Towards a More Affective Society

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Citizens from all sectors of society are deeply troubled about the rising crime rate and the senseless violence that is being inflicted on our society. Many have concluded that our youth have lost their souls and ability to reason or care for their fellow citizens, while others insist that few today are concerned with patriotism or national development. I have always believed that as a people we have neglected deliberate mechanisms for cultivating national consciousness and love of country among our young citizens. We fail to recognise that in modern societies schools must achieve more than helping to certify individuals. Indeed, it is my conviction that modern societies cannot flourish without establishing structures and processes for developing rational, caring, creative, respectful, and productive young people.

The research literature increasingly articulates the virtue and importance of orienting teaching to the affective and psychomotor domains. Teaching in the affective domain, it is claimed, contributes considerably to the development of emotional intelligence, social skills, and graces. Promoting excellence in the psychomotor domain helps to produce healthy and exceptional athletes in the major sporting disciplines.

On December 4, a relatively new school, Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation in Tobago, demonstrated how we can use important festivals or national days to socialise our students to develop national consciousness. In this case, the occasion was the celebration of the inauguration of Assembly Day—virtually a national day in Tobago.

The school identified the following six objectives: 1) To describe the composition of the Tobago House of Assembly and its relevance to the governance of Tobago; 2) To identify and describe the functions of the Tobago House of Assembly as a governing body for Tobago; 3) To value the uniqueness of the island and its citizenry; 4) To appreciate the legacy of accomplishment left by former Tobagonians; 5) To appreciate the contribution of specific individuals to the development of nation building in general and to Tobago in particular; and 6) To develop among students a sense of unity and patriotism.

Educators always remind us that educational objectives must be tied to a rationale and anticipated outcomes. Not to be faulted, the administration and teachers of Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation High School were able to furnish me with an elaborate rationale and realistic anticipated outcomes.

Their rationale for the occasion read: “Meaningful learning must cater to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The affective domain must be clearly stressed to ensure that strong values are inculcated along with the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The celebration of the first House of Assembly Day on the island is an excellent medium through which students will be given the opportunity to focus on themselves as Tobagonians. In addition to obtaining knowledge about the highest level of governance on the island, The Tobago House of Assembly, students will be challenged to reflect on

the possible personal contributions they could make to the development of Trinidad and Tobago in general and Tobago in particular."

With respect to anticipated outcomes, the principal of the school, Ms. Belinda Dillon, persuaded me that educators must never engage themselves in teaching sessions without anticipated outcomes. For this auspicious occasion the anticipated outcomes were to induce: (a) greater love and appreciation among students for themselves as nationals in general and Tobagonians in particular; (b) increased awareness of the history, structure, and function of the Tobago House of Assembly; (c) reflections on the positive contributions of some icons of Tobago; and (d) an ideology of purposefulness in students.

In the field of education we are taught that teaching is always more effective when it is done by involving students in the process. Indeed, an old Crow (North American indigenous tribe) dictum states: "Tell me and I will remember. Show me and I will understand, but involve me and I will learn." This was exactly the situation in the school on December 4. Student involvement was facilitated by the following programme:

- National Anthem, accompanied by pannists
- Introductory Remarks – Chairperson
- An overview of the Tobago House of Assembly, emphasising its history and importance to Tobago
- An item by the School Choir
- A Prayer for the Assembly
- Principal's Address in which she urged students to remember the flora, fauna, wealth, assets, and good fortune of Tobago; the achievement of Tobagonians; and the importance of cherishing each other for the good of the island
- A Calypso (in keeping with the values of the denominational philosophy of the school) sung by a student
- A Radio/Television Hook Up, carrying the Address of the Chief Secretary, Mr. London
- A National Song – *Let the Flowers Bloom Again*
- The National Pledge
- Closing Remarks

I have reproduced this programme in full to highlight it as a model for other schools. It is to be noted that this programme was punctuated by lively singing by students. The atmosphere was one of excitement, fanned by an energetic and dynamic teacher, Mr. Christopher Williams. The principal pointed out to me that she had wanted more student involvement, but had been unable to achieve this, given the short notice of the intended celebration of this inaugural day. For example, she had wanted students to present skits, poems, and songs with a national or Tobago emphasis. She had also wanted outstanding students to highlight their achievements in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in the school through an exhibition and live presentations.

Indeed, much can be learned from this celebration of Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation High School. As educators we must move away from embracing only the

cognitive. My view is that we can make our students humane and worthy nationals. Researchers argue that student indiscipline and disruption can be controlled when schools manage to make activities meaningful; when schools eliminate feelings of anonymity among students. Truly, what greater form of identity can we promote than getting our students to identify with their country, its people, their achievements, and its rich heritage?

To conclude, let me remind administrators that, like Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation High School, we must deliberately strive to create cultures of excellence, purpose, achievement, caring, and respect in our schools. If we do not, our students will create their own. I believe that most of the indiscipline and violence in our schools was allowed to develop by schools which failed to engage their students in meaningful activity. In other words, teaching in such schools did not induce meaningful participation. Assemblies and Home Room sessions were either mechanistically implemented or not pursued at all. Alienation or anomie was allowed to develop and grow through laissez-faire leadership. Students felt powerless, bored, and ignored. Generally, they were never encouraged to develop a school-based and nationalistic ideology of purposefulness.

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