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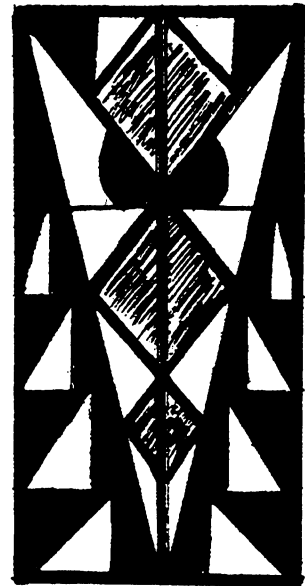
## Questions that Give Direction

In the twentieth century a number of important concepts have emerged in the field of education (John Dewey's progressive philosophy heralding the importance of experiential learning; brain research as it pertains to learning and thinking; Piaget, Gesell, and Steiner's concepts of children's ages and stages; learning styles; creative problem solving; metacognition; cooperative learning; and so forth). If properly implemented many of the recent theories could revolutionize the nature and tasks of learning. However, most American schools have ignored these ideas due to what Longstreet and Shane (1993) refer to as *cultural mindsets* concerning the structure of knowledge and how schools should function. People tend to view the world as it is defined by their past cultural experiences rather than seeing the intention or potential of new ideas.

Almost all people in America have received or are receiving schooling. We enter the experience of schools with a narrow view of how teachers should

*I want, by understanding myself, to understand others. I want to be all that I am capable of becoming.*

Katherine Mansfield



**NOTES**

teach, what should be taught, the methods that should be used, and what should be included in the curriculum. Many people, simply because they have attended school, think they are experts in the process, and their frequently voiced cultural mindsets often deter educators from changing the structure and nature of schooling. In many communities, entrenched attitudes create tremendous barriers against much needed and important educational reforms. Not only must many bright, innovative teachers deal with strong cultural mindsets, but these same mindsets are found within the teaching profession itself.

In 1989 I was doing field supervision of student teachers while completing my doctorate at Oklahoma State University. It was the beginning of the third week of my student teachers' experiences, and most of them were progressing very well. Many of the student teachers were moving rapidly from observation into aiding or teaching small instructional groups. Some student teachers were even teaching isolated lessons, and others had proven themselves competent enough to ask for longer periods of autonomy as "real" teachers.

One of my most promising and enthusiastic students, Shelby, had excitedly invited me to observe a creative writing lesson she had prepared for her fifth-grade students. This particular student teacher was innovative and confident, and she had developed an excellent rapport with most of the students.

When I arrived for my observation, the students had just finished a whole-class math lesson. Shelby had introduced the main concepts using both visual and experiential examples. The supervising teacher had remained in the room to support and observe. She had aided Shelby by working with individual students who were having problems with the independent practice portion of the lesson. At the end