

Business Education Will Prepare Today's Students for Tomorrow's Economy

If we carefully examine the needs of students and of society, we will readily see the crucial role of business education in preparing productive citizens.

The omission of business education from the 1988 ASCD yearbook, *Content of the Curriculum*, is a serious shortcoming in the development of the book's content. If educators translate yearbook recommendations into programs, they may well handicap students by not providing the knowledge needed by virtually every employed person in America—the skills and understandings of the discipline of business education.

I wonder how a discipline so essential could have been overlooked in this presentation of curriculum. For several important reasons, I believe all students would be better served if business education subjects were required in the secondary curriculum.

Changing Conditions

To begin with, our economy is shifting rapidly from manufacturing to service-related employment. The vast majority of jobs will be created in small businesses in every town and city throughout the country. Most of these jobs will not require a college degree; but some training beyond high school will probably be desirable, combining extended job skills with knowledge of how businesses function: the driving forces in our economy, the structure and organization of companies, and so on. Also, nearly every job in America now has or will have some relationship to computers, making keyboarding skills an almost universal job requirement. If the companies themselves must teach employees these entry-level skills—and remember most of the companies are small—

they will be taking resources away from new services, improved technologies, and the creation of new jobs.

Imperative Reasons

Furthermore, a review of America's economic problems reveals imperative reasons that business education should play an important role in preparing tomorrow's citizens. Topics such as the perils of the deficit, the dynamics of balanced trade, and the realization of an instantaneously responsive interlinked world economy, if not learned in secondary business education, may never be encountered by those who enter employment without going on in school. An understanding of business and economic principles is too important to be denied to these citizens.

To succeed in an increasingly competitive market, our nation must have the most efficient and proficient workers possible. Employees must have an appreciation and understanding of the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics; these skills are the raw materials from which comes the ability to function on the job. Such functioning requires the blending and fashioning of the raw materials into extended learnings, such as keyboarding, ac-

counting, word processing, and business fundamentals or economics.

Last but not least, the number of students who fail to complete high school indicates an alarming waste of our most vital resource. Business education, because it directly relates school learning to the workplace and enables students to see the benefits of staying in school, can help solve this problem.

Ensuring a Clear Picture

The world is becoming truly small, time is moving perilously fast, and too many of us are making educational decisions without a clear picture of the broadened needs of students and the changing needs of our country. Future editions of the ASCD yearbook—indeed, any discussion of curriculum design—should examine curriculum from the standpoint of the needs of students, of employers, and of our nation's economy. Careful examination would show that business education should become an integral part of the core curriculum for all secondary students. □

C. LeMoyné Smith is President, South-Western Publishing Company, 5101 Madison Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45227

Reply from the Yearbook Editor

In retrospect I agree with Smith and others who objected to the omission of business education from the 1988 yearbook. Business education is an important part of the current curriculum and should have been included. We will give the subject appropriate attention in future ASCD publications.

—Ronald S. Brandt, Editor
Content of the Curriculum

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