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## Education and Professional Training

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### 12.

#### Selections from THE ENVIRONMENT OF LEARNING

*Elizabeth Richardson*

##### **HARNESSING THE EMOTIONAL FORCES IN THE GROUP**

As the over-all leader in the work situation, a good teacher will have one main objective: to help his pupils to learn for themselves. For the one inescapable truth about the whole educational enterprise is that every child must, ultimately, accept responsibility for his own learning, whether he is an acknowledged leader in his form or its most retiring member. As individuals, the children in our classrooms want to learn. They want to acquire the skills of the adult world and to experience the excitement of discovery. Certainly, by the time they reach the higher forms of the secondary school, and probably by the time they enter the first form, they are aware that the kind of life that will be available to them as adults will depend on the use they can make of the opportunities the school gives them to do this growing and learning. Yet, as members of groups, their behavior is continually dominated at the primitive, unconscious level by emotional needs that may have little to do with growing or learning.

The relationship between the teacher and his own form is in essence a mutually dependent one, and a form teacher's role as the leader of a dependent group carries with it all the pains and anxieties as well as the pleasant characteristics of the dependent group culture. We must ask ourselves whether the teaching-learning situation, too, depends on the ability of teacher and class to use this dependent culture in a sophisticated manner, or whether another kind of relationship must be sought.

Certainly, if the teacher is not dependable, his pupils will not learn. Conversely, if he sees himself as omniscient, believing that all knowledge must emanate from him and merely be