

Impact of New Industry on School and Community

*What are the problems
school leaders face
as new industries
move into a community?*

THE purpose here is problem setting and problem identification, not problem solution. We begin with what we mean by impact, look at the role of cultural setting, proceed to some aspects of new industry impact, and conclude by listing some of the problems that may be anticipated.

Impact is viewed here as striking force operating in interacting cycles of action and reaction, resulting in change. We talk about the impact of change, even though we know that change follows impact. However, change in turn becomes impact, just as reaction in turn becomes action. Further, impact is multidirectional, not unidirectional. As the web of community life is stretched at one point, stresses and strains occur at many other points, and accommodation follows. Thus, impact leads to change, and change creates problems—not a problem, but problems.

Change and problems tend to occur in connected clusters. Dealing with

them, therefore, becomes a community responsibility. School leaders have to perceive and face these problems within this larger context. Consequently, these problems cannot be considered as the province of the school alone, or the community alone, or industry alone, but rather of all three acting in concert. This is especially true when concern is directed to cultural impact.

Cultural Setting

Obviously, the kind of industry, school and community has to be taken into consideration. The variables are too many to specify. The reader will have to draw upon his own perceptions and experience (as he would in any case). The best we can do is to assume that the differences will be more in degree than in kind, and that the situation is always local and as such known in some detail.

Cultural thrust. Faced with multiple impact and uneven change, we use the concept of cultural lag, which is a negative view. The concept of *cultural thrust*, its opposite, is a positive view. In focusing on cultural lag, we are forever engaged in catching up and mop-

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ping up; in focusing on cultural thrust, we could be forever engaged in moving ahead and building up.

Contradictory though it may appear, schools tend to reflect the culture in which they exist, while at the same time they tend to lag behind rather than to lead with respect to change. Impact tends to change the community, requiring the school to change to maintain its reflection role and to reconsider its functions to exercise leadership in a changing culture.

Education for adjustability. We have experienced difficulty with the concept of "education for adjustment." Small wonder, for we have been talking about the wrong thing, namely, a concept tied to a static society. The concept that fits in a dynamic, changing society is *education for adjustability*. To differentiate: adjustment means "to be willing to conform" to a static society; adjustability means "to be able to perform" in a changing society.

Our concern about impact of new industry on school and community depends upon whether we propose to deal with it in terms of adjustment, which seeks to fit it in with as little change as possible; or in terms of adjustability, which seeks to weave it into the ever-constant yet ever-changing fabric of community life. The first invites cultural lag; the second accepts cultural thrust. In the latter view, change is a process, not an act, and impact is a moving cluster of active cultural forces, not an isolated incident.

Expectations and images. Impact operates to modify the expectations and to affect the images school, community, and industry have of themselves and of each other.

A new industry generally brings along personnel at the executive, managerial,

supervisory, and technical levels. They come with experiences in many communities and schools. We must be alert to pick up the cues and signals that tell us about their expectations and images, at the same time providing them with cues and signals identifying our expectations and images.

Impact of New Industry

The new arrivals may trigger off ferment for change, which may be viewed by some as a challenge to power and prerequisites of local leadership, and by others as ingredients for progress. The older resident may feel himself cast in the role of defender of tradition and the status quo, or he may feel himself lifted on a wave of the future. New industry and people may alter the power structure and the communication system of the school and the community.

Younger parents have strong and immediate interest in educational programs for their children. Wanting these programs now, they tend to favor action over promises. They are disinclined to take over, but are likely to feel forced to do so if local leadership does not get the job done.

The newcomer tends to have indefinite status and frustrated feelings of belongingness. The school stands as a conspicuous potential unifying opportunity. If assimilation machinery is not available, the community may find itself confronted with cultural islands of residence and participation. Also possible is the emergence of Industryville, a more or less self-sufficient and self-contained community within the community, or just outside the community.

New industry quite likely has an active, working commitment to "the team approach." This is something to encourage

and build upon and may afford the know-how for a breakthrough into an improving school program and a better community. Industry knows (more than do schools and communities) that there is a positive relationship between good schools, good communities, and good business.

New industry adds to the human and social resources for school programs and community enterprises. It is a limited view that considers new industry only in terms of financial resources or added burdens for schools and communities.

Impact of new industry is economic—more jobs, more buying power, more houses, and so on. It also involves more municipal services, more consumer services, more cultural facilities and opportunities, and, above all, more attention to community-wide coordinating and planning functions and services.

To meet the changing situation, the school may anticipate that it will need to provide wider offerings, diversified curriculums, specialized services, and increased citizen participation. In turn, these probabilities indicate need for stepped up and enriched in-service teacher education.

Residence of employees may occur in a taxing area different from that in which the industry is located, thus creating increased demand for community services in certain areas without relatively increased tax resources. Also, industry may enter with certain immunities, such as a "favorable" tax base or assessment formula.

On the other hand, its entry may assure an adequate base for provision of community services. New industry may be expected to be wary of a community, or a school, that has a history of shifting

undue proportions of the tax burden to industry.

Some Problems

Proceeding on the bases of cultural thrust, education for adjustability, and mediation of expectations and images, here are some of the problems to be faced as new industry moves into a community:

1. Are we ready to capitalize on greater "freedom" to change and innovate?

2. Do we have dependable information on population changes, keeping in mind that characteristics may be more important than numbers?

3. Have we taken a look at the implications of the tendency of people to settle in one-status neighborhoods?

4. Are we ready to accept a younger parent population, with experiences in different school systems and different communities?

5. Does the concept of curriculum reflected in the offerings of the school and the methods employed in the classroom represent an educational program designed for all the children of all the people in the community?

6. Have we taken into account the lack of uniformity in curricula and textbooks and consequent difficulties for transfer-in students?

7. Are we prepared to deal with the probable increase in individual differences? to deal with a more differentiated school population?

8. Are plans being made for provision of expanded guidance and counseling services?

9. Have teachers set about obtaining new social understanding and sharpened sensitivity? Does the school carry on

community study? Have teachers had guided opportunities to explore community resources for use in teaching?

10. Have steps been taken to cope with the role of the "school stranger" and the "community stranger"? to minimize the tendency to treat a group of community newcomers as "foreigners"?

11. Has the school developed a resource of unifying and belonging activities?

12. Does the concept of school public relations rest upon involvement rather than upon telling and/or selling?

13. Has the new industry been invited to send information and/or personnel ahead that is needed for planning?

14. Will new classrooms be required? Will they be provided by additions to present buildings, or by new buildings?

15. What is the probable location of new residents in relation to present school boundaries? Will expansion of transportation facilities and services be required?

16. Will sufficient teachers be available? Will standards have to be lowered in order to obtain teachers in a hurry?

17. Will there be sufficient textbooks, teaching materials and supplies on hand?

18. Will there be sufficient tax income to cover expanded facilities and services? Will the per pupil expenditure be maintained? lowered? increased?

19. Are there groups or agencies or programs in the community engaged in the cooperative study of community problems and the mobilization of resources for solving them?

20. Are there working plans in operation involving industry-community-school cooperation—for example, advisory groups?

21. Will the community be able to add new stores, banks and other services? Can this be done within the area of the

present community center? Are there plans for subcommunity centers?

22. Will the cultural facilities and services be available to and adequate for the increased demand?

23. Will the community be able to expand municipal services, for example, water, sanitation, fire, police, to meet increased need?

24. Will the public library be able to accommodate additional readers and interests?

25. Will recreational facilities and programs be adequate for the expected population? geared to age-groups?

26. Can social, fraternal and service organizations accommodate new members? provide appropriate activities?

27. Are local hospital facilities large enough?

28. Are there sufficient professional personnel to service the anticipated influx of people?

29. Are the adult education programs adequate and appropriate for the anticipated demands?

30. Is the new industry planning to operate an internal educational program of its own, i.e., classrooms in the factory?

31. Is there an adequate program of in-service education for teachers?

32. Are these problems being thought of as "administrative level" problems only? (Let us hope this is a purely rhetorical question.)

These are representative, and highly probable, impacts of new industry on school and community. What is done to anticipate and to deal with them will have much to do with the future of the community and the school. To the extent that expectations are mutualized, as well as realized, will the impacts become a force for cultural thrust rather than a reason for cultural lag?

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