

Significant Books in Review

Column Editor: George W. Denmark

Education and Manpower. By The Educational Policies Commission. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1956.

One of a series of reports that have for several decades performed the important function of helping American teachers and lay citizens think constructively about important educational issues, this latest statement by the Educational Policies Commission is devoted to America's manpower problem. It identifies the problem as one of immediate urgency and yet one with certain temporary, transitional aspects. The Commission's report at its very outset places this problem in its broad context of democratic values by pointing out the continuing responsibility of a democracy for the cultivation of the individual talents and capabilities of all of its people. However, in the judgment of the Commission, "the United States now finds itself in a situation in which the fullest possible development and use of all its resources of trained manpower is both more urgent and in some ways more difficult than it has ever been before in time of peace."

Our current manpower problem, according to the report, arises from two major factors—changes in the composition of the American population and changes in technology. Because these changes are occurring in a period marked by international insecurities and tensions, the demands they make upon manpower and their effect upon the reservoir of manpower are even more significant.

One of the specific problems highlighted is that caused by the change in the proportion of our population in the various age groups. A chart depicting the percentage of different age groups in the population from 1900 to 1970 (projected) shows that we are currently in a period in which a smaller proportion of our population is in the 20-64 year age bracket, ordinarily the most productive years of the life span. This suggests that this age group currently has the responsibility of caring for greatly expanded groups of children and older persons. While recognizing that this current situation does not represent a permanent trend, the Commission points out that its immediate import is one which should not be minimized by taking refuge in long term statistical surveys.

Other changes in our population identified by the report are those relating to distribution by sex (the growing excess of women over men), geographic distribution (particularly the shift from rural to urban areas) and ability distribution in terms of the changing needs of industry and technology. It is in this latter area that the report makes its most cogent case for the role of education with respect to our manpower problems. The Commission holds that, while the nature of many technological and social changes are not yet discernible, "... the phase of industrial and scientific revolutions into which we are now passing will require of the labor force a marked upgrading, and a high degree of flexibility." The

notion that a "push-button" world will lessen the need for knowledge and skill on the part of many workers is quickly dispelled by the report in pointing out that new knowledge, new skills, and new basic sensitivities will be demanded of large numbers of workers. Many of these workers will need to see production in more abstract terms. Many will need to maintain and repair increasingly delicate and complex mechanisms. As was true of the period of our Industrial Revolution, the increase in automation will bring unrest and dislocations to many of our labor force, according to the Commission report. It is the thesis of the Commission report that our schools need to assume major responsibility for providing the upgrading and flexibility needed by many Americans.

In support of this conclusion the Commission makes a series of recommendations with regard to education which seem to have special significance for curriculum workers. The recommendations are that:

"1. General and liberal education concern themselves much more positively with the career concerns of students, and

2. Vocational and professional education concern themselves much more definitely with the development of personal and humane qualities.

3. Industry should undertake more of the task of specific job training than it has in the past assumed, seeking to develop such programs at a professionally sound level.

4. The schools and colleges must increase their vocational and career programs as the basic agency for developing the talent of a vast people.

5. The agencies of adult education be increasingly active in meeting manpower needs.

6. There be further experimentation in making military training more a contribution and less a disruption in the career development of young Americans."

In the judgment of this reviewer the

recommendations regarding general and vocational education are particularly apt and significant. The support of this influential Commission for the notion that general or liberal education at both secondary and college levels can attain vitality and validity by utilizing the needs and interests of students career-wise can help us to provide youth with educational experiences which are both general and relevant to their own purposes. Much needs to be done in the blending of these two concerns. Similarly, the broadening of our conception of vocational education may help us to see that effective vocational education is more often than not dependent upon the development of mature self-understanding and, upon a heightened sensitivity for the consequences of one's acts upon others. The lack of a fundamental reappraisal of the relationship between general and vocational education seems to this writer to constitute a major roadblock in the adaptation of American education to our educational needs of today and tomorrow. If the Commission's report can help remove this roadblock, it will have performed a major service to our educational system and to the nation.

Two subsequent chapters of the report deal with special facets of education which relate to the manpower problem: the guidance and personnel services and education for the gifted. The report supports the concept of guidance as a central responsibility of all teachers and quotes from the 1952 EPC statement, *Education for ALL American Youth: A Further Look*, in holding that "guidance is not the work of a few specialists. It is rather a service from the entire school staff, which requires some people with special knowledge and skills, but enlists the co-operation of all." Through such guidance, the hope is that the school may

discover and nurture the special talents of each student and may assist each in making vocational choices which are individually appropriate and socially responsible.

In its discussion of educating the gifted, the Commission points out that such an emphasis should in no sense be seen as belittling "... the first importance of the best possible education for all young people." It maintains, instead, that a greater concern for the education of the gifted than we have shown in the past simply seeks to apply the principle of equality of educational opportunity. Such equality is defined not in terms of the same kind and amount of education for all but rather in terms which involve lifting every individual to the highest level of his capacities. The support which the Commission gives to ability grouping as a device for improving the educational experiences of the gifted troubles this reviewer and will doubtless concern many other readers. Supporting the practice in terms of its facilitation of enrichment and acceleration of learning experiences for gifted children, the Commission seemingly fails to take into account its earlier observations regarding the varieties of giftedness which exist in boys and girls. The report seems also to neglect to emphasize at this point the need for applying the creative talents of gifted individuals to the group problems of the whole community. It would seem as if social responsibility was best fostered in an environment in which youth were able to practice daily their obligations to their peers rather than separating them from those with whom they will subsequently live and work.

While identifying the major areas of manpower shortage as involving the fields of scientific research, engineering, health services, executive and super-

visory activities, education and technical activities in all phases of industry, agriculture and commerce, the report places special emphasis upon the problem of obtaining enough qualified teachers. In the Commission's words, "the shortage of essential teachers is the most significant and specific education implication of the manpower situation in the United States for the 1950's and 1960's." At another point the report states that "the teacher shortage has unique potency for breeding shortages in other areas where trained manpower is sorely needed. Failure to solve the problem of growing-scarcity versus increasing-demand in education will not only affect adversely all the areas served by education. It will aggravate shortages generally, and its effects will be cumulative."

Some of the possible remedies for the current teacher shortage which the Commission suggests are:

1. Increasing the number of students finishing college and graduate school, and

2. Attracting a larger proportion of these persons into teaching through active recruitment campaigns, higher salary levels, improving the prestige of teaching, increased counselling services for prospective teachers, and improving the educational program prerequisite to licensing.

3. Using new sources of teacher supply, such as qualified persons from minority groups, married women, older members of the community.

4. Increasing the holding power in the profession, and

5. Increasing the efficiency of education."

In terms of the last point the Commission encourages experimentation with a wide range of methods but holds that there is no adequate substitute for the personal relationship between student and teacher. The report urges that "... the full nature of education and of personality and the well-rounded objectives of individual growth must be kept

in focus" in evaluating any such experiments.

Education and Manpower is a most readable and succinct statement regarding an important problem area in American life. It combines in admirable fashion a sensitivity to the needs and concerns of individuals with a concern for the total society and its vitality. Both of these concerns are placed in the context of a democratic value system and clear recognition is given to the need for judgments which are made with regard to some of these pressing personal and social issues to properly reflect and strengthen the central values of our way of life. Controversial at many points, the report should provide a valuable base for discussion in many teacher and community curriculum study groups. It can likewise serve as an important resource in teacher education programs concerned with self-appraisal and improvement.

—Reviewed by GEORGE W. DENEMARK,
assistant dean, College of Education,
University of Maryland, College Park.

The High School Curriculum (Second edition). Edited by Harl R. Douglass. New York: Ronald Press, 1956.

This second edition of a well known title in the field of secondary education has added three chapters which not only give new value to the book but which give some clue as to new perspectives and insights in the high school curriculum field. Chapters have been added on the curriculum problems of the small high school, the core curriculum, and the large unit in the curriculum.

The issue of optimum school size has become an important one as the movement in the direction of consolidation has become an established fact. Important

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though it is, we would do well to recognize that more than one half of our regular four year high schools still enroll fewer than 100 pupils. Since curriculum discussions concerned with secondary education so frequently seem to assume a large school with opportunities for a wide variety of course offerings it is well that the practical problems of the many small high schools are called to mind. The chapter on the small high school serves this function well, particularly as it points out the dangers inherent in assuming that smallness seems to dictate one program and that that single program becomes, all too frequently, the academic program.

The new chapters on the core curriculum and on the unit method of course organization lend support to important trends in secondary education. A heightened emphasis upon the obligation of the

high school to provide an effective general education for all who attend is heartening, as is some departure from the assumption that such general education is more or less "naturally" acquired as a student passes through a prescribed program of required courses.

Taken as a whole, this book presents a realistic picture of secondary education as it looks today and suggests, at many points, practices which can help to move it further in the direction of better serving the needs of those who attend and of the society from which the high school gets its charge. However, the book, made up as it is of a large number of chapters, each written by different individuals, does not and perhaps cannot be expected to present the case for a fundamental reappraisal of secondary education which some feel is sorely needed today.

—Reviewed by GEORGE W. DENEMARK.

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