

The Worldwide Struggle for Education

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TODAY the basic educational problem is one of helping in man's struggle to remain human. The backdrop is the worldwide struggle against poverty, authoritarianism, colonialism, tribalism, and many other forces which tend to divide men, or to place certain groups of men in positions of subservience and inferiority.

This worldwide saga is equal in importance and excitement to our own Westward Movement, the Age of Jackson, and the drama of the frontier. Too often when bits of this saga are acted out in distant countries we regard them as merely items in the daily newspaper. For many years this was the case as we read with detachment, and some amusement, of the student protest activities in Latin America in the 1940's and 1950's.

Even in our own country we often overlook critical struggles because of their subtle or their sophisticated form. Thus, it took Michael Harrington to point out to us the hidden poor—the "Other Americans."

This struggle brings to mind Richard Heilbronner's concept of the "great ascent"—out of the pit of poverty, ignorance, and despair. In the 19th century, in the United States, the ascent began with education as the ladder leading up and out of the pit into the bright sun of opportunity, ethnic respectability, and humaneness. The ladder has worked imperfectly, of course, and for certain groups there have been people above stepping on their fingers as they grasped the next rung. Today this interference is inflicted more subtly as educational opportunity and social class standing are linked together. This interference enables some to enjoy high status and respectability while others are left with low status, an inferior education, and little chance to advance. In other parts of the world the same phenomenon occurs through use of the exclusive academic secondary schools and their counterparts on the higher education level.

In the case of the black American, he has seldom been allowed to use the main educational ladder out of the pit. Instead, in the past he was

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provided with a much shorter ladder. In addition, it was so rickety that it occasionally collapsed. At best it was often a ladder full of splinters and sharp edges calculated to make the climb difficult. A similar situation prevailed for indigenous peoples in many regions of the world under British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese rule. As independence came for many of these groups in the 1950's and 1960's a serious attempt was made, and is being made, to fashion new ladders of educational opportunity.

Such ladders are not easily constructed when physical resources are limited and when tribal, ethnic, and class rivalries pit one group against another. One of the most persistent of human patterns is the way men tend to divide into invidious groupings, often aided and abetted by the educational system. Education has been used to heighten the feelings of being inadequate and unworthy in some individuals and to make others feel proud and haughty and disdainful of the masses. Nevertheless, country after country at present is engaging in a nationwide campaign to extend education to all its citizens.

Having made it out of the pit, unlike people in many parts of the world where lack of education, poverty, and oppression go hand in hand, Americans are now in danger of being pushed back into the pit by a monster of our own creation—that is, a society stressing technology, extreme specialization, rootless existence in suburbia, and computer values over human values. It is no wonder that we now read of a widespread identity problem, not only of black Americans, for whom the problem is doubly acute, but for all of us.

Problem of Identity

The problem of identity is no less acute in Africa and other regions of the world where local identity, long dormant under colonial rule, now seeks to establish itself. The campaign to establish identity is comparable in scope to the struggle now going on in the United States in which schools and other institutions are now embarked, whether they like it or not, on a vast program to revamp the Negro's, and the white man's, outlook on life. Basically this is an educational job, though one involving far more than schools. No society in the world can remold itself without coordination among all its social agencies.

One of the agencies is the national government, and increasingly we seem to be relying on big government. In so doing we face a new dilemma of preserving local initiative and respect for individual differences in the presence of a government increasingly vast, faceless, and bureaucratic. Our only defense seems to be a renewed insistence on citizen participation.

Viewed in this light, the black citizen's demand for control over his neighborhood school is a healthy response which may help black and white alike in the long run. As ordinary citizens now demand a say about the hiring of teachers and the nature of the curriculum, teachers find themselves pitted against administrators and against citizen groups who in effect challenge the claim that teachers are professionals and should control their work. Students also rise now in anger against bureaucracy, bigness, impersonal values, disinterested teachers, and everyone and everybody who is in the other generation from which youth is alienated.

Who controls, then, becomes a basic issue and underlies much of the

educational change occurring in many regions of the world. This is, of course, part of a larger struggle between the haves and the have-nots of the world.

In the United States the poorly educated are separated by a widening gulf from those who are well educated. The same is true in other lands, but it is less a problem in some regions of the world where elitism is an old and well accepted ideology. Here it becomes a problem because of our society's open commitment to equality and because of our nation's faith that education, if only we will give it a chance, is the answer to all our problems. Unless we make faster progress in coping with the vast problems generated by a rapidly changing society, we face a vast disillusionment not only with schools but also with the intellectual approach to life. In our own time we have witnessed the awful specter of a nation, Nazi Germany, adopting a blind emotional approach to life. Should such irrationality gain a foothold in the United States, it would be the crowning irony because of our noble attempt to educate mankind, all of mankind, on a scale which no other nation thought possible, or desirable.

As other countries dedicate themselves to the inspiring task of educating all mankind, and in a manner which preserves and enhances man's humanity, it becomes equally important that progress keep pace with rising expectations. Reports coming in from the various regions of the world indicate that the challenge has been accepted. We all have an obligation not only to keep informed of these developments around the world but to lend our support, each in his own way. □

Improvement of Teaching

Four innovative approaches to improvement of teaching are effectively described and illustrated in action in *Theory Into Practice*, the journal of the College of Education, The Ohio State University, in the December 1968 (Vol. 7, No. 5) issue. Interaction analysis, nonverbal communication, microteaching, and simulation—these techniques for the study and improvement of teaching are treated in the issue, which has as its theme, "A Workshop in the Analysis of Teaching."

Four articles describe models based upon innovative aspects of these approaches to the study of teaching. Following each description is an article by a teacher educator who has actually used the approach in an educational setting.

Authors include Walter J. Mars, Edmund J. Amidon, Charles M. Galloway, Dwight W. Allen and Arthur S. Eve, Donald R. Cruickshank, Douglas L. Minnis and Kenneth Shrable, Sue S. Lail, David B. Young and Dorothy R. Young, Glennon Rowell, and Asahel D. Woodruff. Editor of *TIP* is Jack R. Frymier.

Copies of the issue may be ordered from College of Education Publications, 1945 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43210.—RRL

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