

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO POST-HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

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BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

America has become great by keeping the doors to human development open, by letting individuals develop their potentialities to their fullest as motivation and moral stamina provide. This philosophy of equality before God, calling for equal opportunity to try, abetted by faith in the common man's ability to assume responsibility for the direction of his life, his community, and his nation, has provided an opportunity for the creative individual as well as for the rank and file to make a contribution. We cannot afford by administrative decision or public policy to lose the best contribution of a single individual. This philosophy of opportunity for all was opposed by those who objected to the establishment of the free grammar schools in the first half of the nineteenth century, again by those who objected to the free secondary school fifty years later, and is again opposed by those who fail to understand the importance of post-high school education today: academic, vocational, technical, and general.

AMERICA'S CRISIS IN POST-HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

America's crisis in post-high school education is fed by currents from numerous cultural headwaters flooding upon us here in the twentieth century. Harnessed and put to creative use the flood offers new opportunity for social advance. Unharnessed and undisciplined it may lead ultimately to cultural disintegration.

One current flows from the beginning of the Christian era and the triumph of a religious doctrine that never has ceased to affirm the equality of human beings before God, an affirmation that began the slow but relentless erosion of traditional concepts of basic human differences in heredity, birth, and race.

Another current flows from the integration of the classic Greek concepts of human aristocracy and the Christian concepts of morality and human life. The Greeks believed in Aristotle's Golden Mean, the development of the disciplined life, the cultivation of good taste in many fields, and the living of a well-rounded existence. At the same time the Greeks never believed this aristocratic way of life was for the working people.

Later Gouveneur Morris said, "The people never act from reason alone, but are dupes of those who have more knowledge." And Alexander Hamilton spoke contemptuously of the "imprudence of democracy where the people seldom judge or determine right." A few years before he became second President of the United States John Adams said, "The people of all nations are naturally divided into two sorts, the gentlemen and the simple men." To him the simple men, the common men, could not be expected to harbor significant opinions.

A third current rushes from the springs of the eighteenth century Enlightenment in which were intermingled the heady belief that all human beings can attain a state of perfection, not in the hereafter, as Christian doctrine claimed, but right here on earth. Out of this flood the new doctrine of progress reared its head to challenge traditional concepts of human association. This progress was to be brought about by the spread of reason. Reason became the key word to a whole new universe in which the individual was central.

The Enlightenment brought an affirmative doctrine of man. Man is basically good. He is educatable. He can be responsible, make his own decisions, run his own government, and decide the major issues affecting his life. Traditional doctrines such as "original sin" and "divine right of kings" were out.

Such a tide swept in an era of optimism on which were founded the democratic traditions which we embrace today. This optimism about man and his ability to obtain the Good Life has been abetted by currents from the striking and uninterrupted advance of science and technology which today have forced upon American society the immediate need for intellectual development and leadership.

This democratic world in which we find ourselves requires highly intelligent men to decide the life and death issues of a complex society. Subtle shadings of philosophical, political, and social issues require intellectual capacities that would have cast fear even into the hearts of the eighteenth century propagandists. The new scientific and technical world requires educational background, manipulative skill, and adjustive capacities of the kind entirely beyond the comprehension of Adam Smith or Karl Marx.

EDUCATION IS A REQUIREMENT

Business everywhere is asking for a high school diploma as the minimum requirement for a job. The old adage that "we need stupid people to do the menial jobs" is rapidly being replaced by the realization that we cannot use many stupid people, and they are soon to become welfare cases. An elderly gentleman recently wrote that what

our community needs is not more education but plenty of dirty, smoking factories. Obviously, this gentleman had not realized that the world of manufacturing has changed and that dirty, smoking factories are no longer the order of the day.

Nor is the problem one of skills alone. *Time* magazine in the August 28 issue (1964, p. 44) reported, "Half the knowledge of today's engineering graduate will be obsolete in a decade, and half of what he will need to know has not yet been discovered."

The U. S. Department of Labor reminds us the average worker must change his type of work from four to six times in a lifetime if he is to continue to be employed. In other words, if the individual is to hold a job, he must have continuing education, and if this nation is to maintain its pace in technological advance, opportunity for general and continuing education must be provided for all citizens.

HOW IS THIS EDUCATION TO BE PROVIDED?

We begin with the assumption that a high school diploma is the minimum requirement for all, and yet not all students now receive or can receive a high school diploma. The physically and mentally handicapped students cannot be treated en masse. They should receive the special types of education required to benefit them.

Another group that will not receive high school diplomas is the culturally handicapped, students who are not motivated, who cannot read, and whose basic cultural knowledge is so limited as to retard their development. These students comprise the great mass of the dropouts and will not usually respond to traditional treatment. Their upgrading will often require the cooperation of the welfare agencies to make their participation in education a basis for aid. Such projects as the Great Cities Gray Areas School Improvement Program offer another approach. These programs are all concerned with enlisting community cooperation and motivation. The initiation of Youth Core programs offering study as well as work under the Anti-Poverty Program constitutes still another approach for helping the culturally handicapped.

There seems to be general agreement that comprehensive high schools offering a variety of areas of preparation will also be of aid in helping many young people to a high school diploma.

Assuming that at least 75 to 85 percent of all youth with the proper motivation can reasonably be expected to earn a high school diploma and assuming that the high school diploma is required for low-level jobs, how then are the great mass of American youth to be

given post-high school education and the adult to gain continuing education in the years of his maturity?

Obviously this education must be available at relatively low cost within commuting distance of the student. It must offer a broadly comprehensive program if the variety of needs and talents of the mass of students is to be served. Emphasis must be placed upon teaching and guidance. Every student who attempts post-high school education must be accepted at his own level of development and advanced from that point toward attainment of an educational objective that will be meaningful to him and will enable him to make a worthy contribution to society.

In general, the approaches suggested are three: the area vocational school, the university extension center, and the junior college.

Vocational education in America begins with the Morrill Act of 1862. It gathers momentum with the manual training movement of the late nineteenth century, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, other supplementary federal legislation culminating in the George-Barden Act of 1946, and finally the Vocational Education Act of 1963.

Grant Venn in *Man, Education, and Work*, published by the American Council on Education, summarizes some of the philosophy and characteristics of the vocational education movement in the following manner:

1. A uniformity of program for all States has been written into the Federal law.
2. There has been encouragement of separate administration of the program producing a duality with the academic field under the conviction that its success depended on administration by vocationally minded people.
3. Emphasis has been placed upon the practical phases of education to the exclusion of general education.
4. Programs are designed to fit students for immediate employment, not further study.

In general, vocational education in high school has been most successful in those communities where the student finds immediate employment for his skills. Beyond such instances the success has been qualified, partly because of apathy of the school administration and the general public, partly because students were often taking training for nonexistent jobs, and partly because the skills required for jobs were too complex for the program offered and the maturity of the student.

THE AREA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Having met only limited success with programs in secondary

schools some states, such as Georgia and Wisconsin, have developed area vocational schools, completely under the administration of vocational leadership accepting both secondary and post-secondary students. The Vocational Education Act provides for federal support for such area vocational schools.

These area schools have the advantage of devoting maximum effort to skill development and minimum effort to education requiring verbal talent, thus giving somewhat better advantage to the academically limited student. Teachers are usually chosen for their skills in a particular field. Such schools try to keep close to industry in order to make their programs practical, preparing the student for the job. Area schools are usually less tied to the local school boards which have been traditionally miserly in providing funds for the expensive equipment required for vocational education in the high school. The area vocational school can take post-high school students whether they have a high school diploma or not. They are operated by personnel who are devoted to the field of practical education.

Critics of the area vocational school point to the educational duality it creates with the resulting competition for funds and recognition. They point to the historic tendency of high school vocational programs to leave the student poorly equipped for continuing education. They argue that their extreme emphasis on the practical to the exclusion of the academic constitutes completely terminal education, making it difficult or impossible for the student to move to a higher level of education even if he has the capacity and the desire. This fact alone, it is often claimed, makes the area vocational school a low status institution. Vocational educators tend to substantiate this claim by emphasizing that many of their students are unable to carry general education courses.

Another criticism is that the narrow scope of the curriculum and the limitation of the so-called "practical" leadership do not adequately prepare the student for citizenship in a complex society. Furthermore, the claim is made that many vocational education leaders have completely failed to comprehend the meaning and significance of technical education for which contemporary demand is so great and that the area vocational schools are unable to give the quality of leadership demanded by such education.

THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION CENTER

The second approach to post-high school education, through the university extension center, is being emphasized by such states as Kentucky and Indiana, but is used in some twenty states. Extension

centers or branch campuses usually think of themselves as the state university in a particular community.

An argument in favor of this approach is that it is developed as an integral part of the state university, involving one administration and one legislative appropriation. The branch campus is, therefore, assured a high quality educational program led by faculty of the same quality as at the university. Branch campuses have the advantage of the availability of research staff and advanced counseling and guidance personnel not usually available to the other types of institutions. Another argument is that state control of post-high school education will prove advantageous since it is free from local interference and pressures. Finally, it is claimed that the cultural and intellectual resources of the great university can be better brought to the local community through the extension center.

Criticisms of state extension centers begin with the accusation that their programs are dominated by the main campuses, with policies set and faculty approved by deans who seldom visit the campuses and fail to consider that the needs of the centers may differ from those of the main campus. Many extension center catalogues state no philosophy and indicate no educational objectives because they have none of their own.

Admissions practices are usually similar to those of the main campus. Such "open door" admissions as do exist are on a "show us" basis, a philosophy hardly adequate to meet the post-high school educational needs of the great mass of average students now requiring such education.

Faculty qualifications are usually similar to those on the main campus, placing emphasis on research and writing, with only minimum attention to teaching effectiveness. Yet, teaching effectiveness, not research and writing skill, is needed by beginning post-high school students. Heavy use of graduate students and transient professors often defeats the very concept of a college community where learning takes place through fellowship as well as in the classroom. Because the policies and faculty appointments of these institutions are controlled on the main campuses, extension centers seldom attract administrative leadership with drive and initiative; yet, it is claimed such leadership is desperately needed in community post-high school institutions. In many states, extension center directors do not mingle with their counterparts in other institutions of higher education and are thus denied the experience of sharing educational problems and ideas.

The viewpoint is also advanced that the university, burdened with

all the details of thousands of beginning undergraduate students, can become so involved as to neglect its responsibility for graduate and professional programs where its truly great contribution can and should be made. If the state university systems include two institutions, one a technical and agricultural school and the other a general and professional institution, comprehensive post-high school programs can be provided only if the two institutions cooperate. Regardless of the attitude of the administrators, the tendency is to compete rather than cooperate, making adequate service to the community impossible.

In my own state, Indiana, the failure of the state legislature to face up to post-high school education has led the universities to a ridiculous policy of charging several dollars more per semester hour in the centers than on the campus, and in addition charging three dollars per semester hour to construct buildings in the centers. Such a practice obviously defeats the very purpose of post-high school education within commuting distance of the student.

THE COMMUNITY JUNIOR COLLEGE

Increasingly, states are turning to the community junior college as the key institution in post-high school education. The community junior college is a strictly American creation of the twentieth century. Its growth from a meager beginning to the present is phenomenal. Some twenty to thirty new institutions are being established each year. States like Pennsylvania and Ohio which have been committed to extension centers to serve post-high school needs have now initiated junior college systems. States such as California and Florida are usually cited as having developed outstanding junior college systems.

Recommended procedure calls for the establishment of comprehensive community junior colleges on an area basis, under the direction of separate boards and including several school districts, except in great metropolitan areas where the college is usually under the public school board.

Comprehensive junior colleges are usually under local or area control. Therefore, it is claimed they are more responsive to community needs. Because of their autonomy it is argued that they can attract top administrators, educational leaders who have the creative ability and administrative capacity to challenge their communities.

Their comprehensive programs can offer academic transfer curricula; terminal vocational-technical curricula; adult education courses for credit, for continuing education, for rehabilitation and for enrichment; and special programs of education as may be required by institutions and organizations in the community. They can also give cultural and intellectual leadership to community life.

Community junior colleges are usually "open door" institutions welcoming all high school graduates, and nongraduates into such terminal programs as the students can carry. They claim to give an opportunity to the indifferent high school student to recover and prove he can do college work; to the questioning parent to test whether his son is college material without heavy expenditure of money; to the terminal student to develop the skills needed for participation in today's economy; to the adult to retrain himself and to continue his education; and to all students for broad general education.

In comprehensive junior colleges students can shift fields of study without the trials or embarrassment of changing institutions. They emphasize teaching without the constant pressure to do research and publish, although many of their faculty members do original research and carry heavy writing programs. Graduate students are not utilized.

On the other hand, the question is often raised whether any institution can do everything a comprehensive junior college claims and do it well; and the tasks of serving the needs of so wide a variety of students with such varied interests, with so many differing programs, admittedly is indeed a difficult task.

The claim is often made that the junior college cannot attract top faculty because of its lack of academic prestige, and that it leans too heavily on high school teachers who are unable to do creditable college teaching.

The criticism is made that too many junior colleges are tied to local school boards, to local secondary schools, and therefore, are not really colleges. Rather they offer fifth and sixth years of high school, often sharing teachers interchangeably with the high school.

A concern in some quarters is that every community will want its junior college, resulting in small inefficient institutions unable to serve adequately. A further concern is that junior colleges are very apt to clamor to become four-year institutions.

ALL THREE NEEDED

In reality, it is fair to say, that all three types of these approaches may be needed within a single state. They are not mutually exclusive. Large metropolitan areas, such as Los Angeles, may find it far more practical to provide one vocational-technical institution where expensive equipment can be centered for maximum use and surround it with several academic junior colleges with limited terminal programs. Certain areas may very well need the supplementary services of extension centers for senior college and graduate work such as in

Flint, Michigan, and in Vincennes, Indiana, where both Purdue and Indiana Universities operate supplementary projects. State universities may welcome junior colleges in their communities, as has been true in Lansing, Michigan and is developing in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Good educational practice requires that the decision concerning which approach and where it is needed be based on state-wide unbiased studies by competent educational leaders who consider all factors. State legislatures which depend solely upon the counsel of protagonists of any one of these approaches are very apt to get warped interpretations and develop an unbalanced wasteful system of post-high school education.

In fact, over-all state planning for post-high school education and the development of a state strategy to meet the needs of all the people have already been undertaken by several states. So pressing has the need for coordinating the various higher educational activities become that this theme was made the topic for discussion at the annual meeting of the American Council on Education in San Francisco on September 30—October 2, 1964. Most certainly, sound educational policy demands that higher educational strategy within the state should be developed on the basis of society's need and not dominated by the vested interests of any one segment of the educational community.

Now to demonstrate my own bias. I am willing to predict that if a balanced objective study of a state's need is made, in most instances the comprehensive community junior college will emerge as the basic post-high school educational approach with vocational-technical schools and the university extension center supplementary to it. Perhaps it would be appropriate to suggest that state after state which has developed plans for higher education has made the junior college the basic post-high school unit.

The comprehensive community junior college offers the greatest promise of keeping the doorway to human development open so the individual can fully develop his own potentialities. By their very philosophies both the vocational approach and extension centers tend to stratify students, and place exaggerated emphasis on a limited scope of human abilities.

Administratively, the comprehensive junior college offers promise of meeting the needs of the mass of people. Administratively, it is responsive to community needs. It can develop a sense of educational responsibility on the part of local leadership. It can provide a wide spectrum of programs within commuting distance of the student, and at the same time effectively serve the variety of individual abilities.

The criticism that the community junior college often does not provide a comprehensive program has too many times been justified, but too often the failure is the result of inadequate support at the state level. Abundant evidence is now available to all who want to examine it, that comprehensive junior colleges can serve the complex variety of needs their philosophy projects.

No doubt, in some instances comprehensive community junior colleges have not maintained able faculties and high academic standards, but studies of the success of transfer students, and several have been made, clearly indicate good transfer success for junior college students. When it comes to faculties competent to teach freshmen and sophomore students the universities can claim no pre-eminence. Their records in serving selected freshmen and sophomore students leaves much to be desired.

A state plan for higher education, including junior colleges, should be designed to produce an orderly area development without dominance by local school boards. No competent junior college leader advocates the establishment of junior colleges in connection with high schools or the joint utilization of high school teachers.

In my judgment both the extension center philosophy and the vocational educational philosophy fail to grapple with the basic problem of post-high school education in American society today. *The problem is: How to keep the great mass of the citizenry growing and equip them to participate in a highly complex technical culture and an increasingly intellectual generation.* These two approaches are aimed at segments of the population and are very apt to leave the needs of many unserved. By the vocational education philosophy Herbert Hoover could well have become a skilled worker and by the extension center philosophy Winston Churchill would never have matured in time to get into senior college.

History is replete with examples such as Louis Pasteur, Charles Darwin, Harvey Cushing, Albert Schweitzer, and Thomas Alva Edison, that the educators, the guidance experts, and the testers are totally unable to predict which teen-ager will lead the human advance. If you want an excellent picture, if perhaps extreme, of attempting to choose leadership by some deterministic means, I commend to you Cecil Woodham-Smith's description of British leadership in the Crimean War, entitled *The Reason Why* (McGraw-Hill, 1953). Furthermore, the social, political, and economic issues before the nation require that citizens have a sense of value and intellectual capacity rather than just vocational skills if America is to continue as a land of opportunity for all.

The American educational advance is moving into the post-high school area. It is not a limited advance involving a segment of the population, but a broad advance involving most of the population. If the Hebrew-Christian affirmations about the nature of man and the Enlightenment's optimism about man's potentialities are really to be brought to fruition in democratic America, then her educational advance must continue into the post-high school area, and the comprehensive community junior college is the most promising next step in its continuance.

PART II

*Meeting Our International
Obligations*

