

## SOCIAL REINTEGRATION AND CURRICULUM REFORM

by F. T. BURROUGHS (Iran)

Education is every individual's problem. It is every society's concern. People want and need more education than ever before ; evidence indicates that they are more critical about the type of education they receive than at any time in the past. Education is rapidly becoming a major interest of a majority of people.

As the interest in education has increased, however, the disenchantment with the system of education as it exists and functions today in many parts of the world seems to have flourished. The disenchantment has, in fact, reached such proportions that it has been referred to as "flaming dissatisfaction". It has been evidenced in several ways. First, students have demonstrated. Second, teachers have struck. Third, authors have expressed their concern in numerous articles and books. This evidence signalizes a movement that appears to have already penetrated the institution of education, that promises to shatter the very foundations of the institution. The tenor of the movement resembles the early stages of a process of institutional and social disintegration.

### *Root Causes*

What are the root causes of the disquiet? Several explanations have been offered ; several causes have been suggested. In his article "Illusions and Disillusions in American Education", Theodore Brameld identifies several causes. In that article he contends that the unrest arises from

"distorted conceptions of educational purpose, from learning theories that do not recognize the reciprocity of interest and effort, from an outmoded "egg-crate" curriculum still primarily college preparatory, from over-emphasis on the technological and under-emphasis on the aesthetic, moral, social and humanistic."<sup>1</sup>

Brameld discusses the causes in terms of illusions which prevail in education. The illusions he believes to be the most enfeebling include the following :

- (1) The school should perpetuate the customs, attitudes, behaviour and institutions of a society.
- (2) Students should display an appreciation for and an allegiance to the criteria of knowledge and wisdom established by school authorities.
- (3) The nation remains the chief education authority ; nationalism exerts an undue influence on education.

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1. Editorial introduction to "Illusions and Disillusions in American Education". *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 1968, p. 202.

Other root causes of the disquiet have been suggested elsewhere, and, like those Brameld deals with, they fall within the category of illusions. Two of the most blatant and dangerous of those illusions are closely related. One is concerned with individuality, the other with equality of opportunity. Equality is an almost universally accepted aim ; it involves the attempt to provide all youngsters with equal opportunities for training and development. Individuality emphasizes the worth of the individual and lays great stress upon the needs and demands of each person. Equality and individuality are, however, mere illusions, for they are aims which have never been achieved, nor is it likely that they will ever be satisfactorily realized. They are aims which, contrary to what one might think, do not serve education positively but which tend to act as disintegrative and disruptive forces.

The recent expressions of unrest and discontent by both students and instructors in many countries around the world lend proof to the contention that the aim of individuality is an illusion. They also indicate that too much emphasis on the needs of a nation and the disregard of the individual and his needs are illusory goals. The very systems that have spawned the many malcontents profess unwavering allegiance either to the individual and the development of his talents or to the needs of the state.

The expressions of unrest lend validity to the belief that an extensive search for a purpose in life is under way. They focus attention on the fact that the school curriculum has ceased to serve society to the extent expected because of its insistent adherence to the cult of individuality or its preoccupation with the furtherance of national aims.

The various illusions which obtain in education today are crippling the institution and are tending to render it disfunctional. They are, in fact, encouraging its disintegration. They are also aiding the spread of disenchantment and dissatisfaction to other social institutions. It is imperative, therefore that education throw off these illusions, appraise its situation objectively and begin the process of building on a firmer and more realistic foundation. Otherwise, there is little hope of bringing meaning into the present morass of confusion.

#### *Transcending Needs*

The concern with equality of opportunity and the preoccupation with the individual developed in opposition to the ideology which emphasized the needs of society and ignored those of the individual ; both the concern and the preoccupation were necessary to the attempt to reduce the influence of that ideology. The interest in equality was defensible during the early years of the industrial revolution when the continued significance of the individual was placed in jeopardy, when opportunities were offered to a privileged minority. Further concern with the ideal of equality may still be argued with some degree of success when the evident inequalities in today's world are considered. As a reaction against a mechanized way of life and a mechanical

society the tremendous interest professed in the individual may have been justified in the past ; it hardly seems justifiable at present.

Transcending both equality and individuality in importance in today's world, however, are these questions : What are we living for ? What are we striving for as individuals, as nations and as a world society ? In addition, there exists the transcending need of a sense of social equality on the international and intercultural levels. The answers to these questions and the fulfilment of this need are essential to a healthful, productive existence, but to date answers have not been provided nor has the need been met. The result is that many people feel let down. In short, they are disillusioned. In his book *Education Today and Tomorrow* F. T. Willey suggests that man will remain in a state of disillusionment until these and other similar questions are answered.<sup>2</sup>

The illusions now plaguing education and the resulting disillusionment must be uprooted. Appropriate measures must be taken to insure their demise. We must concur with Mr. Percy Wilson, the then Senior Chief Inspector of the Ministry of Education at the British Association, when he warned that "we must attempt to reverse a process of disintegration that would bring all knowledge into disrepute, all cultures into decline, and most educational progress to a full stop."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Suggested Changes and Reforms*

If the process of disintegration now evident not only in education but also in society in general is to be arrested and a degree of social reintegration effected, definite and decisive steps must be taken ; reforms must be instituted. Unless reforms are introduced the continued usefulness of the school as an institution is definitely questionable. The illusory goals and aims presently serving education must be replaced with aims that are in keeping with the realities of today's world. The curriculum of the school must be reoriented. Only after changes have been wrought in these two areas can more detailed reforms be introduced. Only if new aims and priorities are established and the curriculum is reoriented can the school hope to gain a new lease of life.

The *aims* appropriate to the present day give preference to the fulfilment of societal requirements, yet they do not deny the importance of the individual and his needs. They merely account for those needs within the broader framework of a world society. The aims which appear most suitable for today include :

- (1) The establishment of a viable and workable international order consisting of contributing and co-operating nations and individuals.

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2. Willey, F. T., *Education Today and Tomorrow*, London : Michael Joseph, 1964, p. 18.

3. *Ibid.* p. 28.

(2) The development of a general understanding of and appreciation for the historical and contemporary contributions of individuals and nations to the progress of mankind.

(3) The development of a society of individuals who can view problems and difficulties from an international perspective and can employ their talents and abilities to assist in overcoming those problems within the international setting.

These aims may be translated into educational goals applicable to the various levels of formal training.

The *curriculum reorientation* permitted by the aims listed above does not represent a radical departure from the present concept of the curriculum ; it represents more a synthesis of the curricular concepts that have obtained for many years. It may be termed a compromise between the traditional and the newer concepts, involving a readjustment in the list of educational priorities. The fulfilment of the societal needs and requirements are given slight preference, but the school is not regarded as a social agency dedicated only to the recruitment and training of people for services needed by the society. It is viewed as the institution dedicated to the development of the individual and his abilities within the framework provided by the society and its goals.

The needs of the individual as well as those of the state are given a definite hearing. The attempt, therefore, is to offer the individual guidance in his search for answers to his pressing inquiries by supplying him with information concerning general problems and their importance to him and others. Such information will enable the student to exert his individuality, but not so much as to contribute to the further disintegration of society.

#### *Course of Study*

The course of study required to achieve the suggested aims and objectives should involve not only a study of the basic skills but also a consideration of societal problems and needs at the highest level. It should enable the student to apply his knowledge in the basic skills to the problems of an international society and to contribute to their eventual solution. The dissenting groups today are extremely aware of the problems and shortcomings of modern society, but their proposals for change and reform indicate a definite lack of empathy. They show an inadequate understanding of the concept of a society and its function ; they attest to an absence of the ability to apply the knowledge and skills the dissenters possess to the positive solution of the problems at hand. The efforts of the dissenters tend to feed the fire of confusion rather than quench it ; such will be the case until their efforts are correctly channelled. Dissension can yield results only if positively directed.

The course of study should aim at developing within each student a keen sense of observation and the definite ability to transfer knowledge and

generalize from information given. It should help erase erroneous ideas which label groups of people as "lazy", "deceitful", "simple", and "uncultured" or which result in questions which show cultural misconceptions. It should arouse within the student a certain feeling of empathy and a desire to extend that feeling to include people unlike him and cultures far different from his own. The course should, in short, enable the student to broaden his perspective to the greatest degree possible, all the while keeping in mind that the technological as well as the aesthetic skills and knowledge he possesses are useful only within the context of the society.

#### *Organization of the Curriculum*

The organization of the curriculum required to achieve the aim outlined should include both separate subjects and unified designs. The separate subjects to be studied are, in essence, the same as those studied presently. Certainly, without a thorough grounding in the basics a student can hardly be expected to develop his talents or a reasonably accurate understanding of the urgent needs of today.

The element of unification becomes important when attempting to aid the student in awakening and perfecting the ability to apply his skills and knowledge to the solution of problems international in scope. It is here that the experience type of organization is required. The student must be presented with different problems appropriate to the level of his skills and knowledge ; he must be encouraged to solve those problems in the light of the information given him, the given information placing emphasis upon the international and intercultural aspects of the problems. A high school student may, for example, be presented with the problem of the inability of people from various cultural backgrounds living within a particular area to communicate. The student would first be asked to consider the problems from his own point of view. Next, he would be requested to spend some time with members of the other group in their own community attempting to discover the attitudes and needs of the group. Then the student would be expected to analyze the problem from the other point of view. Finally, he would propose a solution based upon the information gained from his period of observation, the knowledge acquired from his study of the separate subjects and his own views. Such involvement on the part of the students, and instructors as well, is needed in all parts of the world.

Within the context of the problems presented to the student the similarities rather than the differences among people, their difficulties and their efforts at overcoming those difficulties must be stressed. The student should be shown, through the presentation of the problems, the possibilities for using his skills and knowledge gained in studying the separate subjects to enhance the search for the solution to the problems. The over-riding consideration is involvement in subject matter and related experiences. The result should be a change in attitudes and behaviour.

*Implications*

The reorientation of the school curriculum is vital to the survival of the institution of education ; it is necessary if the tide of social disintegration now in progress throughout much of the world is to be stemmed and reintegration effected. The present confusion and unrest so evident among students and teachers attest to the failure of the school and its curriculum to meet the needs of society, yet it is the school and its curriculum that should serve as the primary means for fulfilling those needs. It is the curriculum which must serve to produce the thread of continuity needed by society in its progress from the traditional past to the new world civilization.

## REINTEGRATION SOCIALE ET REFORME DES PROGRAMMES

par F. T. BURROUGHS (Iran)

Alors que se fait plus pressante la nécessité de l'enseignement pour un plus grand nombre, étudiants, professeurs et spécialistes de l'enseignement expriment leur mécontentement des systèmes actuels. Mais en attaquant les méthodes autoritaires apparemment dépassées, les critiques se font les porte-paroles de ceux qui réclament l'égalité et l'individualité, deux conditions qui sont démodées, destructives et illusoire.

Les buts qui à présent servent l'enseignement doivent être remplacés par des objectifs qui sont conformes aux réalités du monde d'aujourd'hui. Parmi ces objectifs, on notera (1) l'établissement d'un ordre international réalisable, (2) le développement de l'évaluation des contributions historiques et contemporaines des individus et des nations au profit du progrès de l'humanité, (3) le développement dans les sociétés d'un pouvoir permettant d'apprécier les problèmes d'un point de vue international. Ces objectifs peuvent être traduits en termes de buts éducatifs par une synthèse des concepts établis de longue date en matière de programmes destinés à des écoles consacrées au développement de l'individu et de ses capacités à l'intérieur même du cadre que lui fournit la société et ses buts.

La politique qu'il faudrait suivre pour atteindre les objectifs suggérés devrait comprendre une étude des aptitudes élémentaires ainsi qu'un examen des problèmes des sociétés qui permettraient et encourageraient l'étudiant à appliquer ses connaissances aux problèmes d'un ordre international. Les programmes scolaires préparés selon ces lignes devraient couvrir des sujets distincts ; les aptitudes élémentaires qui en découleraient seraient raffinées par l'évaluation des problèmes toujours plus complexes d'un type international et inter-culturel. La participation aux matières académiques et aux expériences associées est de la plus haute importance. Il devrait en résulter un changement des attitudes et du comportement. La réorientation des programmes scolaires servira à tracer le chemin de la continuité dont a besoin la société pour son progrès, depuis le passé traditionnel jusqu'à la civilisation d'un monde nouveau.