

“No Stopping Place”

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T“There is no stopping place in this life.”—Meister Eckhart
THROUGH periodic stocktaking and future planning, man has the ability to chart, at least partially, his own destiny. At significant points in time, men in groups assess the impact of their organizations and plan for new outcomes. Members and friends of ASCD, in the year of its 25th anniversary, have the opportunity, both individually and collectively, to ascertain the Association's impact on the fields of curriculum and supervision and to make plans to assure that there is no stopping place in its ability to serve.

It is indeed significant that the 25th anniversary of ASCD should coincide with International Education Year, for in its curriculum projections, ASCD needs to take into account the global village in which late 20th-century man finds himself. During a period in which man's ingenuity has enabled him to reach the moon, we hardly dare engage in educational planning which fails to transcend geographical and political boundaries.

If we accept the assumption that curriculum planning in the future will be enhanced by cooperative endeavors which cross national lines, then what kinds of questions should be asked?

Questions Needing Consideration

1. In a world which is rapidly shifting and changing, how can man achieve a feeling of selfhood—of identity? How can man define his loyalties? his loves? his concerns? his commitments? A necessity exists to consider man in his local community, a setting defined by shared values and beliefs. Yet at the same time, consideration must be given to universal values and concerns in a world in which many men will have access to resources and persons outside the local unit.

A major issue with which curriculum workers must deal is that of helping individuals identify, judge, and attain their own aspirations. Nothing that is done for a person is of much worth if the individual loses his own aspirations in the process. The implications of education's role as the incentive for identification, evaluation, and achievement of individual aspirations have not been fully considered. One obvious implication, though, is that attention must be given to helping each sector of the world study its own peculiar needs while maintaining an openness to cross-national development of ideas which go beyond local concern.

2. What is the meaning of freedom in an interdependent world? The value placed upon individual freedom varies from culture to culture. Perhaps too little attention has been given to the meaning of freedom in a highly interdependent world. Ferkiss says,

Freedom consists in responding autonomously and authentically to the currents of life and action passing through one; the loss of freedom is not the loss of an impossible complete determination—which would necessitate standing outside the universe—but is a synonym for being bypassed and not being allowed to play one's part in shaping the whole.¹

Man has a responsibility to learn new forms and modes of freedom. What he learns about this concept and how he learns it is a critical matter to which curriculum workers need to give attention.

3. What is the relationship of man to his creations? Man has developed so many new technologies that many current writers feel that man will become subordinate to his creations. In light of the fact that man has even invented means of radically altering himself, careful attention needs to be given to helping man see himself in proper perspective.

4. What is the potential impact of the communication explosion upon man? At the present time, advanced developments in communication networks mean that a relatively small percentage of the world's population has access to an extremely large quantity of information from around the globe. A communications elite exists.

In many instances these persons who have access to knowledge are also in a position to make decisions which coerce or pressure other persons. Access to the communication network of the world oftentimes means access to power. Ability to obtain information, however, does not necessarily mean a perceptual readiness to receive it or act wisely upon it. Thus, even if more persons were let in on potential and actual communication networks, we have not yet adequately prepared man to adjust to these opportunities.

Access to information may oftentimes be correlated with possibilities and potentialities for leadership which go beyond the local community. If we are truly concerned about the global village, how can we give more persons choices relative to accessibility to communication networks?

Man—who is he? what can he become? what is he likely to become? How shall he relate to his peers—those both near and distant in time and space? The questions are many.

Possible Responses

In light of the range and magnitude of the questions with which present man is faced, he might well look for a stopping place, for the complexity of the situation is overwhelming. On the other hand, if we accept the premise that "there is no stopping place in this life," one possible solution is for curriculum workers from all parts of the world, each bringing his own background of experience, to join hands in order to tackle the questions relative to man and his education.

¹ Victor C. Ferkiss. *Technological Man: The Myth and the Reality*. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1969. p. 253.

Within this frame of reference, the ASCD Commission on International Cooperation in Education has been planning a World Conference on Education to be held in Asilomar, California, March 5-14, 1970. Topics such as "Man for Tomorrow: A Challenge for Education," "Is the School an Obsolete Institution?" and "Useful Functions for the School of the Future" will be dealt with by persons representing a variety of cultural and national heritages. The scope of the conference is such that the Education Committee of the U.S. Commission for Unesco has given the meeting its endorsement and cited it as one of the major efforts of the United States during International Education Year.

Significant to ASCDers is a statement in a letter of support from Robert Finch, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, in which he commends the Association for its "view of the importance of nongovernmental, professional organizations' accepting responsibilities in international cooperation." Various units of the U.S. Office of Education and the U.S. Department of State have been helpful in the planning of the conference.

It is the hope of the sponsoring Commission that persons reaping the benefits of the Asilomar Conference will not be only the few who can attend but also those who participate in various ways in their local situations. In a proposed resolution, members of ASCD are being asked to sponsor activities which foster cooperation among nations, including pressing for the funding of the International Education Act of 1966; urging the ratification of the various human rights conventions upon which the United States has not yet acted; and encouraging organizations, groups, schools, or any institution of which our members are a part to emphasize or to create an international dimension in ongoing projects. The possibilities are multitudinous and varied.

There is no stopping place . . .

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Editor's Note. Moved by a desire to improve communication among nations and peoples on curricular matters, ASCD's Commission on International Cooperation in Education assumed responsibility for planning the content of this November issue. Planning for the issue was undertaken by a group made up of Alice Miel, Vincent R. Rogers, and D. Edward Fleming, with Dr. Miel serving as chairman.

Writers from the United States and other lands have developed articles on three symposium topics: (a) "Aspirations for Education Around the Globe," (b) "Education's Worldwide Common Market of Free Intellectual Exchange," and (c) "International Cooperation in Educational Research."

This issue will serve as background material for participants at ASCD's World Conference on Education. We trust that readers will find the articles stimulating, informative, and significant.—RRL

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