

Education's Role in the World Crisis

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American educators have faced other autumns of crisis, according to Dean Harold Benjamin of the University of Maryland. As they educate for power, for understanding, for freedom, they personify a hardy tradition.

A FIRST CONCERN for American education in the current world situation is to help the American people remember enough of their past to forget some of their present fears. The United States has faced many crises in its history and emerged therefrom successfully. Sometimes she was badly battered, but she ended each round on her feet, still in the middle of the ring.

Americans need to remind themselves and their allies and associates in the United Nations in this hour of momentous decision that the world has always been faced with grave decisions. It is always approaching the crossroads, standing at them and trying to decide which path is fatal, or moving through them in the wrong direction. It is still operating, however, and probably will be operating for a long time to come.

When the Chips Are Down

All human beings are tough, and those who make up the population of the United States of America are as hardy as any. Sometimes their leaders think they must be protected from the shock of reality, think they are timid. Their leaders are wrong. The people are tougher than the average leader. As much as any people in modern times, they agree in action with a great soldier's dictum:

*Cowards die many times before
their deaths;
The valiant never taste of
death but once.*

In this autumn of a rough year in world history, therefore, the school men and women of the United States might well ponder the fact that they are teachers of a proud, rough people. Neither they nor their pupils nor their pupils' parents and brothers are delicate flowers to wither at the first frost of violence. They are children of a thousand generations of men who fought shrewdly to stay alive. They and their ancestors were nursed by women strong enough to carry the race through all its miseries.

In some countries, teachers are generally exempted from military service. In the United States, most teachers would scorn such a privilege. They are conscious of their 175-year war record, unexcelled by any other civilian profession. From Captain Nathan Hale and Colonel Francis Parker to Major Howie of St. Lo, the teachers of the United States have commonly had the knowledge and the guts to shoot the works when the war chips were down.

In the present war situation or any that may arise in the future, therefore, the people of the United States can

confidently expect the teachers of the country to serve again in all their key civilian capacities from issuing ration cards to serving as air-raid wardens, to fly warplanes through flak-carpeted skies, to sail ships through the mines of the seven seas, to assault enemy-held beaches, and—if so desperate a need should occur—to fight in guerrilla action with hunting rifles and shotguns, with knives and pistols, with clubs and fists, over every square mile of American territory.

To make the United States and the United Nations strong for war, the teachers will use all their instructional skills. They will extend their science teaching to every needed area. They will prepare new workers for industry. They will assist the Armed Forces in selection, placement, and training of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Without stint or hesitation, they will devote their professional talents to all the technical and material learnings required for the victory of their people.

Education for Understanding

Having insured the fulfillment of this first mission, however, the teachers of the United States must take up another and a greater task. The current international crisis and all others like it have been caused by lack of education and by mis-education. The conditions causing these recurring difficulties must be corrected by education.

The education needed for this task is an education for understanding. In a period of crisis we need to increase this kind of education rather than to reduce it. Instruction in the geography, history, government, and society of other parts of the world needs to be

developed on a new scale throughout the schools. Anthropology, foreign languages, and psychology should be studied by many more young people than are now working on these subjects.

There need to be at least ten students and teachers from other countries in the schools and colleges of the United States for every one such person now in this country. There should be an equivalent increase in the number of Americans studying and teaching abroad.

For war and peace, for national welfare and international security, for all the jobs which Americans are now doing and will have to do increasingly, at home and abroad, a new and extended education for understanding of other peoples is imperatively needed.

Education for power is needed to build up a nation's industrial capacity, to train and equip an army, and to win a war. Education for understanding is also needed for these tasks but is above all required to find peaceful outlets for productive achievement, to make large armies unnecessary, and to keep wars from happening.

Education for Freedom

There is a third main kind of education which is finally of greatest importance. This is the education for freedom which makes other education possible and which develops the pattern of life which the other types of education serve.

Education for freedom starts with tolerance of differences, works to cultivate every socially valuable idiosyncrasy, and ends with a maximum of original contributions to the general welfare. It uses the arts and humanities,

the studies of man and society, and the activities in science and technology as instruments for aiding the growth of individuals to their highest possible levels of achievement.

One of the commonest errors made by nations facing threats to their national security is to restrict the freedom of their citizens far beyond the point required for safety. At any time, a nation has to ask two questions concerning its citizens:

1. How much uniformity of response among these people is required for safety?

2. How much deviation from the average response among these people is required for progress?

Even with the science taught in an education for power, and particularly with the social studies of an education for understanding, the effects of a small change in the amount of freedom granted to teachers and learners are sometimes tremendous. The question of safety must be answered coolly and realistically. If it is answered in the hysteria of fear, it will be answered wrong, and the quality and number of ideas will be consequently reduced. The question of deviation must also be answered by calm and matter-of-fact appraisal of all observable conditions. If it is answered impractically, the quality of the educational product will cer-

tainly be lowered, although the number of responses may be increased.

Public Acceptance Needed

A stepped-up education for power, a strengthened and expanded education for understanding, and a more daring education for freedom are all needed in this time of world crisis. They are needed all the time, since crises occur all the time. They need to have increased support in money, in trained teachers, and in public acceptance.

Of these three; money, teachers, and the people's judgment on the matter; the last is by far the most important, for without it, the first two will be provided poorly or not at all. In the current crisis, as never before, the schools and their programs must be presented to the people for detailed consideration.

This is not a policy *must*; this is merely a statement of a phenomenon. The American people are rapidly learning how to take over the task of deciding what they want their schools to do. They will and should move faster on this matter in the current crisis than ever before. A new theory and practice of what used to be called "school public relations" will have to be developed. The result will be a new and better education for democracy in peace or war.

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