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ABSTRACT

The role of a state education agency (SEA) in the development of a program for international community education is analyzed. The task of this paper is perceived to be linking the human condition internationally with the concept of community education. Community education, as presented here, engages the public in determining the role that schools play in solving individual and community problems. Roles and functions of the SEA are no longer limited to traditional tasks; rather, national trends point to new responsibilities and directions for the SEA. They are: (1) more comprehensive, coordinated planning; (2) increased evidences of coordination with related agencies; (3) new approaches to research, development, evaluation, and accountability; (4) general shifts in staffing patterns and agency size; and (5) involvement in conflict resolution. These plus basic principles guiding the SEA indicate its position in an international education program to be leadership. Also identified is an emerging role of staff development for training programs. The SEA is advised not to forget the pivot of its success -- people, whom education is to serve -- as it proceeds in linking community education with international education. (ND)

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The Role of State Departments of Education  
in International Community Education

by

Walter D. Talbot

SO 008 466

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## The Role of State Departments of Education in International Community Education

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate so much that introduction by my good friend, colleague, and former teacher, Dr. Israel Heaton. In his own right Dr. Heaton could effectively carry the title "Mr. Community Education." For his great role in my own state, I extend thanks and appreciation. To Dick Pendell, Obadiah Harris, and a host of other "shakers" and "movers" of this conference, I express admiration for the planning of this conference and acknowledge before them the mixed emotion with which I accepted the assignment to speak on this occasion. I am pleased to be a part of this great conference and of the growing movement of community education. For the chance to be here in this international setting, I accepted the invitation to speak to you.

The opportunity to share this platform with many great people adds to the other side of my mixed emotions on being here today. I stand before you very humble at the thought of addressing an international audience.

I think I feel much like the farmer who entered his mule in the Kentucky Derby. He knew the mule didn't have a chance to win but he thought the association would be good for him. I also think I now know how that mule must have felt as he entered the track with those fine thoroughbred animals. Ladies and gentlemen, if I don't stir you to new heights, I want you to know that I am going to benefit from my appearance in this great center.

To begin my address, I want to borrow from the position paper proposed by the International Association of Community Educators which was printed in the advance copy of the program. The notion of linking community education and international education intrigues me and I believe the framers of that paper have

A talk given at the Second International Community Education Conference.  
Las Cruces, New Mexico, Juarez, Mexico, El Paso, Texas. April 1, 1975.

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done an excellent job of fusing the two. I quote:

If civilization is to survive and further evolve, it must develop the will for sharing more fully the constructive benefits of scientific and creative exploration, and education must also become integral in nature and international in dimension. The uniting of enlightened community educators of the world offers a realistic hope for some evolutionary advance toward the emergence of collective thinking and a consequent lift in the consciousness of the race more capable of reconciling unity with diversity and continuity with change.

Utah has an intense interest in both community education and international education. My successor at this podium this afternoon is a colleague from Utah who has provided leadership in both areas. I hope you will give your utmost attention to what he has to say and to the slide-sound story he will present.

For a moment I want to give you an interesting aspect of Utah culture which has a bearing on the topic of community education and international education. First, Utah has a close-knit society with a majority of the people maintaining a common social and religious base. Our communities are small and reflect individuality. We believe that the schools belong to the people and the people believe that too. When we speak of the public schools we're not afraid of attaching an apostrophe "s" to the word public to reflect that the schools are the public's schools. But, strangely, while we have a common base we are unusually cosmopolitan. In a recent compliance report to the Office of Civil Rights on bilingual/bicultural education, we discovered that there are 24 different foreign languages which constitute the only language spoken in homes in Utah from which our students come; an additional 41 languages are spoken in other homes most of the time; and there are homes where 43 different languages are spoken equally with English. So, truthfully, Utah is a state which has already had to address the principle of reconciling unity with diversity and continuity with change.

But we are stronger for it and as we develop further in community education

and international education we'll learn the great lessons needed to move us into prominence in both fields. A challenge of great dimension is to develop our programs so that we can orchestrate the whole and link the various programs together for the benefit of our people. Until now we have been able to hear the individual notes but have failed to detect the melody. We've got to do better; and we're going to do better.

One hardly knows where to begin to treat a topic so broad and all encompassing as the "State Department's Role in International Community Education." Yet treat it I must if I am to justify my trip to this conference and merit your confidence in me as a contributor to this program.

Now I perceive part of my task is to deal with the human condition internationally and to link that with the concept of community education.

If we are to fully achieve an international brotherhood and reconcile unity with diversity and continuity with change we need to observe several principles:

1. We need to be men among men rather than American among Chinese or other races or nationalities, white among black, or have's among have-not's.
2. We need to understand that the learning of culture is much more than learning a language.
3. We need to come to know that with understanding comes better relations.
4. We need to explode myths such as the spiritual and humanistic qualities of Asia versus the materialistic views of capitalist nations. Both cultures are made up of people and qualities overlap.
5. We need to do less for people and more with them.
6. We need to make the statement "all men are brothers" a declaration of commitment which recognizes that brothers differ and in differences there are inherent strengths.
7. We need to know that thought is barren unless it has a relationship to

action. We know many things; but we must develop serious empathy and feeling for people. We need to emphasize the posture of loving people and using things rather than loving things and using people.

8. We need to accept the fact that tradition dies a hard death; indeed when people change they do so only for a good reason.

9. We need to provide a balance between a pragmatic education--which might be characterized as the most popular subject for the most lucrative job--with the ideals of education, which provides for the beauty of character and for community leadership and service.

10. We need to emphasize the benefits of self-reliance where people may be less dependent upon outside influences. At a time when whatever happens in any nation may affect the entire world self-reliance is a most difficult concept but a most essential principle; for in self-reliance people and nations are less subject to inflation, changes in government and economic hardship. Yet, at the same time we need to develop a spirit of cooperativeness--a oneness--where brotherly love prevails.

A number of years ago, Dr. Alvin Leipers produced an intriguing idea on how one could see the world in a more logical perspective. He devised what he called a theoretical town of 1,000 people. He said that by capsuling the world's population of 3,000,000,000 people into a theoretical town of 1,000, various relations are more readily understood. It helps me to identify myself in a tremendously large world. Someone has said (and I will be paraphrasing to some extent), "I have measured myself by myself and have said how tall--by some other measure I would have been small, and by eternity's rod I scarce would be here at all." His analysis was basically couched in a way that the people of the United States could make comparisons more readily. Despite my desire to be more international in my perspective, I must confess that I shall sound rather provincial today.

Of the theoretical town of 1,000, 60 would be Americans; 940 would be the

remainder of the world. Further comparisons were as follows. (Some of the figures are now outdated but their meaning may still be very real.)

- \*330 would be classified as Christian; 670 would not.
- \* 80 would be practicing Communists; 370 would be under Communist domination.
- \*303 would be white; 697 would be non-white.
- \*The 60 Americans would have an average life expectancy of 70 years; the 940 others would average less than 40 years.
- \*The 60 Americans would have an average of 15 times as many possessions per person as all the rest of the people. The Americans would produce 16 per cent of the town's food supply. Although they would eat 72 per cent above the maximum food requirement, they would either eat most of what they produce, or store it for future use at enormous cost.
- \*Since most of the 940 non-Americans in the town would be hungry most of the time, it could lead to some ill feeling toward the 60 Americans who would appear to be enormously rich and fed to the point of sheer disbelief by the great majority of townspeople. The Americans would also have a disproportionate share of electric power, coal, fuel, steel, and general equipment.
- \*Of the 940 non-Americans
  - 3 would die of leprosy
  - 85 would die of schistosomiasis
  - 300 would die of malaria
  - 45 would die of cholera, typhus, and other infections
  - 156 would die of starvation and malnutrition
- None of the 60 Americans would ever get these diseases nor would ever be worried about them; few would have little concern for starvation or malnutrition.
- \*The 60 Americans would each be spending \$87.00 per year on liquor and tobacco but less than \$20.00 for the drugs needed for the finest medical care in the world.
- \*The 60 Americans (just a little over six per cent of the town's population) would consume 60 per cent of the world's goods.

Realizing that I am not speaking to solely an American audience, I emphasize the basic meaning of Dr. Leipers' town. Is it any wonder that we need more to be men among men rather than to be identified in such a way as to create barriers between us--between nation and nation and people and people. Is it also any wonder why international cooperation and greater self-reliance are essential.

When there is so much misunderstanding and suspicion among us, when our world perpetuates idealistic as well as economic and social barriers, how can we hope to be one people but through education.

I have so much faith in an education system which has as its base the needs of the people, which I judge community education to be. Community education can have that international flavor and influence.

As we contemplate our world of today, the classic statement of H. G. Wells that "History becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe" should take on greater meaning. How does education go about winning that race? What kind of education must the world have so that catastrophe may be avoided? How do we provide the kind of education that is needed?

There are, of course, no simple answers to such complex questions. As I contemplate my own position in community education I think I've come from a position of cocksure ignorance to one of thoughtful uncertainty. But, if we begin with some basic assumptions we would conclude that community education has a great potential for success in overcoming world conditions. Those assumptions, which provide the foundation of community education, are:

1. Conceptualization must precede organization and objectives to be met must precede the program to meet those objectives.
2. Good community education programs must reflect the variation in needs and aspirations in and among communities and are limited only by the creativeness and inventiveness of the people who plan and develop programs and their ability to optimize the use of community resources.
3. Education serves best when it is based upon identified need and when learning experiences are derived from a base understood by the student.
4. Instruction is best when it is based on rational principles rather than on personal preferences and prejudices.

5. Community education is a concept, not a program; it is a process, not a product. Community education is the process which precedes the activity that occurs at the community school or elsewhere in the community. What happens in the school is education. That which precedes programs at the school to meet problems is community education.

6. Community education is the process by which we engage the public in determining the role the schools shall play in solving individual and community problems. The action word in that context is "determining" not "engaging," for it would be possible to engage the public and do nothing purposeful and useful.

Despite my repeated reference to the schools in the concept of community education, I do not want to give the impression that community education is school-based; indeed it is not. It is community-based.

In speaking of education, one would be folly to suggest that all education belongs to the school. I am reminded of a statement by the noted historian, Henry Steele Commager, when he said:

As we interpret society in terms of education, so we can describe education in terms of society or community. For it is, after all, the community which performs the major job of education, not the schools; performs them through a hundred miscellaneous institutions from family to farm, from government to playing field, from churches to labor unions; from newspapers and journals to comics and radio and, above all, television.

But if the schools serve their destiny and purpose they can be the catalyst and provide the leadership necessary to inseparably link the schools to the community. It may seem ironical that community education had its beginning in the schools, yet the community holds in its hands the future of the schools. To put the relationship in perspective: what the heart is to the body, the schools should be to the community; community education should serve that same role in the lives of the people and in the community itself.

Thus community education holds the key to the growth and stability of the people in every community and in every nation. What every wise and prudent parent wants for his children, every community should want for its people. My experience in international education convinces me that every parent desires the highest advantages for their children. It is my conviction that the processes of community education and what results from the application of those processes will inevitably give to the people the highest advantages in living, here or around the world.

Borrowing from some of the basic assumptions I listed earlier, I would conclude that the first step of the state education agency is to conceptualize what is meant by the term "International Community Education" and put it into a proper frame of reference in its relationship to the total educational scene. Even community education, either as a concept or program, does not have a universally accepted definition. When the international dimension is added there may be greater confusion.

In my own mind, I am at the seventh level featured in Jack Minzey's community education model--"involvement of the community in the school and of the school in its community." I shall discuss community education from that vantage point. Community education is a vehicle by which programs serving the needs of the people in the community may be brought to those people.

The SEA has a three-fold function and a single mission. Its role is to provide leadership, service, and evaluation; its mission is to provide education. Of course, the SEA does not do that single-handedly. Indeed, it relies upon the people. Therefore, we need to carefully examine the purposes of the SEA and how it performs its function among the state and local agencies responsible for education.

Leadership by the SEA means it shall provide options and alternatives to local agencies so they may better choose means of meeting the needs of the people they serve. The SEA is not generally an operating agency. It finds its function

in facilitating the operation of local programs. Assuring local education agencies of options and alternatives which permit them to exercise local initiative is important.

Service means giving assistance to local education agencies in meeting goals and objectives which they set. Assisting them in making certain those goals and objectives are community based is also important. Local communities must also have the vision to work with other communities in providing linkages which give the people better service. Local education agencies must gain a greater statewide perspective just as nations must look to the world.

Evaluation as a function of the SEA is linked to its "control" function. Control means setting standards and evaluating the way in which local programs meet those standards. The progress and degree of effectiveness of programs must be continually assessed against standards set by the SEA.

The United States is unique for a nation of the world in that it does not have a national system of public education. There is, however, a loose federal system. That is, each state has its own system and the composite of those systems makes up the "nation's system of education." The balance of power between the states and the federal government is the essence of the federal system. In that system we cannot deny the importance of national action but we believe that states must be in a position to influence and modify that action--to adapt it to local conditions. At the same time, educators at the local level--in the local education agency--cannot deny the importance of state action but they also must be in a position to influence and modify that action. Said in a different way, education will be best when it is responsive to the people it serves; therefore, appropriate decisions have to be made at all levels. Flexibility and the ability to move where the pressures are greatest--where the needs are evident--are essential qualities of the American public schools. Proper relationships, well understood, are important to us.

I suspect that all of us at the local, state, and federal levels have to

understand that we operate on a stage upon which we are not the sole actors. We are constantly in danger of being upstaged but if we drop out of the cast the play will be the worst for it. We all have a part to play and we have to recognize that others do also. How best to manage those relationships appears to be a task each of us will have to undertake.

Such a thought is doubly important as we embark on a program of international community education. If the SEA is to assume its proper role in that program it has to analyze carefully its place in the overall scheme of things.

Few would disagree with the notion that roles and functions of the state education agency are no longer limited to the traditional tasks of monitoring compliance with regulations, accreditation, teacher certification, apportionment of funds, pupil transportation and safety, and various custodial functions. While the SEA continues to do all of those things they increasingly occupy less and less importance among the duties of the modern SEA.

There are noticeable trends across the nation in the responsibilities and directions of the state education agency. They are:

1. More comprehensive, coordinated planning.
2. Increased evidences of coordination with related agencies.
3. New approaches to research, development, evaluation, and accountability.
4. General shifts in staffing patterns and agency size.
5. Involvement in conflict resolution.

All administrators know that three things are essential to success in any venture: (1) clear conceptions; (2) sound organization; (3) competent staff, assuming adequate financing and proper stimulation and motivation.

As society changes, a corresponding change must take place in the organizational and functional aspects of the SEA if it is going to continue to be a relevant part of the education system. The modern SEA has assumed such imaginative

tasks as taking responsibility for educating all citizens of the state, designing programs for the future, managing an enterprise which is growing rapidly, developing curricula in such a way as to guarantee learning, advancing educational improvement, and a host of other important tasks. But, despite all these, I happen to believe that there are four basic principles which should guide the SEA:

1. The primary mission of the SEA is to strengthen local education agencies and institutions which have major responsibility for providing educational services and programs, to the end that the community is better served.

2. No institution in a free society will long exist without a full measure of public support. Therefore, mechanisms must be found for the meaningful involvement of more individuals and groups in educational decision-making.

3. When local educators and citizens of good will consider a number of viable alternative courses of action they will usually make better decisions than when considering a single alternative. Therefore, providing options is a more viable change strategy than selecting "best" programs and then trying to persuade agencies and institutions to adopt them.

4. Although a fragmented approach is usually better than no action at all, a systematic approach to educational change is most efficient in achieving desired ends. The piecemeal, fragmented effort that has traditionally characterized educational practice must give way to a more orderly, systematic direction toward educational improvement.

If the SEA is to provide leadership it must identify, on a systematic and continuous basis, immediate and emerging needs in and for education; it must collaborate with interested lay and professional groups in planning for ways in which to meet identified needs; it must serve as a catalyst in identifying educational, personal and community problems that can be treated through education; and it must be active in assuming responsibility for gaining support and understanding of the general public.

Notwithstanding all we may do to conceptualize, to organize, to stimulate

and motivate, to provide financing, and a host of other tasks which are the prime responsibility of the SEA, I would conclude that an emerging role--and one which provides optimum potential--is that of staff development. If we are to get anywhere on any program--and in any international community education is no exception--we've got to have well-trained staff. No program is self-initiating. It takes people to move it and those people have to conceptualize, organize, and agonize if things are to get done. The SEA must take the leadership to provide a coordinated pre-service and in-service training program to avoid waste of talent and resources.

But such staff development may also prove to be wasteful if we lose contact with the community. It is in this spirit that I embrace community education as a concept. Again, bear in mind that my brand of community education calls for engaging the public in determining the role the schools shall play in solving individual and community problems.

The greatest obstacle to overcome in any education program can be summed up in one word: people. The greatest reinforcement of any education program can also be summed up in one word: people. The people whom education is to serve is the pivot upon which success or failure turns. Education's greatest ally is the people. Community education should provide us the means of returning the schools to the people and of turning the hearts of the people to their schools, whether on a local, state, national or international level.

The SEA can provide a great service to the local education agencies through the adoption of clear and concise position papers, plus guidelines which LEA's may utilize in formulating their own purposes and programs. Utah has adopted a position statement on community education and on international education. The latter paper will occupy a place on this program today.

But writing and adopting such position statements are not enough if new directions are to emerge from such effort. There also has to be a dissemination

device. One of the great problems with which an SEA must deal is the lack of spread of good ideas and practices in the building of a statewide system of education.

A method which seems to hold some promise in seeing that the meat of position statements is disseminated is currently being employed in Utah and could well become a model in SEA-LEA relationships in our state. As an example, we recently adopted a position paper on adult education. We then made the position paper a focal point in a statewide conference for school administrators. A slide-sound story was made on the paper and shown to all administrators. The conference theme will now be carried into regions of the state as a follow-up. This will permit us to have a smaller number in attendance which will facilitate a closer working arrangement. Individual LEA's will make plans for implementation at the conference and our own staff will devise a schedule of activities for implementation of the concepts and practices contained in the paper.

A third element is initiated wherein the paper is sent to the president of each local board of education and superintendent of schools with the request that the paper be made an item on the board agenda for full discussion and planning for implementation where practicable.

We believe this to be a case-in-point in exercising leadership. Such a follow-up activity should provide a means of effecting better relationships and understanding of the role of the SEA and LEA in these matters.

The Utah State Board of Education has adopted a position paper on community education and on international education and it is hoped their implementation will find fruition across our state.

Now, I have not stated all that needs to be said about community education or international education. But I do want to say that I am intrigued with the idea of linking them together. I am committed to community education and to international education and I see nothing but good coming from expanding the concept and

scope of community education to the international scene. The prospects are bright, I believe, that the principles and concepts found in community education can work wonders in reconciling unity with diversity and continuity with change.

Thank you.