

An Overview of the Related Fields

THE PREMISE upon which this special issue of *Educational Leadership* was initiated and has been organized is that education in our mass, suburbanizing society is so complex, so encompassing, that methods, data, concepts and understandings from all sources are needed to help maintain and improve it. It is further presumed that there is a sociological, historical, economic, psychological, etc., aspect to most if not all that goes on in educational institutions. On these bases, eight authorities representing as many presumably relevant disciplines have been asked to provide a brief statement of what major possibilities of applicability they see—realized or potential—in their special fields. My purpose as guest editor is to provide perspective on the separate contributions by discussing certain general and common conditions of relationship between them and education.

Though each of the articles in this issue makes a separate contribution, one area of common agreement stands out as particularly important. And that is the potential usefulness of these disciplines in the formulating of reasonable hypotheses concerning educational consequences. This is the major premise in one article, and is implicit in most of the rest. No one claims that any known tools or resources will make it possible for the educator who uses them to make hypotheses that will "prove out" 100 percent of the time.

The only claim that can be made at present is that in some, perhaps many operations, the use of methods and understandings of process made available by the disciplines treated here will lead to clearer and more accurate anticipation of consequences for a given course of educational action than is frequently possible on the basis of common sense and experience alone.

This is not intended as an argument that educators, particularly administrators, can dispense with these two vital sources of wisdom. Special techniques, methods and understandings must always be used sensibly, and there is no substitute for experience in the application of their results. But they can make experience less expensive in the long run and they can improve the quality of thinking about educational problems.

What no one pretends to be able to do is to tell the educator what his goals, his ultimate purposes, should be. The social sciences have passed through a stage of commitment to the improvement of society in terms of specific and known ends. With increased sophistication questions of value became unpopular, because they obscured objective analysis of behavioral consequences. Recently there has developed a new kind of thinking about values—as determinants of behavioral consequences as well as ends in themselves; and this development holds considerable promise for further clarification in

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the future. But the educator will find few students of human behavior who are willing to commit themselves to a recommendation of what goals the educator should desire for the improvement of society and human welfare through his programs. The sociologist, psychologist, or whatever, will usually presume that the objectives are known.

The unanswered question is who decides what the objectives of education should be, and on what basis? Should this question be left to the educators? The wiser among them are reluctant to accept the responsibility. Should the question be left then to the community? This is not always acceptable, for reasons known to most educators. Should it be left, then, to the power groups? This is precisely where it will be left if allowed to go by default—as many administrators know.

There is no absolute answer to this problem. But the readers of this issue will find that the philosopher has something relevant to say. A systematic philosophy of education can help to clarify

the issues, and the nature of the goals, if not their absolute character. Beyond this, and contrary to some positions on the subject, I believe that a maturing social (or “behavioral”) science will eventually make it possible to deal objectively with value criteria. Sociology and anthropology, for example, are able at present to make known what values are widespread and in what quarters within a community, on the basis of empirical investigation. Some sociologists and anthropologists (and indeed others) are grappling with the problem of universal human values. These kinds of approaches combined may some day make it possible to base a social, public morality on other than theistic grounds or folk knowledge. Until then the educator (and the politician, public administrator, etc.) must do the best he can, using the materials of science and philosophy to clarify alternatives that he perceives, but sometimes dimly, on the basis of experience and observation.

Beyond this basic contribution of enhancing hypothetical thinking and clarifying alternatives of action, the various disciplines represented in this issue are useful for other reasons. I shall make no attempt to summarize what each author said, or might have said, but will list what seem to me to be some significant actual or potential contributions.

The research contribution has been treated, by implication at least, in what has been said already. The methods and body of accumulated knowledge in each discipline can be brought to bear upon analyses of the educative process. The purpose is to make it possible for the educator to anticipate consequences better, as stated, but also to

contribute to the building of a systematic and comprehensive theory (or theories) of education—something that is lacking at present.

These (and other) disciplines have another kind of role to play in the training of educators—teachers, administrators and the various kinds of specialists. General principles, case materials, ways of thinking about and studying relevant phenomena are available from these disciplines and should be used more extensively in the training of educators than they are. Political science, for example, and as pointed out in this issue, can help educators to understand better what “democratic values” are and how to implement them, and has a contribution to make to the understanding of the dynamics of administrative organization. Anthropology can help create in the educator-in-training an awareness of the cultural process and the implications of the educator’s role as a cultural transmitter. In this effort, as in those of all the special fields as they contribute to the training program, the data and principles afforded by the discipline need to be made relevant to education, by the specialist. This presupposes a familiarity with educational institutions and education based upon direct experience—not necessarily as educator, but certainly as student of education—as well as a high degree of competence in the special field. This creates problems in the organization of schools of education with respect to the “foundational” disciplines and the personnel representing them, and in the relations of such professional schools to the various academic departments within the colleges and universities. These problems can

be solved, but they are outside the province of this brief statement.

The representatives of these disciplines—the political scientists, anthropologists, psychologists, et al.—can also be used appropriately as consultants or resource personnel, to help solve programmatic or localized problems. Some of the ways in which they might be useful can be gathered from a reading of the articles in this issue. What may not become as clear as it should are the limitations on such utilization—and the basic limitation is one of communication. By this I do not refer simply to the difficulty in passing through the verbal barriers erected by specialized vocabularies (of words and understandings), though these are formidable enough. I refer, rather, to the need for both the educator and the representative of the discipline to see the other’s point of view—to empathize in terms of the other’s role. This can be done if the economist, or sociologist, etc., is experienced in the institutional setting of education, and if the educator has at least a general awareness of the approach of the discipline and sympathy for the research-oriented, theoretically minded student of behavior. Too often potentially fruitful collaboration is thwarted by an undercurrent of hostility—the researcher for the practitioner, the practitioner for the theorist.

And finally, the appropriate content of these disciplines can be incorporated in the curricula of the schools. I do not mean that “Anthropology,” or “Psychology,” or even “History,” should be taught as separate and special subjects in the elementary or secondary school. But rich materials on the ways of life and institutions of other peoples are

available in anthropology and sociology and only most superficially utilized at present in school curricula. An approach to understanding the emotional development of the individual, or the formation of attitudes by experience, is offered by psychology—if skillfully and wisely interpreted. And an awareness of the developmental processes of societies and civilizations through time can be derived (but often is not) by a skillful interpretation of the materials made available by history. The integration of these and other similar contributions in the school program is the responsibility of the curriculum expert, and indeed, forward-looking schools and educators have been so integrating them for some time. The surface has hardly been scratched, however. Possibly one of the reasons why this is so is that skillful integration of these materials in the curricula, and skillful classroom teaching of the materials once integrated, require a commitment to and knowledge of the facts and understandings drawn from the special disciplines.

Educators of all categories will need to acquire a better foundational as

well as general preprofessional education in order for this to happen. At the same time it seems apparent that we need more and better interpretation from the professional cadre of the social and behavioral science fields—interpretation that will more effectively communicate the methods, data and understandings that are available, to the educationist practitioner. The present issue of *Educational Leadership* seems to be a step in the right direction.

I believe that most readers will find something interesting in every article in this issue. There are things said that will surely be disagreed with. But readers will see that the interests and approaches of the various disciplines overlap, yet each has its own unique character and can add something new to the professional equipment of educators in their specialized capacities as hypothesizers about consequences, trainers of teachers, problem-solving practitioners, or curriculum builders.

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