

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH CHALLENGE
THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND THEIR
IMPLICATIONS ON JOB TRAINING

by

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In this era of evolving change we have seen a tremendous increase in our country's commitment to education. This shift did not come about through well reasoned public awareness of the need for change. Rather, it is the result of socio-economic crises such as communism, unemployment, illiteracy and the civil rights movement.

In the late 50's, Sputnik shook the American public into questioning the superiority of American scientist. This led to the accusation that American education was failing to provide adequate scientists and engineers. The National Defense Education Act resulted in support of higher education in the pursuit of excellence. These events led to the neglect of educating the masses.

The concentration on superior achievers or excellence served as a deterrent in providing job training. These few short years of neglect combined with scientific accomplishments, resulted in record unemployment rolls. The previously mentioned development caused by Communism has immediate and far reaching implications on job training.

The 60's have resulted in another trend. This trend has concentrated on education for employment. The tremendous rise in unemployment was another crisis which had to be solved. A direct result was the Manpower Development and Training Act and the Vocational Education Act of 1963. Since the unemployed are almost always lacking in skills and education, the goal should be to provide more occupational training in the schools. Such schooling can be provided by expanding vocational education at the high school level. For those unwilling or unable to complete a basic high school education, work-study programs are desirable. This would provide work experience and industrial discipline along with income.

At the post-secondary school level job training could be greatly strengthened to combat unemployment. An institution on an area basis could provide vocational and technical education, related instruction for apprentices, the academic offerings of a good junior college, and continuous education and skill upgrading courses for adults. Students desiring to further their education in college would have had an opportunity to "learn by doing" in addition to making a wiser choice of college training.

Basic education should be offered to those who missed it in their youth and lack the base for continuous education as adults. In addition to assuring the quantity and quality of education to present and future generations, an attempt should be made to abolish adult illiteracy.

Perhaps we should not be so concerned about retraining the unemployed as preventing the increased pool of unemployed through lack of the education of young people. Money would be far better invested in preventing high school dropouts and in helping them go on to college than in trying to retrain the unemployed coal miners. Since we are not likely to find ways to re-employ a large proportion of these people, perhaps we ought to find ways of using their presence among us to develop imaginative ways of enjoying leisure to greater advantage. The main difference between unemployment and leisure lies in the attitude taken toward being not-gainfully employed.

Thousands of unemployed are not solely the result of automation but also the result of dropping out of school. They lack motivation, hope, and an education to meet their needs.

Education is concerned with the well-being of millions of individuals in our society. The unemployed youth in this society is the concern of every segment of this society.

A formal education is essential for the great mass of youth in our modern world of work. The complexity of our technical age requires it. For many young people this is just a matter of continuation in school with some attention being given to their individual needs and desires. Those who are academically oriented should be encouraged to continue their educational pursuits.

There is a major problem posed, however, by those who are not inclined to pursue formal training beyond the first few grades in school. The dropout rates in the elementary and secondary school is appalling. Many of these did not reach the point in their schooling where they received any appreciable amount of vocational training. These dropouts are available for the labor market, but profitable employment eludes the vast majority of them simply because they have no salable skills. This leads to the distressing situation of frustration, devinquency, and dependency. Deprivation and dependency accompany these.

These conditions persist throughout the life of the untrained and to a large degree they are carried over to the next generation. Those who are ignorant, deprived, and depressed tend to perpetuate their kind. Education has the challenging task of attempting to break this chain of hopelessness. In doing this, efforts must be extended early in the life of potential dropouts to cause these youth to have educational success and to see the necessity of continued formal education. Assistance should be provided at other levels too, but it seems that prevention may be easier than to attempt a cure later. If we are to succeed in job training

at the secondary and post secondary level, we must look to the foundations of our society as well as the elementary school to succeed in our task.

Another factor, "The Great Society", has caused the educational interests, aspirations, and concerns of people and governments to become more pronounced. The "have nots" in our society threaten the favored position of the "haves." The civil rights movement attracted public attention to poverty in America and the poor conditions in slum schools. The inevitable solution is adequate attention to the socio-economic welfare of all people regardless of race, creed, and national origin, or economic status. Special programs such as Head Start and the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 are a start on solving this problem

The base or foundation of the problem is now being attacked. Head Start and the 1965 Act are the first federal contributions aimed at stabilizing the weak educational foundation. The battle to help the child from the impoverished home will eventually strengthen the entire elementary education system. A drive should be made to make the slum and rural schools equal to that of suburban schools.

Strengthening of the base in education will have direct implications on job training. These programs will strike at the heart of drop-outs and the unemployed, therefore, job training will become significantly more important. Social innovations and improvements will have a tendency to keep youngsters in school but will not change their inherent ability to succeed. Therefore the masses will need some type of vocational education and preparation for a world of work.

All persons should receive training which will enable them to earn a livelihood and prepare them to contribute effectively to the society in which they are a part.

The full significance of this becomes fully apparent when one considers the fact that education is the key that opens doors to the vast array of employment opportunities. Educators of all types must realize that education should be a continuing effort which extends throughout life. Vocational education is one phase of this but there is a need also for it to continue over the larger portion of the life of the individual. There is need for preemployment training assistance in upgrading the worker, and retraining or preparation for a new job. It is estimated that most workers will change jobs several times during their productive lifetime. Appropriate education can facilitate these adjustments.

The crisis--reaction approach to education gets things done, but usually a little late, in insufficient amounts, and often without full consideration of long run consequences. The adequacy and appropriateness of policies and programs can be assessed only by defining goals and comparing them with program purposes and accomplishments.

The primary goal of education, whether vocational, technical, or general, should be to develop within each individual the ability to think logically and plan rationally, to understand himself in relationship to his environment, and to accumulate the basic, intellectual tools that are essential to a productive and meaningful life.

These goals in no way deny either the importance of employability to a successful life in a work-oriented society or the role of education in training for employment. Fortunately, the kind of education that best accomplishes education's basic goals will, in the long run, best assure each person's employability, productivity, and adaptability to change.