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ABSTRACT

The advanced technology of modern communications has created a condition in which the contradictions of complex social orders, the atrocities of interpersonal, intertribal, and international conflicts, the inequities inherent in practically all of our social systems, as well as the richness of our cultural and technical accomplishments constantly bombard the human spirit with relentless assault and stimulation. Human beings, accustomed to far simpler social environments, have reacted to these inputs with habituation or adaptation. As these inputs increase in complexity and intensity, the process of habituation is likely to accelerate and the processes of adaptation must become more complex. Under such capacities the survival of man will increasingly depend on his capacity to use his intellectual power to adapt to his changing environment as well as on his ability to adapt the environment to his special needs. Such capacities are likely to be the product of learning experiences designed to cultivate the mind and spirit of man in ways which combine competence in the use of knowledge, compassionate and empathetic appreciation of values, and mastery of selected skills. It is then these three which must comprise the dimensions of career education--education which prepares for continued progress in the life of a person. (Author/JM)

Broadening the Concept of Career Education

by

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In a paper which has reached much too limited an audience, Marland has made an eloquent plea for the expansion and enhancement of the comprehensive high school to insure that all young people leave the secondary school with generic competence in general education and specific mastery of some area of vocational education. The paper speaks primarily to the need for the development of assessment instruments and procedures by which such competence and mastery may be measured and recorded. However, it is in this paper (written in about 1968) that Marland used the term career entry to refer to the transition from the truly comprehensive high school to post high school study and/or work. Implicit in that paper is a concern for the achievement of a high degree of symmetry in the attention given to intellectual and vocational development. Both were seen as crucial elements in the educational process but the latter had traditionally been given second class status. The opportunities for the schools to reward wider varieties of talent, to develop curricular that had greater relevance for a wider range of pupils and at the same time to contribute to the nation's pool of trained labor were given emphasis. It is out of this kind of thinking that the current concern with Career Education, also introduced by Marland, has emerged.

Three factors, however, have contributed to a prevailing view of career education which is too narrow. First, we have traditionally considered all basic education which includes vocational skill mastery as a specific goal to be vocational education. Second, in an effort at redressing the balance to give greater status to preparation for work, the employability potential

of the products of career education has been overemphasized. Third, the traditional reservations held by academicians for anything that smacks of vocational education has enabled experts in vocational education to preempt early developments in the emergence of career education.

In the review of much of the contemporary thinking relative to career education, one finds a heavy emphasis given to concern for vocational education and development. As recently as 1971, in searching the Educational Index for references to career education, one is referred to vocational education as if the terms are synonymous. In some discussions of the concept, career education takes on different meanings depending on the level of schooling at which it is introduced. For example, in the primary grades career education would involve introduction to some of the categories of work experience available in the immediate community; in the middle grades youngsters are likely to be exposed to guests who are representatives of varieties of vocations. It is also at that level that some attention might be given to attitudes toward work and exposure to some of the tools and instruments associated with categories of work. At the high school level youngsters would be expected to master the skills of at least one marketable occupation. There have been some efforts at broadening the concept so as to include college bound as well as non-college bound pupils. In this scheme it is proposed that effort be directed at the achievement of competencies in the content of general education as well as mastery of a marketable skill. Graduates of such programs (very much like the comprehensive high school) could go on

of man's labor from idiosyncratic nuturance and crafting to homogeneous and repetitious manipulation. Cybernetic era may not only completely change the nature of man's work but could eliminate work as an essential human function. The implications of these changes will greatly influence education and practically all other aspects of our society.

As societies become more complex and congested, political processes become more intricate and the requirement for politicalization becomes almost essential to survival. The growing political awareness and social action of significant segments of the society is but a reflection of this phenomenon. As a result of this politicalization and other pressures, patterns of social organization are in a considerable state of flux with old foci and institutions giving way to new and sometimes none. In addition, institutional ties are being severed and alienation is prevalent. In this period of increasingly rapid change, old values are surrendering to new, contradictions between professed and practical values are becoming more obvious, and conflicts between values are more disruptive. Among the contradictions none is more obvious than the fact of hunger and poverty in the midst of affluence. This discrepancy in the distribution of society's wealth is maintained by our technological developments that have brought us to a point where our potential productivity is almost unlimited. Such conditions in the presence of high economic potential could become the basis for radical changes in the political economy of the nation. Prediction of the direction of change is difficult, but the existence of such circumstances make obsolete many aspects of traditional cultures as well as the current predominant trend toward political and social conservatism.

To enable our educational efforts to match the demands of these developments, attention must be focused on remodeling the concepts and structure of education so that schools of the future will not only be more appropriately aligned with the needs of that future society, but will also be a positive force in facilitating societal transition. The vast amount of knowledge available to man, together with the demands of the advanced technology by which our society moves will require of our student-future-citizens skill in the management of knowledge; just as changes in the politico-social sphere will make more necessary than ever before competencies and skill in intrapersonal management and interpersonal relations.

A society which approaches education with these concerns might appropriately give attention to five specific educational goals.

1. Mastery of basic communication skills: Education for all in our society must be built upon the mastery of basic skills in symbolic representation and utilization. The survival tools of the cybernetic era are communication skills including speech, reading, writing and arithmetic computation.

2. Problem solving: The movement from anxiety, confusion and disorder to problem formulation involves competence in the analysis of data and experience leading first to problem identification followed by competence in the synthesis of concepts and postulates to the end that strategic approaches to problem solution may be generated.

3. The management of knowledge: Knowledge of the physical, biological, and social sciences is so vast as to preclude complete content mastery by any single person. Knowledge of the dimensions of these fields, mastery of

priority. At another time, the role of producer may be most important. Although the assignment of permanent pre-eminence to any one of these roles must be avoided, temporary emphasis on one or another may be justified. In that sense some concern with vocational education may be justified since the vocational role is one for which we must prepare (at least in the immediate future). However, vocational skill development may be inappropriate for long-term goal fulfillment. It is no longer appropriate to focus entirely on one's vocational skills and role, for it may be appropriate to too small a portion of the human life span. One's career should be concerned with several other roles. Preparation for all of these roles is essential so that one could move in and out of work, politics, institutions; relate in a variety of settings; utilize knowledge and skill for appropriate social adjustments; assign values and make choices in unanticipated situations requiring decisions; and develop appreciation for aesthetic and humane values in preparation for many roles as an expressive and compassionate being.

One of the reasons for this shift in concern is the fact that man increasingly devotes less of his time to the production of things and services and more to leisure. Leisure is thought of as the varying periods in the life span when one is free from the requirements of productive work or service and free to devote energies to voluntary self-expression. In leisure gratification comes from doing things relevant to one's own voluntary pursuit of life's idiosyncratic meanings. Thus, one's involvement in self-fulfilling activities is essential to the living of a meaningful and satisfying life.

In earlier stages of our society, most people were able to give meaning

to their lives through the work of their vocations. For many, the search for meaning and satisfaction was not engaged. The society did not extend that privilege to them. But one of the contradictions of the present period which is likely to extend into the next, is to be found in societal conditions which constantly stimulate man to search for meaning and satisfaction, but which provide limited resources for fulfilling that search. What is the essential ingredient necessary to the living of a meaningful and satisfying life? Probably nothing is more important to this process than is intellect. It is through man's intellect that all else becomes possible. It is the development of intellect that has enabled man to rise above lower forms of animal life. It is also intellect which prevents man from being reduced to robot status by the technology of his own creation. Yet it is the intellect of man which receives so little attention in almost all our efforts at schooling.

According to Anthony Wallace, what a man should learn is a function of his culture.[1] What is expected of education depends upon whether it occurs in a revolutionary, conservative or reactionary society. No society is exclusively based on one of these value orientations although one does predominate in a given group during a particular period. According to Wallace, any one society will repeatedly progress through this tripartite cycle of revolutionary, conservative, and reactionary stages.

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[1]Anthony C. Wallace, 'Schools in Revolutionary and Conservative Societies." Social and Cultural Foundations of Guidance, Esther M. Lloyd-Jones and Nora Rosenau, editors. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968 page 196.

A particular philosophy of education, which determines what is to be learned, is associated with each stage. Priorities for learning are assigned and classified into three categories: the development of intellect - the ability to critically analyze transmitted culture to generate or create something more; the development of morality - capability of establishing values and discerning meaning from them; the development of skills - the mechanics or operations used to achieve morality, intellect and productivity. It is interesting to note that none of the stages (revolutionary, conservative, or reactionary) rank intellect as the top learning priority for the society.

Learning priorities for a revolutionary society support a process of cultural transformation by converting the population to a new code of morality, as its primary concern. The first task for this society is to fill positions of leadership with intellectually resourceful people who adhere to the new morality. These personnel are designated to develop and carry out a program that will convert the populace to its revolutionary ethic. Intellect serves a secondary but important function in a stage of cultural, moral transformation.

In a conservative society since code formation is established, intellect has no special use or political influence. Schools have no reason to emphasize intellect, and responsibility for intellectual education is left to the individual. Pseudo-intellectualism and pretentious amateurs flood academia with incompetencies. The pure intellect utilizes his talents in contributing to amoral production of new weapons, new philosophies, and new curricula. The system rewards technological advancement and places technical skill training as the highest educational priority and intellect, that is separated from morality,

as the lowest.

In a post-conservative or reactionary society learning is centered around two matters: (1) renewal of enthusiasm for a once-pure, revolutionary morality, (2) suppression of contradictory doctrine. It should be noted that a common phenomenon in revolutionary and reactionary societies is the paramount concern with morality. However, there are severe discrepancies in their designs for achieving it. In the former, morality and intellect are viewed jointly to achieve predetermined behavior; while in the latter, intellect is viewed as an enemy. In the conservative society, intellect is simply ignored. Most alarming, however, is that a moral or skill-based education is forced upon the young at the expense of personal and intellectual development. Clearly, then, it seems that in all stages of societal development technique and socialization are stressed while intellectual cultivation is assigned low priority.

For the emerging social order it is crucially important that the paradigm described by Wallace be changed to insure that the development of intellect be raised to the highest priority. Skills and imposed morality will leave man insufficiently equipped to deal with the most critical problems of twenty-first century man. Even now, the advanced technology of modern communications has created a condition in which the contradictions of complex social orders, the atrocities of interpersonal, intertribal, and international conflicts, the inequities inherent in practically all of our social systems, as well as the richness of our cultural and technical accomplishments constantly bombard the human spirit with relentless assault and stimulation. Human beings,

accustomed to far simpler social environments, have reacted to these inputs with habituation or adaptation. As these inputs increase in complexity and intensity, the process of habituation is likely to accelerate and the processes of adaptation must become more complex. These processes are reflected in growing insensitivity to social and moral indignation or shock, increasing insulation and isolation in personal-social interchange, alienation from the concepts, institutions and affiliations which heretofore have provided stabilizing points of reference, and disaffection or loss of a sense of faith in nature, in society, in authority figures, or in oneself as continuing influential forces.

Under such conditions the survival of man will increasingly depend on the capacity of man to use his intellectual power to adapt to his changing environment as well as on his ability to adapt the environment to his special needs. Such capacities are likely to be the product of learning experiences designed to cultivate the mind and spirit of man in ways which combine competence in the use of knowledge, compassionate and empathetic appreciation of values and mastery of selected skills. It is then these three which must comprise the dimensions of career education--education which prepares for continued progress in the life of a person. Obviously, such an education must be concerned with mastery of basic communication skills; competence in problem solving; competence in the management of knowledge; preparation for continuing education, employment and leisure; and competence in self management. The specific content to be emphasized will vary as the emphases of the society change. For a number of years that content will probably in-

clude some concern with mastery of a marketable skill along with other content specialties. However, if that education is appropriately managed, it will not have as its purpose mastery of that specific skill or content. Its purpose will be to use that content as the vehicle by which intellectuality--the capacity to understand and to adapt--is developed and enhanced. For if career education, or any education, does not do that, it is inadequate education.