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*Education must do more than simply help the young to achieve their economic ends. It must assist students in building their own knowledge, perspectives, and competencies for effective use in a diverse society.*

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# *Assessing Programs for Economic and Ethnic Diversity<sup>1</sup>*

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**D**O PUBLIC schools provide the opportunity for students to learn economic diversity and ethnic diversity? What is the current interest in evaluating programs for economic and ethnic diversity? Prior to evaluating programs, one must look at the curriculum, the philosophy, and the community which provide the school's structure.

Richardson describes the curriculum as everything that the individual chooses to live with, for, by, and upon (6). This makes learning purely individualistic; thus, each learner has a different curriculum according to his interest. When the school builds upon the inherent interest of the child in activity and exploration, enriching his learning through appropriate experiences that help him to see what he is about, and to consider what is most important to him in relation to

the adult world, we then begin to have the elements of a sound program. With such a program, each member of the school staff has a stake in the child's career development; each teacher, and indeed each parent and businessman, carries some responsibility.

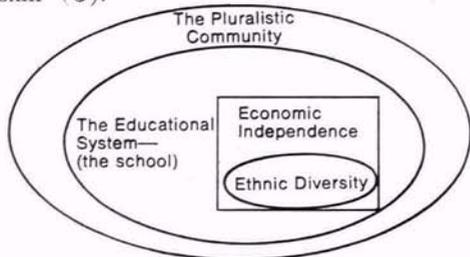
It becomes the school's responsibility to encourage public acceptance of economic and ethnic diversity. This may be done through the use of mass media, referral centers placed in the community and operated cooperatively by school and community, or the school might explore community resources to be shared with students.

Envision the pluralistic community as a circle enveloping the educational system (school). Within the school circle lies the responsibility for imparting knowledge of economic and ethnic diversity which, when properly administered, sends the student back

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into the larger circle of the pluralistic community fully prepared to meet his responsibilities as an individual. As Miller points out, "Surely, the aim is to prevent the return of our students to school for lack of a salable skill" (3).



However, a child or an adult should be able to return to school at any time of his or her life for updating and upgrading employability skills. Since individuals change with age and experience, and the world of work changes, opportunities should be available to train for new careers.

A learning community can be a powerful force for effective learning and thus, mutual learning and instruction can occur with a sense of compassion and responsibility. The work world models this relationship for the student. A worker not only recognizes his individual responsibility, but appreciates the need for interdependency with fellow workers. All members of the school community have a shared responsibility for the learning experience.

In a recent poll by Phi Delta Kappa on the goals of education, economics ranked low. The goals of education, relating to economics, were to gain information needed to make job selections and to develop skills to enter a specific field of work (7). But, as was pointed out by Wharton, overconcentration of minorities in career-oriented education programs may bar them from entering important occupational or leadership activities which require a wide understanding of the inheritance of man. Thus, career education becomes a stepping-stone for economic and ethnic diversity (9).

To inspire ourselves to equal achievement, according to Wharton, we must immerse ourselves in our collective intellectual

and aesthetic heritage, gaining a vision of man as he was, is now, and someday may become. This is one meaning of ethnic diversity.

## We Must Immerse Ourselves

Economics should be built in as a part of every person's educational program. There are mental and physical tasks involved in developing human potential into employment and social performances (8). Economic development programs as a unifying structure in education provide the opportunity for all members of the school community to cooperate and to be responsible.

In the Richmond Public Schools, there is a program under the Distributive Education Department which involves the student in exploring all areas of marketing and distribution. It includes occupations in such areas as banking, real estate, finance, retail and wholesale business, services, transportation, and communications. In this way, the student is able to employ the process of eliminating and selecting areas for further study according to his or her interest and ability. This is done under the guidance of teachers, counselors, and parents. The curriculum remains flexible and adjustable, thus considering individual needs as well as economic and ethnic diversity.

Stanley believes other career options should be available in the lower grades. As long as the career concept includes all professions, including those of the industrial world as well as in medicine, law, and the humanities, students will not be "locked in" and any student can benefit from career exposure, exploration, and experimentation (8).

When more information and deeper insight into the nature of the human mind and personality began to accumulate, the nation's social philosophy began to change. Currently the melting pot theory is being replaced by the theory of cultural pluralism. In theory cultural pluralism states that each person must find his own identity, accept his heritage, hold on to his traditional culture patterns, value his (and other people's) differences, and make peace with himself.

We believe that differences contribute strength and when harmonized, create a beautiful pattern of life. We no longer make any child feel ashamed of his or her ethnic origins. We encourage children and adults to associate across ethnic lines knowing that when they do, prejudices tend to disappear and that when people enlarge their circle of associates, they lead more abundant and generous lives (5).

Until recently, education has been thought of in absolute terms—as an end in itself. But education has always been related to human and social needs. Education has been the tool society used to achieve its ends. Education programs must redefine their missions in relation to the job market. They must become programs and operating structures which are responsive to the needs of students as they build their own knowledge, perspectives, and competencies for effective use in a diverse society (2).

### **A Point of Departure for Education**

Economic and ethnic exploration as a point of departure for education has the potential of individualizing education. Thus, attention should be given to the learning styles of students as these relate to the broader world outside the classroom. This can stimulate learning which will provide individualized feedback to students concerning their self-identities. Each person, if he or she feels of equal worth, will aid others in achieving *their* individual goals.

Teachers and students could take responsibility to explore and, on a trial basis, participate in the work world and share their findings with peers. Through role-playing, media, and simulated games, students could have the opportunity to make decisions and activities similar to various work settings; thus utilizing the business and industrial world's personnel and resources to enable students to explore the work world.

Teachers, counselors, and administrators should examine their practices and techniques. Each activity should start with the question, is it relevant? School age youth at all levels need the opportunity, continuously

and systematically, to explore their own interests, aptitudes, attitudes, and values. This kind of exploration should be in relation to a wide range of educational and economic opportunities which may be available to them in order to avoid premature educational and occupational foreclosures (4). Students need to be exposed to jobs they can realistically hope to achieve. In an economically diverse society different levels of educational preparation are needed. Therefore, economic diversity is not, necessarily, to be equated with college preparation. Does not vocational education preparation lead to satisfaction as well as superior economic benefits?

The most critical aspect of any program is evaluation. This should be a continuous process, based on direct experience. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of the school to gear its curriculum to imaginative, directive, involvement—teaching strategies centered around life—activities of the real world, a world which happens to be both economically and ethnically diverse.

There is a need for each program to define its use of terms in articulating specific program objectives. With clear objectives, the mass of evaluation material generated regarding concepts, processes, techniques, and resources, could have meaning to the teacher. Specific career education programs should be retained only if they are viable, and should be changed as required; and both decisions must be reached on the basis of sound research. Furthermore, programs need to be compared by creative research designs that are constructed during program development—not after implementation.

It is the responsibility of teachers, administrators, and students systematically to assess and measure a program's progress and to determine what modifications or adjustments might be required to achieve program goals and objectives. The evaluation planning must begin early so that it can be modified.

The ultimate evaluation of economic and ethnic diversity in education will not be reached until enough persons have experienced the full system from early childhood throughout their working lifetime into retirement (1).

But, in the interim, evaluations must be performed to keep the program tested and improving.

Following are some evaluative questions which might be considered:

- Has the learner been provided opportunities to heighten his awareness of economic opportunity?
- Has the school maintained a working relationship with industry, labor, and other job information sources?
- Has the learner acquired skills both in quality and quantity which would lead to economic diversity?
- Has the learner become aware of a variety of economic options?
- Does the learner know that he has the ability and opportunity to become employed in any of the 15 occupational clusters identified by the U.S. Office of Education?
- Has the learner been involved in a wide range of activities, including committees, research conferences, seminars, and conventions pertaining to economic and ethnic diversity?
- Does the learner have a salable skill that fits into the present economic market and leads toward new jobs?
- Has the learner had at least five opportunities to be directly involved in different work experiences?
- Has the learner had the opportunity to perform mental and physical tasks in career areas?
- Has the learner developed abilities and skills needed for immediate employment?
- Has the learner developed an awareness of opportunities and requirements related to a specific field of work?
- Has the learner developed workmanship (as measured by a predetermined instrument)?
- Has the learner developed the ability to use information and counseling services related to the world of work?
- Has the learner developed a list of economic principles and responsibilities as determined by the school curriculum?

- Has the learner had the opportunity to develop skills leading to the acceptance of ethnic diversity by having direct experience in community development, group dynamics, and human relations?

- Has the learner had the opportunity to learn how people in the world of work view their relationship to the schools' curriculum designed to achieve economic and ethnic diversity?

There are rewards for teachers, students, and administrators in an economically and ethnically diverse program. School administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals will gain a renewed sense of accomplishment in providing opportunities for students realistically and effectively to prepare for life in the pluralistic society into which they will be graduated. Schools, then, will become the stimulating, animated, and joyful places of the real world.

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