

education a vital force through building a real community-educational center. The high position of guidance in the list of problems of educators and the requests for additional assistance by youth should be a sobering thought to those who feel that our guidance programs have been well developed.

Finally, these results imply that the area of democracy must be extended within the school and the community. This is essential if our youth are to join vigorously in helping to solve the problems facing society universally, problems held in common with all the youth of the world.

## *Youth in a Changing Culture*\_\_\_\_\_

HOWARD CUMMINGS

To the familiar criteria for the selection of learning experiences—the demands of society and the demands of youth itself—Howard Cummings, assistant specialist for government and economics, Division of Secondary Education, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., suggests that we add also the adjustments necessary between these criteria in a constantly changing society. We believe those concerned with planning learning experiences for high school youth, which will be truly functional in this world of 1949, will find much food for thought in Mr. Cummings' article.

STATEMENTS of objectives for secondary education are usually based upon one of two sets of criteria: the demands of contemporary society; and the needs or the demands of the youth groups which are seeking full adult status in that society. It might well be asked whether these should be the sole criteria for selecting the objectives for secondary education in the United States today?

Because of the climate of opinion in which they have grown up and because they are living in a dynamic society, the members of each generation of youth have acquired some habits and conventions which are not accepted by members of older generations. If this

were not true the cultural lag in an age of invention and mass use of technology would be even greater than it is. Society, however, is not inclined to let youth build an entirely new social order every time a new generation of youngsters grows up. Social stability and unity rest upon the acceptance of ethical and moral, political and economic concepts which should be modified only after careful consideration of consequences and alternatives.

### **Adjustment As a Prime Factor**

In light of what has been said, is there a third set of criteria which might be used as a basis for selecting the objectives of secondary education? Since

both the demands of youth and the demands of society deserve consideration, these competing demands must be reconciled through a series of compromises. In making a statement of objectives, therefore, might it be wise to list not only the demands of youth for status, security, acceptance, experimentation, and adventure—and the demands of society in these same areas; but, in addition, the nature of the adjustment affected? Such statements could be translated into objectives for secondary education stated in terms of behavior.

### The Two-Fold Role of the School

Obviously such an undertaking must involve the cooperation of youth and representatives from various institutions in the community. The role of the school in developing a program based on such a statement of objectives would be two-fold: that of a mediator between the two groups in the preliminary work of formulating statements; and that of an implementing agent which has an understanding of the national and international aspects of problems and

which acts to keep the local program from becoming too parochial in character. After all, there is no assurance that youth will live in a given community, nor is there a guarantee that the larger cultural movements of national and world societies in the years to come will not modify the local pattern.

The chart on the following pages is illustrative only. It represents an effort to formulate the type of demands which have been described, but the author has not carried on the conferences with youth and with community leaders needed to obtain really valid statements. Similarly, the list of adjustments has been prepared without the benefit of group thinking on the part of youth, adults, and school representatives which such a list obviously requires. In other words, the chart simply suggests an approach to the formulation of valid objectives for secondary education; it is not to be considered an authoritative list of problem situations from which a valid statement of specific objectives may be formulated.

#### Demands of Youth

1. A job which will pay good wages with favorable working conditions.

#### Demands of Society

1. That the young worker remain on a job long enough to pay for the cost of training. That he be loyal to the firm.

#### Adjustments

1. Help youth in self-evaluation of skills and capacities and in making a just estimate of job situations. Indicate that job shifting may cause loss to the firm—but not to the individual or society which still profits from his training. The question of what institutions in American life have claims on an individual's loyalty, and how much claim should be considered.

2. An opportunity for advancement to more satisfying jobs which promise a larger opportunity for using youthful strength, energy, and stamina.
2. That the young worker begin at the bottom of the ladder. That he should develop settled habits in work and in human relations.
2. Help youth evaluate his work and school experiences against job requirements to find his place on the job ladder. Work out with employers a list of acceptable work habits and bring them to the school group for consideration and action.
3. An opportunity to develop on the job his own self-confidence, desire for innovation, and a flair of individuality.
3. That he accept responsibility, follow tasks through to completion, be self-reliant, and avoid bluffing and coxsureness. That he be flexible in his work habits to facilitate cross-training programs for different jobs and upgrading programs for promotion.
3. Help youth in school develop statements of personal qualities which will provide a blend of those qualities of character and personality valued by youth and other qualities valued by society. Perhaps some of the qualities valued by each group, but rejected by the other, can be eliminated.
4. An early trial in positions of leadership with some authority.
4. That he acquire experience and training before he is eligible for jobs which call for judgment. That he learn to use authority tactfully.
4. Opportunities for school leadership should be shared widely. A wider range for opportunity within the school can be developed. Liaison with the community can provide the community with young leaders with opportunities for limited community leadership.
5. The right to select books, movies, and radio programs without adult censorship.
5. That youth, to a lesser degree than children, be protected from over-stimulating, corrupting, and brutalizing influences.
5. The progressive substitution of straightforward facing of issues for protection as the school population increases in age.
6. An opportunity to learn the facts of life about sex, economic relationships, and political activity.
6. That facts in areas where the institutions which make up American society are not in agreement shall be taught by the institutions using their own frames of reference.
6. Objective handling of controversial issues. Liaison with institutional representative in the local community to secure a better preparation of youth for life. Personal counseling to deal with individual problems.

7. The right to question conventions in American life, even if these conventions are strongly supported by institutions in American society.
7. That established conventions shall not be rejected merely to satisfy a youthful desire for power or novelty.
7. A rational consideration of the place of conventions in American life and the possible value of a convention over a longer period of time than the memory span of a given youth group. If conventions do not meet this test, the school should hesitate to defend them. Conventions should also be judged in their relation to the general ethical and libertarian principles which underlie American life.
8. The right to experiment in finding patterns for living even if the experiments involve questioning well-established conventions.
8. That institutional life be protected from youthful leaders who are substituting energy-consuming trial and error experimentation for well-established knowledge and experience.
8. The urge to experiment should be encouraged but the schools should encourage, as well, a problem-solving approach to planning before undertaking a program of action. Action need not be discouraged if: (1) the goal set is consistent with the general principles of American life, (2) the plan for reaching the goal seems sound on the evidence considered, (3) and there is some desire to evaluate progress after the program has started.
9. The recognition of individual differences and the right to be accepted for what he is, and what he can do, with no restriction imposed because he is below a certain age.
9. That any recognition given to a member of the youth segment of a group shall not lead to large demands from other members of the group who possess less ability, or to wholesale sulking if such demands are denied.
9. General recognition within the school of the principle of the career open to talents. School can emphasize ethical considerations, professional standards, civic responsibility of leaders. Can minimize, in the community, age as a factor in eligibility for recognition.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>10. A hearing for his ideas and values and acceptance by the social group if his ideas and values are approved.</p> | <p>10. That the implementation of sound ideas and accepted value judgments, even when these are accepted in principle, must wait on the exigencies of nature and human inertia, and the development of know-how.</p> | <p>10. Respect the dignity and worth of each individual. Give all a hearing in school. Evaluate all new ideas, value judgments, programs for action, when they are accepted as good, against the realities of the community situation.</p> |
|--|--|--|

### Samples of Desired Behavior

The statement of objectives can be made from the column on adjustments. The statements should be in terms of behavior and they would reflect the nature of the compromise made. For example, in considering the relation of young workers and employers, objectives might take the following form:

The new worker on a job will:

1. Accept a job which requires training at the firm's expense only if he plans to remain on the job long enough to permit the firm to recover the investment.
2. Investigate the job to see whether it offers a real opportunity to receive training and a living wage or is a dead-end job where workers without experience are exploited.
3. Report for work promptly every day that he is not ill and give a full day's work for his wages.
4. Be aware of his own interests and welfare but not to the exclusion of all claims of his employer for his interest in the welfare of the firm.

After the objectives have been stated, experiences can be organized which will encourage the formation of the de-

sired behavior. Instruction should be planned to achieve objectives.

### Youth's Place in America's Future

American society has shown amazing vitality in winning a global war, re-converting to a peacetime economy, and accepting major responsibility for world reconstruction. Youth has played a large part in these efforts. It is difficult to assess the changes that have taken place in American society during the last decade. Certainly a new phase of the industrial revolution seems to have begun its course. The presence of six million Americans who have come in contact with virtually every cultural pattern in the world is another potentiality for change.

A changing culture demands opportunity for experimentation and reflects a taste for innovation. These are qualities youth supply. If youth is kept too long in the wilderness of protection, routine jobs, or long vocational preparation in school or college without opportunity for leadership, these qualities may be dulled. Young people who are growing up and experiencing an expanding, changing culture are the leaders to shape a new culture based on our growing social homogeneity, our expanding world contacts, and our high-speed and high-power technology.

Copyright © 1949 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.