

Social Planning and Social Change

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"Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change."—Tennyson

UNDERLYING the exhibitionist rebellion of the hippies and the flower people is a more subtle and more important change in the great majority of people born since F.D.R. Like politics, science, and business, people have undergone profound change. "The marines we have in Vietnam are a lot smarter than the ones we had at Guadalcanal," says a veteran marine, quoted in a recent news account, "but they are a lot harder to discipline."

The "now" generation, we are told, is alienated and mobile, has empathy and stimulated imaginations. What has happened? Toronto scholar, Marshall McLuhan, gives one kind of explanation, with his complicated theories of the effect of television and modern communications.

I seem to blow a fuse every time I read a McLuhan book. Perhaps this is what he means when he says that television, with its instantaneous communications of myriad events, has educated children in a different way than did the book, which presents information in a one, two, three sequential way. He believes that printing, with its absolutely clearly defined character, causes the reader to receive information passively.

Television, by contrast, is a vaguely defined picture and the need for one's eye to connect the thousands of dots makes it an involving experience, one that not only draws the child into action, but tends to make him desire immediate action. What is important here is the powerful influence that media participation presents in planning for change. Our schools, the staff, and the curriculum must unfold and become tomorrow-oriented.

Media participation, city and suburban living, technology and scientific research are creating global, new life styles at a whirlwind pace. Architecture and the Peace Corps are making societies, "look alike" all over the world. The vast recent increase in the sheer number of human beings has further complicated our understanding of the consequences of change. And the fact that this generation in America and abroad has been subjected to faster and more bewildering change

than previous ones has made us oblivious to some of the more subtle but important changes that affect the quality of human living and learning.

For Social Reality

This generation seems more interested in the role of education, beyond a mastery of the three R's. John Dewey's philosophy, which stressed group experience and the utilizing of the school to prepare for life, is being discovered by the "now" generation. They are discovering much more of Dewey—they are using the school as a testing ground against social rigidity and, in some cases, for social reality. Witness the recent race riots in the schools and during extra-curricular games. Many administrators are so bewildered by expressions of youth to demonstrate on the one hand, and for flexibility and opportunities for creativity on the other hand, that they are in a constant state of "floating anxiety." This generation is forcing the notion that the school is "everywhere"—everywhere they find *meaning*. It is up to us to remake the schools in styles less dull and more worldly.

I believe that our schools have become so highly structured that the policies and goals being set by school boards and administrators, and the work actually being done seem unconnected. When this happens, we have one of the outstanding manifestations of alienation. As schools become increasingly large and complex, the traditional organizational hierarchy or power structure loses its usefulness.

The most effective decision-making and policy determinations seem to evolve when key people *directly* related to an issue are brought together: sometimes parents, sometimes teachers, sometimes the police, sometimes students, etc.; this brings "instant" psychological recognition and personal satisfaction—especially when things begin to happen. Some university campuses are organized in this fashion, where the professors are under the loosest bureaucratic control. Within many corporations, research departments already operate this way—as virtually independent organizations made up of independent projects.

Leonard Duhl, a Washington psychiatrist and government advisor, sees corporate organization emerging as a "floating crap game." Rather than becoming a solid organization in the old sense, Duhl says, corporations will draw people together for a problem. As a solution evolves, they will break apart and reassemble in other groups. For example, a new nonprofit company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Organization for Social and Technical Innovation (OSTI) retains a permanent staff of ten generalists. For any particular project it picks up key men from all over the country. The trick is to find the specialist and the generalist and bring them together to bear on a problem. For the problems we face in education, we will have to learn how to move people "horizontally as well as vertically." Done skillfully, this assignment-by-task can solve not only a specific curriculum problem, but also the problem of teacher motivation.

Many companies are adding to this concept a change in salary structure. For example, a *valuable* technical man might earn more than his boss (although the technical people never believe it). This might solve the age-old problem: How to

promote the master teacher without making him a second-rate supervisor or administrator? In industry, "There is a change taking place in the old concept of line and staff," says Frank Metzger, ITT's director of personnel planning and development. "A blurring is taking place. You no longer have a strict allegiance to hierarchy. You try to forget about seniority and organize to get the job done."

Persons in the Process

Why weren't we in education smart enough to figure this out? As supervisors, we have been struggling with line and staff organization for years—mostly because we were unable to work in such a "tight" structure. We just did not fit the old pattern. The very nature of supervision and curriculum development requires that we have authority and responsibility to organize and constantly reorganize, with different people involved, to get the jobs done. We must work at establishing ourselves as "persons in the process," not at establishing our power or authority in the organization.

The very nature of the struggle suggests that the pyramidal structure of our schools was established to handle routine tasks and there is nothing routine about working with people in the processes of supervision and curriculum development. ASCD has been the spokesman for this structural style—a style of communications, up, down, and sideways. The style will need to be high-fashioned. We will need to bring more and more specialists and generalists into our schools to work on specific curriculum problems.

The interdisciplinary process of bringing together people who have never met before to solve problems, and to develop curriculum will acquire spontaneity and require new skills. Regrouping of educators for decision making will make "sensitivity training" a relevant prerequisite. Each school person will have to understand himself in relationship to others. He will have to learn to build a culture out of each group in which he finds himself. Many educators who have been through leadership training experience soon accept it as just another happening, mostly because school systems are operated more like Prussian armies than like human interaction systems.

New Social Skills

The changeover from hierarchical structures to participative management techniques will evoke new social skills and feelings. It will create some new anxieties, too. Some administrators will constantly worry about "who's in charge?" To a degree, the inflexible "older" supervisors and administrators (and there are just a few) will discover that an "open-system" has the built-in power and capacity to bring everyone involved the illusive psychic and psychological rewards and far less work-boredom and worry about loss of power.

Participative management approaches in education need to be discovered and, no doubt they will bring new social problems; for in most traditional systems, seniority has been equated with wisdom. The "new" system will draw on the expressive talents of both young and older personnel. The person with the *ideas*

and the *ability* to make them live will emerge to do the task. Young and older educators will find that they need to keep on learning, consequently the very nature and need for in-service education will change radically. The chief source of need for continuing learning will be the commitment of the people involved to study and understand social change and its effect on children in the home and on youth and teachers in the school.

Many of us have been working and planning this way in part. I am convinced that too many have not because of the demands of teachers and the negotiations and contracts which have emerged in the past few years and which have been dumped in our laps. If curriculum negotiations spread, they will not bring about participative management, but will lead only to role reversal and the same hierarchical organization, but with a different power-questing group pulling the strings.

It is not the young generation of teachers who are pushing the negotiations movement. It is a segment of a "middle-aged generation" of teachers who are now discouraged, bored, bitter, and rebellious. These teachers are discouraged because they have had to *insist* on getting simple monetary recognition for recognition as professionals. It seems that in the process they have become "packaged personalities," attracted to higher salaries on the teacher market. As teacher negotiations become institutionalized, the individual teacher must suffer a greater loss of dignity and sense of self.

School as a tightly scheduled island has also contributed to teacher alienation. The boredom of routine (just fitting into one of the schedules) gives one a sense of nothingness, and a loss of feeling unique. To make matters worse, a growing number of middle-aged teachers just cannot understand the "now" generation of students in his classes, or even the younger generation of teachers in the school.

The middle-ager has lost "teacher" power in the classroom where once his word was law. The "now" generation of students question teacher authority. The "now" generation acts as though no one had ever lived before them. It seems to me that both these generations are exhibiting many of the same tendencies: intolerance of existing conditions; lack of respect for authority; a desire to participate physically in significant activities and relationships.

What I can't figure out as I am writing this is: To which generation do I belong? To which do *you* belong?

What I *can* figure out is: That the next generation of effective supervisors, teachers, and administrators will emerge as individuals who are willing to take risks; that educational technology will force us to take a new look at instructional theory as well as force us to deal with costly obsolescence. However, the immediate challenge before us is to use the evaluation data we accumulate to change the curriculum: a curriculum which must emerge to help develop individuals of global stature in their thinking and in their performance.

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