

us today is not whether we shall teach subject matter or the child but rather how can we provide the quantities and

qualities of subject matter the child demands as he avidly explores this great wide world.

☞ *We know that learning is a lifelong process; yet we do little to extend after-school education*

## EDUCATION ENDS AT 18

● PAUL H. SHEATS

IF YOU WERE ASKED to indicate agreement or disagreement with the following statement published in a recent issue of *School Management*, how would you vote?

Learning is a continuous process for the normal, mentally alert individual, a process which begins at birth and continues as long as life continues.<sup>1</sup>

Ninety-nine and fifty one-hundredth per cent of you nod agreement and mutter a few appropriate phrases on the silliness of asking for such an obvious answer. And so, *ipso facto*, the myth that education ends at 18 is exploded and we move on to more pressing considerations. But wait a minute—does intellectual agreement that learning is a lifelong process mean that present school practice is consistent with that conviction? You see what we are leading up to. The gap between profession and practice on this matter of extending educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults is so wide that the real myth which needs to be ex-

ploded is the belief that we *now* have an extensive pre-school and adult program. Actually the public school in its current program is no more than exploring the approaches to the problem.

Briefly, here is a bill of particulars:

### *Why Do We Need to Extend Education?*

1. Out of a potential clientele of approximately 89 million persons over 18 years of age in the United States, probably not more than 2 per cent are being reached by a program of public school adult education at this time.

Among the 75 million persons in the

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*Paul H. Sheats, Director of New Tools for Learning, New York City, tells us that there are two contradictory myths extant among us. Myth number one: a youngster terminates his learning at the age of 18; myth number two: youth may quit formal schooling at 18, but that is no cause for alarm because we have a totally adequate program of extended school services for the "post-eighteeners." Mr. Sheats is most concerned with exploding myth number two, for he says that practically all of us will agree that, like breathing, education goes on as long as we live, but that we do not face the facts about our woefully deficient education for out-of-school youth.*

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<sup>1</sup> Fern, George H.: "What Plan Is Your Community Making Today for Adult Education Tomorrow?" *School Management*, January, 1944, vol. 13, no. 5, p. 130.

United States who are 25 years old and over, 13.5 per cent have completed less than five years of school, and in four States this figure jumps to 30 per cent or more. It has been estimated that there are 700,000 totally illiterate aliens in this country alone. If we were to set a standard of civic literacy for determining the educational attainment of our adult population, many additional millions would be shown to lack even the minimum fund of knowledge and understanding needed for informed citizen action on community, national, and world problems. The demands which have been made on the school for vocational training of workers in war industries, while lessening somewhat at the present time, will reappear as retraining and rehabilitation become increasingly important with the progress of the war and the coming of peace.

These are only the most obvious educational needs of our adult population. If avocational and recreational interests are included, the range of potential service which the public school might provide covers almost every area of human interest and concern.

#### *What Has Held Us Back?*

2. It can be argued that the chief reason why public schools have not yet developed an adequate program of adult education is that there have been insufficient funds appropriated for such services. Granting that this is true in most communities, we can scarcely expect to remedy the situation by ignoring the need for aggressive professional leadership in seeking more adequate financial support. The wide variations in school expenditures for adult education among the States and among com-

munities within a given State prove that where such leadership is exerted, public opinion will support an extended school program. At this time only half of the States make any provision for the use of State funds in adult education programs. A recent survey of sixty-one city school systems reveals that the median expenditure for adult education in 1938 was .84 per cent of total educational expenditures for the year.<sup>2</sup> Small wonder that present efforts are so inadequate.

Obviously, even with aggressive campaigning, not all the needed additional funds will be obtained from new appropriations. Some consideration must be given to the reassignment of available personnel and the redistribution of funds now available. Part-time assignment of elementary and high school teachers to adult school work, operation of the school plant during late afternoon and evening hours, employment of a full-time director of adult education—these and other steps can and should be taken now. Meanwhile, planning for an extended program after the war can proceed, with provision for additional State and local support.

#### *What Are Our Tools?*

3. In this process of making school services available to all the people, new teaching procedures and new tools for learning must be utilized. Too many public school efforts at adult education have been conceived on the pattern of a kindergarten. Adults have been treated like children, taught pedantically, subjected to formalized classroom routines, and alienated from any future contact

<sup>2</sup> Hendrickson, Andrew: *Trends in Public School Adult Education in Cities of the U. S., 1929-1939.*

with anything that bears an "adult education" label.

There is no excuse today for such practices. Films, pamphlets, recordings, film strips, and slides are available to facilitate learning, and, moreover, to make it an enjoyable and fun-giving experience.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Where Does the School Fit In?*

4. Finally, the school must increasingly exercise its logical function as a coordinating center for the fuller use of other community resources and agencies carrying on adult education activities. This should be done, not with any thought or intent of restricting or controlling such activities, but to insure that through cooperative effort, overlapping and duplication may be avoided, and the needs of all sections of the community served. Programs of community education are now being promoted by

<sup>3</sup> Write to New Tools for Learning, 280 Madison Avenue, New York 16, N. Y., for a free catalogue of "New Tools."

business men's groups, service clubs, unions, women's groups, citizens' committees on the problems of the peace, and countless other autonomous and independent organizations. This is all to the good, but somehow, somewhere along the line, some agency at the community level must give some thought to fitting the pieces of the puzzle together. That agency, logically, is the school.

The emphasis in this article has been on the things which need to be done by the school if we are to explode the myth that present efforts in the education of adults have more than scratched the surface of the job to be done. It would have been a much pleasanter task to have reported on the very fine achievements which individual schools have already accomplished in extending services to adults. Perhaps, when there is more "hay in the barn," so to speak, *Educational Leadership* will give us space for reporting the pride of accomplishment which will then be rightfully ours.

¶ *Wise teachers combine books with experience to give real meaning to education*

## EDUCATION IS WITHIN FOUR WALLS

● EDGAR G. JOHNSTON

THE CONCEPT of education as something which happens—God willing—in a classroom, is almost as pernicious as the point of view that all desirable learning is imprisoned between the covers of a textbook. In each case there is a tendency to divorce learning from experience and to place undue emphasis on verbalization.

Unquestionably an alert and vital teacher may do much to bring the breath of life into the classroom—through use of multiple sources of information, through a consistent search for practical applications, through the use of visual and auditory material, through invitations to representatives of community agencies to share experi-

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