.