

# The Need for Effective Educational Tools

## By Douglas Carnine

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If educators are to gain the potency of other professions, educators must have access to enabling tools analogous to those that empower other professions. At the present time, the education establishment provides neither the tools nor the means even to identify such tools.

In fact, education today is similar to medicine several hundred years ago. At that time, the income of a doctor was determined by salesmanship — his bedside manner. It was patient-centred medicine, a client-centred occupation. According to the dogma of the time, the doctor asked the patient what he or she thought would be a good remedy. When a practitioner doesn't have an agreed-upon body of knowledge for solving problems, the practitioners defers to the client.

One of the revolutionaries who ushered in modern medicine, Ambrose Paré, did so by moving from dogma to science. Several hundred years ago, the standard treatment for battle-wounds was boiling oil. During one battle, Paré ran out of boiling oil. To the rest of his patients, he administered salve. This was not remarkable. What set him apart from his colleagues and their dogma was what he did next. He actually went to visit his patients to see if there were differential effects for boiling oil and salve (Haggard, 1929). The evaluation of different approaches helped medicine on the road to science. The road was rocky, however. As Dr. Haggard pointed out, physicians continued to use boiling oil.

Paré's medical writings were in the vernacular. Because he was not a scholar; the medical writings of all other prominent medical men of the time were in Latin. The organized physicians of Paris found therein an excuse for attacking the works of Paré and attempting to prevent their publication; they cited not only his ignorance ("a man very impudent and without any learning") but also charged that in his teachings he departed from the established practices of the ancients. (p. 39)

In recycling old fads, educators don't depart too far "from the established practices of the ancients".

Consider these excerpts from a math textbook and a language arts textbook. "Changes in the methods of instruction in our schools and in the modes of transacting business have made it necessary to revise (this text)..." "What children are interested in, and what they may easily be led to be interested in, determined the nature of most of the lessons here presented. Many of these lessons are suggestive, and in the hands of a good teacher may be enlarged or otherwise modified to suit the environment and development of the pupils..."

The math text was published in 1877; the language arts text in 1898. The thinking and methods today are substantively the same as in **Organization for Quality Education, March 1993**

the 1800s. The lack of a scientific perspective has prevented the development of a body of valid and agreed-upon knowledge that allows educators to be effective service providers.

Instead, educators rely on the prevailing dogma, deferring to the students to select, construct and in general solve their own educational problems.

*(Dr. Carnine is a professor of education at the University of Oregon.)*