

An Analysis of “*Blackboard Bulletin*” from the view of Human Development

人間発達の視点からみた「ブラックボードブルテン」誌の分析

Chiho Oyabu and Toshiharu Sugihara

Gifu University

大藪 千穂

杉原 利治

キーワード

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要 旨

Amish is one of Anabaptist groups refusing modernization and preserving their own lifestyle for more than 300 years in America and Canada. They have kept the relationship within a family and a community close, and run their own schools to bring up their children. We analyzed the *Blackboard Bulletin* which is a primary educational resource for Amish teachers, to clarify how the education of Amish can be carried out by solving school problems. Through the analysis, we found no articles on school refusal or a decline in scholastic ability through either is quite serious in modern society. On the other hand, there are many articles on the development of pupils, class management, educational methods and teacher's attitude.

From the analysis of the articles of the two columns, five points have been drawn: i) messages are mainly from teachers and partly from parents, ii) the 3Rs (writing, reading, arithmetic), lunchtime, games and recess time are the main concerns in school topics, iii) teachers are most interested in the development of pupils and class management followed by educational methods, iv) parents are concerned with class management and the development of pupils, and v) there is a close relationship between school topics and educational contents such as the development of pupils, educational methods and class management.

Teachers obtain ideas and solutions from the *Blackboard Bulletin* for the development of pupils or class management as well as educational methods, which could keep the education at plain schools stable and fruitful.

I . INTRODUCTION

Consumer education should contribute to enhance the human development so long as it is an education. However, consumer education today inclines too heavily towards the consumption aspects, assuming that our society is consumption-oriented. And in the education trifling matters are often dealt. Because our life is founded on both production and consumption and they are mutually related, effective education cannot be achieved without the holistic recognition of our life. New consumer education is then necessitated to deal production as well as consumption in connection with our daily life to accomplish the purpose of education, that is, the human development. The Amish daily life is based essentially on production as well as the consumption contrary to ours in the modern society.

In order to grope the development of new consumer education, we now focus on the Amish education. Firstly, in this paper we analyze the characteristics of Amish education through the Amish educational

magazine named *Blackboard Bulletin*.

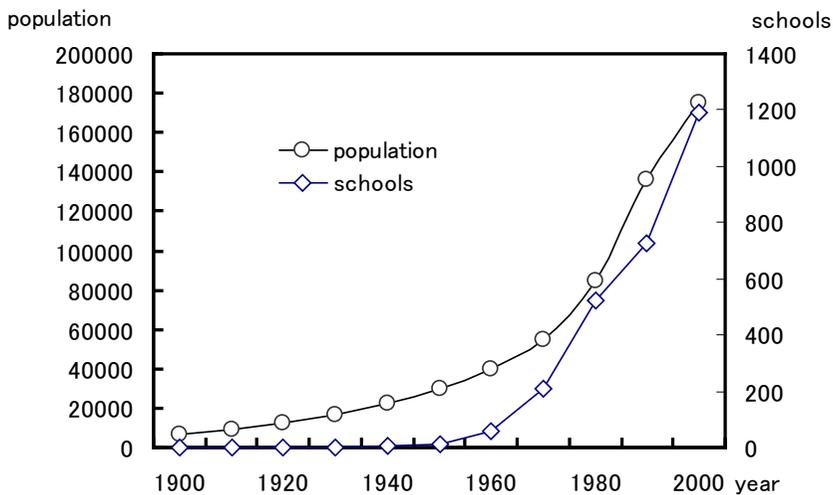
The plain people have kept their society stable by maintaining strong relationships within the family and community. Amish are the representative of such people and they seem to be free from serious school problems such as pupil's refusal to go to school and the decline in scholastic ability by having an educational system of their own. Some surveys show that Amish children have even better educational achievements than American children^{1,2)}. Then, one might ask questions such as what kind of problems do they have? How do they cope with such problems? How do they manage their own educational system? In order to answer these questions, we analyzed the *Blackboard Bulletin*, a journal for Amish and other plain teachers.

Amish pupils used to attend regional public schools until the beginning of the 20th century^{3,4)} because these schools were run under the same educational value system as that of the Amish schools. However, after the Great Depression in 1929, the American society

transformed into a consumption-oriented society accompanied by an enormous change of educational values and school systems. This change prompted Amish to build and manage their own school system,

where eight grades are taught within one classroom. Although there were only four Amish schools in 1940, the number of Amish schools increased dramatically to 1,200 in 2000 (Fig. 1).

Fig 1 Amish population and numbers of Amish school



Amish built their schools because their value system is in conflict with that of American schools, which coincides with the progress of the Amish society. The Amish population has increased rapidly since 1950 followed by an increase in the number of Amish schools, as shown in Fig. 1. Today, more than 30,000 pupils are studying in Amish schools.

Teachers in Amish schools have no higher education. Usually, a young

girl who graduates from the eight-year Amish school becomes a teacher. She has to start teaching without any training as a teacher. Thus, it is not easy for Amish teachers to teach pupils and manage the class or school. They usually encounter many difficulties in school. In order to confront and overcome these difficulties, almost all of the teachers read the *Blackboard Bulletin*. They obtain hints, ideas and

advice on education from the journal. Although they also attend school meetings to gain advice from other teachers, these meetings are not held often. Thus, the *Blackboard Bulletin* is the primary educational resource for Amish teachers^{5,6}. Amish teachers, with common educational problems, regularly read the journal and obtain ideas and advice for the solutions to these problems^{7~9}. In this paper, we analyze the problems they face including the hints and advice they obtain from the *Blackboard Bulletin* and the role of the bulletin for the education of plain people.

II. METHODS AND RESULTS

The *Blackboard Bulletin* started in 1957 for Amish or other plain teachers, with ten journals published each year⁷. The articles in the journals contain opinions, stories, poems, games, statistics, advertisements, and notices, among others. The popular columns are “Dear readers”, “Projects”, “Letters to the editor”, “Opinion please!”, “Reader response”, “From the desk of Teacher Dave”, “Idea swap”, and “For the children”. Among the columns, we analyzed two columns, “From the

desk of Teacher Dave” and “Idea swap”, because they mainly deal with opinions. We analyzed 221 journals from 1989 to 2004.

1. Overview of the columns

“From the desk of Teacher Dave” started in 1993 in which Teacher Dave answers questions from readers. When a problem or a question is discussed in an article, a solution or an idea is given. For this column, there are 70 questions and 70 answers recorded from 1993 to 2004. On the other hand, “Idea swap” started in 1989 in which teaching methods or techniques are discussed. For this column, there are 276 articles published from 1989 to 1994.

The articles are analyzed according to the viewpoints of school topics and educational contents. School topics include the subjects or events discussed in the articles such as the various subjects taught, cleaning activities, recess time, games, lunchtime, tests, and special activities (e.g., Christmas programs and picnics). The subjects taught include English (pronunciation, writing/spelling, and reading), arithmetic, health, and social study.

Educational contents include educational methods, class management (guidance to pupils, how to use recess time, administration of tests, special activities, and relationship of parents and teachers), teacher's attitude (mental attitude, how to teach pupils, how to deal with parents or the school board, and others), development of

pupils (attitude and growth of pupils), curriculum, education of handicapped children, home learning, and evaluation.

As shown in Table 1, the main contributors to the bulletin are the teachers who handle both columns of the journal.

Table 1 Contributors of the articles (counts (%))

	From the desk of Teacher Dave	Idea swap	Total
Teacher	120(84.5)	276(100.0)	396(95.2)
Parent	20(14.1)	0(0.0)	20(4.8)
Total	140(100.0)	276(100.0)	416(100.0)

In "From the desk of Teacher Dave", although most of the articles (84.5%) are from teachers, some (14.1%) are from parents. Some examples of messages from teachers are "How should a teacher respond when a child tells the teacher, "Dad said that was a dumb rule you made yesterday?" (From Baffled, 1993) or "What should my relationship be toward my former school teacher?" (Listening for Advice, 1994). Messages from parents include "Please, teachers, expect completed assignments on time" (From Concerned Dad, 1994). In "Idea swap", all con-

tributions come from teachers.

School topic data are shown in Table 2. In these school topics, articles on learning or teaching subjects, particularly the 3Rs are most frequently written, followed by articles on social study. The topics of games, recess time, tests, special activities, and lunchtime follow, but cleaning activities as topics are few. For topics regarding the subjects taught, English is the most frequent followed by arithmetic. For English, pronunciation/writing accounts for 41% and reading accounts for 34%.

Table 2 School topics*

Subject	From the desk of Teacher Dave	Idea swap	Total
	counts(%)	counts(%)	counts(%)
	42(45.2)	121(41.7)	163(42.6)
English	17(18.3)	39(13.4)	56(14.6)
Arithmetic	15(16.1)	38(13.1)	53(13.8)
Social study	0(0.0)	17(5.8)	17(4.4)
Health	3(3.2)	3(1.0)	6(1.6)
Games	8(8.6)	37(12.7)	45(11.7)
Recess time	10(10.7)	17(5.8)	27(7.0)
Test	9(9.6)	7(2.4)	16(4.2)
Special time	3(3.2)	11(3.8)	14(3.7)
Lunchtime	4(4.3)	6(2.0)	10(2.6)
Cleaning up	3(3.2)	3(1.0)	6(1.6)
Others	8(8.6)	88(30.3)	96(25.1)
Total	93(100.0)	290(100.0)	383(100.0)

*: An article may contain several school topics.

Arithmetic accounts for 48% of 3Rs, and 3Rs accounts for 67% of the subjects. Social study or health accounts for a small percentage. For games, most of the articles are about games during rainy days. For recess time, many articles are on how to manage recess time in distinction to a lesson, for example, how to get pupils seated quickly after recess. The articles on tests are about how to calculate the average of tests and how to teach pupils before they take tests.

As far as school topics are concerned, the two columns show a similar trend. Articles on the subjects taught account for more than 40% in

both columns. English accounts for most of the topics followed by arithmetic. In contrast to these subjects, social study comes third in “Idea swap”, whereas no articles on social study are written in “From the desk of Teacher Dave”.

Educational content data are shown in Table 3. There are nearly 800 educational contents in 416 articles because an article sometimes includes several educational contents. Data on the development of pupils account for most of the data followed by class management and educational methods data. These three data are the main interests in

Table 3 Educational contents* (counts (%))

Educational contents	From the desk of Teacher Dave	Idea swap	Total
Development of pupils	49(22.0)	234(41.1)	283(35.7)
Class management	93(41.7)	169(29.7)	262(33.1)
Educational methods	22(9.9)	127(22.3)	149(18.8)
Teacher's attitude	33(14.8)	23(4.0)	56(7.1)
Evaluation	9(4.0)	10(1.8)	19(2.4)
Home learning	7(3.1)	1(0.2)	8(1.0)
Curriculum	2(0.9)	1(0.2)	3(0.4)
Education of handicapped children	1(0.4)	2(0.4)	3(0.4)
Others	7(3.1)	2(0.4)	9(1.1)
Total	223	569	792

*: An article may contain several educational contents.

educational contents, accounting for almost 90% of the articles. The main topic of the development of pupils is on how to manage pupils who are at the rebellious age. Class management mainly consists of duties that teachers have to perform, particularly the management of pupils in a class. An educational method refers to how to teach each subject. Educational methods are dealt with more in “Idea swap”, whereas teacher’s attitude is mainly dealt with in “From the desk of Teacher Dave”. The main topic of the teacher’s attitude is communication methods of a teacher with pupils or parents.

In contrast to the school topics, we can observe a distinctive feature of

educational contents in the two columns. As for “Idea swap”, the development of pupils accounts for most of the content (41.1%) followed by class management (29.7%) and educational methods (22.3%). As for “From the desk of Teacher Dave”, class management accounts for 41.7%, the development of pupils 22.0%, and teacher’s attitude 14.8%.

2. Teachers and parents

From the table of contributors and educational contents in both columns (Table 4), we can observe that teachers are most interested in the development of pupils (36.5%) or class management (32.9%) followed by educational methods (19.0%).

Table 4 Contributors and educational contents* (counts (%))

Contributors	Educational contents				
	Development of pupils	Class management	Educational methods	Teacher's attitude	Evaluation
Teacher	275(36.5)	248(32.9)	143(19.0)	51(6.8)	17(2.3)
Parent	7(21.9)	13(40.6)	5(15.6)	3(9.4)	2(6.3)

Contributors	Educational contents				
	Home learning	Education of handicapped children	Curriculum	Others	Total
Teacher	7(0.9)	3(0.4)	2(0.3)	8(1.1)	817(100.0)
Parent	1(3.1)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(3.1)	32(100.0)

*:An article may contain several educational contents

On the other hand, parents are most concerned about class management (40.6%) followed by the development of pupils (21.9%). Both parents and teachers are not so much interested in other educational contents. Class management and the development of pupils are the two major concerns of teachers and parents.

Because the articles on class management and the development of pupils account for most of the topics in both columns, we will introduce some articles to see the main concerns of parents or teachers and how they differ from each other. The following are some questions on class management from a teacher.

“What are some things a teacher should do with first graders on the opening day of school?”

If possible, meet your first graders at the door. Introduce yourself if you haven't met before. Show them to the cloakroom and tell them where to put their wraps... There are so many interesting things to do with first graders and at this point in their lives they are so eager to learn. Take advantage of this fact and do all you can to make school interesting and fascinating ... (August 1993)

“What are three things you would like to have every beginning teacher know before the first day of school?”

First, teachers should realize the seriousness of their assignment,

secondly, a teacher must also keep in mind that he was hired by and is paid by the parents of the school, and the third thing is teachers must realize that to do all this is beyond one's own power (August 1993).

The following are some articles on class management from parents.

Dear Teacher Dave,

What is or should be the deciding factor whether a child should be passed or retained? Our child has a 75% average, yet our teacher has suggested retaining him. What do you think? A Wondering Parent (January 1994)

Dear Wondering,

Hopefully, I won't offend a multitude of parents with my answer but I feel the teacher is probably in a better position to know if the child is able to handle the work than the parent is. Therefore, I feel parents should be willing to let that decision up to the teacher...(Teacher Dave)

The following are some articles on the development of pupils from a teacher.

Dear Teacher Dave,

What can be done about a big-mouthed lower grader? He is constantly talking, bragging, and showing off. He generally acts and talks like this around his parents, too, so I expect no help from that direction. –Tired of it. (August 1999)

Dear Tired,

...When you hear inappropriate talk, put on the damper. Encourage him to think before speaking. It might help to remind him in private that 'mouthy' people have fewer friends. Keep in mind that loud braggarts are usually insecure, and it will not help matters to belittle them. –Teacher Dave

The following are some articles on the development of pupils from parents.

Dear Teacher Dave,

We have a son ready for fifth grade this fall who has always found school lessons easy. Since the lessons are not challenging for him, he has no interest in school. What can we do to make school life more

interesting for him? It hurts to see him get bored when he is yet so young and could learn so much. How do you feel about skipping a grade? How do we approach the teacher without appearing proud? –Any suggestions? (April 2004)

Dear Wanting Advice,

Do you have anything to be proud of?... History teaches us that some of the world's greatest inventors and shrewdest businessman were failures at school... Perhaps there is not a great deal you can do other than to show an interest in school and provide interesting reading material for your child at home. –Teacher Dave

As shown typically by the above articles, the main issue differs between the teacher and the parent. From the articles on class management, teachers are concerned about how to manage the class, that is, how to save time in class and how to keep pupils quiet and so on. On the other hand, parents are concerned about the teacher's method of management of the class or school.

Ten out of thirteen articles from parents are, for example, “teachers do not understand the role of parents on school management”, “teachers do not know the effective use of tests”, and “teachers should finish the job on time”. As for the development of pupils, teachers are mainly interested on how to control pupils who have some problems such as speaking loudly, coming to school late every day, and lack of sportsmanship, whereas parents are concerned about the development of their own children. Four out of seven articles from parents are about matters on their own children, such as “my child's attitude is very bad toward a teacher”, “my child wants to become a teacher but she is still very young”, and “my child is very brave but lacks concentration”.

3. School topics and educational contents

To determine how school topics and educational contents are or related to each other, we investigated the relation between them by a cross-tabulation, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5. Cross tabulation of school topics with educational contents*

Educational contents	School topics					Total
	English	Arithmetic	Social study	Health		
Development of pupils	42(35.9)	40(37.0)	14(36.8)	2(22.2)		56(36.0)
Class management	20(17.1)	23(21.3)	8(21.1)	3(33.3)		34(19.9)
Educational methods	43(36.8)	33(30.6)	14(36.8)	3(33.3)		50(34.2)
Teacher's attitude	4(3.4)	6(5.6)	1(2.6)	0(0.0)		7(4.0)
Evaluation	5(4.3)	5(4.6)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)		5(3.7)
Home learning	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)		1(0.7)
Education of handicapped children	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)		0(0.0)
Curriculum	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)		1(0.4)
Others	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	1(2.6)	1(2.6)		2(1.1)
Total	117(100.0)	108(100.0)	38(100.0)	9(100.0)		272(100.0)

Educational contents	School topics							Total
	Games	Recess time	Tests	Special times	Lunchtime	Cleaning up	Others	
Development of pupils	35(41.7)	1(30.6)	8(24.2)	9(37.5)	8(42.1)	2(33.3)	78(39.0)	215(36.7)
Class management	40(47.6)	26(41.9)	9(27.3)	12(50.0)	7(36.8)	4(66.7)	44(22.0)	176(28.0)
Educational methods	2(2.4)	4(6.5)	2(6.1)	1(4.2)	1(5.3)	0(0.0)	62(31.0)	122(23.6)
Teacher's attitude	3(3.6)	7(11.3)	2(6.1)	2(8.3)	1(5.3)	0(0.0)	10(5.0)	32(5.1)
Evaluation	1(1.2)	0(0.0)	12(36.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(1.5)	21(3.7)
Home learning	1(1.2)	2(3.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(1.0)	6(1.0)
Education of handicapped children	2(2.4)	2(3.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(0.6)
Curriculum	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.3)
Others	0(0.0)	2(3.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(10.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(1.0)
Total	84(100.0)	62(100.0)	33(100.0)	24(100.0)	19(100.0)	6(100.0)	200(100.0)	700(100.0)

*: Percentages are given by dividing the count of a school topics by the count of each educational content.

We observed a close relationship between school topics and educational contents such as the development of pupils, class management, and the educational method.

The result of the cross-tabulation of the relation of school topics with educational methods shows that the subjects taught such as English, arithmetic, and social study are related to educational methods or the development of pupils. In the articles,

ideas or solutions for the problems are proposed. The number of articles on English is the largest. For the English articles, most of them are on writing/spelling followed by reading and pronunciation. The problems of English are on how to remember spelling and the proper pronunciation of English vocabulary or on how to make pupils concentrate in reading. As for English pronunciation, there are 20 articles. Effective teaching

methods for small children are also discussed such as the use of pictures of the alphabet, and explanation in English by teachers. There are 29 articles on writing/spelling. For example, solutions to the problems on memorizing spelling and writing sentences are asked. Some practical solutions are teaching spelling using games, having spelling competitions, reading a friend's stories, writing letters to the elderly and sick, or making stories using a friend's pictures. There are 23 articles on reading. Teachers often seem to have difficulty in reading. Pupils sometimes cheat in reading exercises and they usually lack concentration during lessons. For these problems, solutions are proposed such as having competitions between two groups, discussing problems of pupils of lower, middle and higher grades, or reading in a limited time. The problems on arithmetic are memorizing multiplication tables, reading the time, and understanding the rules of fractions, and others. In order to solve these problems, ideas are given such as possible exercises using multiplication tables every morning, using flash cards, using a board to read

time, and learning together within a class. As for social study, there are 14 articles. In social study, Amish teachers find difficulty particularly in geography because pupils are less interested in geography than in history. Several solutions are proposed including making a globe and a chronological table, recognizing foreign countries using an image trip, knowing the names of places of foreign countries from newspapers, and writing the names of rivers and cities in a blank map.

A close relationship between the educational methods and the subjects described above might be expected, because the educational method is usually the first priority for teaching a subject. However, it is noteworthy that school topics including the subjects taught are related to the development of pupils. Particularly, the development of pupils has a close relation with the subjects taught, games, lunchtime, cleaning, and recess time. We should take notice of the close relationship of the development of pupils with the subjects taught such as English or social study, which means that through these subjects, ideas or

solutions are not only given from the point of view of improving educational skills or techniques but also for the development of pupils. For example, there is an article on reading. Teachers do not usually have sufficient time to teach reading to eighth graders compared with children in lower grades. However, if pupils are keen on studying, pupils in eighth grade can discuss with those in lower grades. This means that if pupils bear the responsibility for helping younger pupils, pupils can grow together. Another example is using flash cards to teach English to the first and second graders, which will help lower-grade pupils to understand English vocabulary. In addition, the development of pupils is closely related to recess time, games and lunchtime. An example regarding games is on how to divide a group impartially according to ability and size. As for recess time, the articles are generally about the importance of care of lower-grade pupils by older pupils during recess time. As for lunchtime, there is a story about a lady who cooks all of the lunches for school pupils without telling them her name. This story encouraged pupils

think about the significance of kindness.

There is also a relation between class management and school topics. In particular, recess time, games, and lunchtime have a close relation with class management. As for recess time and games, using a timer and trying many kinds of games during rainy days are proposed for class management. As for lunchtime, teachers instruct pupils to bring many kinds of vegetables and cook vegetable soup for lunch. These could help teachers properly manage a class.

III. CONCLUSION

We analyzed the *Blackboard Bulletin* in order to clarify the characteristics of Amish education. Through the analysis of the two columns “From the desk of Teacher Dave” and “Idea swap” of the *Blackboard Bulletin*, we found no articles on school refusal or a decline in scholastic ability, both of which are quite common in modern society. On the other hand, there are many articles on the development of pupils, class management, educational methods and teacher’s attitude. It is

clearly apparent that the Amish educational system is very different from that of our society and that Amish are free from present school problems commonly encountered.

From the analysis of the articles of the two columns, five points have been drawn: i) messages are mainly from teachers and partly from parents, ii) the 3Rs of writing, reading, arithmetic (especially English), lunchtime, games and recess time are the main concerns in school topics, iii) teachers are most interested in the development of pupils and class management followed by educational methods, iv) parents are concerned with class management and the development of pupils, and v) there is a close relationship between school topics and educational contents such as the development of pupils, educational methods and class management. Particularly, the development of pupils is closely related to writing/spelling, social study, games, lunchtime, pronunciation, arithmetic, recess time and reading.

Teachers obtain ideas and solutions from the *Blackboard Bulletin* for the development of pupils or class

management as well as educational methods, which could keep the education at plain schools stable and fruitful. In this paper, we clarify the characteristics of Amish education. Next, we will analyze how production and consumption aspects are dealt in Amish education.

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